SHADOW COLONY:

REFUGEES AND THE PURSUIT OF THE LIBERIAN-AMERICAN DREAM

By

Micah M. Trapp

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Chair:

Dolores B. Koenig, Ph.D.

Geoffrey Burkhart, Ph.D.

David Vine, Ph.D.

Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about the people living at the Buduburam Liberian refugee camp in Ghana and how they navigate their position within a social hierarchy that is negotiated on a global terrain. The lives of refugees living in Ghana are constituted through vast and complex social relations that span across the camp, Ghana, West Africa and nations further afield such as the United States, Canada and Australia. The conditions under which these relations have developed and continue to unfold are mediated by structural forces of nation-state policies, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the international governing body for refugees, and the global political economy. Situated within the broader politics of protracted refugee situations and the question of why people stay in long-term camps, this research is a case study of one refugee camp and how its people access resources, build livelihoods and struggle with power. In particular, this dissertation uses concepts of the Liberian-American dream and the shadow colony to explore the historic and contemporary terms and circumstances

through which Liberian refugees experience and evaluate migratory prospects and restrictions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	American Colonization Society
BPRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
CBO	Community based organization
CWS-OPE	Church World Service – Overseas Processing Entity
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
Ecomog	Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group
GRB	Ghana Refugee Board
IGNU	International Government of National Unity
IOM	International Organization of Migration
LRWC	Liberian Refugee Welfare Council
LRWWRC	Liberian Refugee Women With Refugee Concerns
LURD	Liberians United for Reconstruction and Democracy
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
NCS	National Catholic Secretariat
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OPEX	Operational Experts or Economic Stabilization Support Project

PAE	Pacific Architects and Engineers
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
ULIMO-K	United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia – Kromah
ULIMO-J	United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia – Johnson
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
WFP	World Food Programme

CHAPTER 1

POWER AND MEANING: BEYOND REFUGEE AGENCY AND SOLUTIONS

This dissertation is about the people living at the Buduburam Liberian refugee camp in Ghana and how they navigate their position within a social hierarchy that is negotiated on a global terrain. The lives of refugees living in Ghana are constituted through vast and complex social relations that span across the camp, Ghana, West Africa and nations further afield such as the United States, Canada and Australia. The conditions under which these relations have developed and continue to unfold are mediated by structural forces of nation-state policies, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the international governing body for refugees, and the global political economy. What I present is a case study of one refugee camp and how its people access resources, build livelihoods and struggle with power. Yet this account attempts to speak to the broader world of refugee camps, specifically camps that have existed for a decade or more and face an uncertain future. This discussion of Liberian refugees is historical, taking into account the specific and simultaneously ambiguous details of its colonial and postcolonial condition.

In 2008 to 2009 I conducted seven months of field research at the Buduburam camp, yet my project began much earlier in 2004, at home in Baltimore – "the Greatest

City in America," according to public park benches.[1] Tucked into my cubicle at a refugee resettlement agency, I had felt eyes upon me as I sat at my desk. I looked up, into the eyes of a small girl with bright orange hair and wearing a Baby Phat puffy jacket, a disposable diaper, and construction boots. Having caught my eye, she asserted "Ai wan drin teh!" I had no idea what she said. In English, I asked her what she said. No glimmer of recognition crossed her face. I tried French. She seemed to understand, but only responded again: "Ai wan drin teh." I shuffled through my arrival sheets and deduced that she was one of the first Liberians to be resettled through our office. She spoke Liberian English.[2] And she wanted to drink tea.

In the following days and months, I picked Liberians up from the airport, helped them move into their new apartments and manage limited financial resources. During our conversations about money and bills, I didn't understand how or why so many people sent hundreds of dollars to family in West Africa while they could not afford to pay the high rents that the city of Baltimore commanded. Over months of time spent together, I learned about Liberia – this "small America" that used Liberian dollars, had a flag similar to the U.S. flag and had named its capital after U.S. president James Monroe. A surreal place emerged in my mind: one full of rich resources and beauty, but torn apart by war. I

[1] Many refugees scoffed at this tagline for the city as they confronted intense poverty that did not coincide with their visions of the American dream.

[2] Liberian English is a type of West African Pidgin English. My spellings and Romanization are largely phonetic.

could not believe that my high school history classes had neglected this country and its history, so closely tied to our own. I wanted to know about Liberia.

In 2005 I spent three months at the Buduburam camp. At this time, the camp had been around for almost fifteen years and had long since shifted from a landscape of tent structures to mud brick houses covered with tin roofing. While many refugees arrived at the camp in 1990 following the outbreak of civil war in Liberia, in the following years people arrived and departed from the camp with frequency as Liberians attempted to find better opportunities within and outside of the West African region. Some refugees had returned to Liberia; others had returned to Liberia and came back to the camp again. As the Liberian civil war calmed down in the late 1990s, some refugees tried to return. When the civil war erupted again in 2002, refugees once again fled to Buduburam. During fieldwork in 2005 it was a vibrant time for the camp as many refugees were able to travel to the United States via a resettlement program. Upon my return to the camp in 2008, the conditions were very different. The economy of the camp reflected the general downtrodden global economy. People pinched resources and were uncertain about what the future held. The UNHCR and the Ghanaian government were planning to close the camp and people were tense. The possible threat of losing refugee status loomed large. Many refugees had built homes and lives at the camp amidst the struggle of camp conditions and the cessation clause threatened their way of being. Limited livelihood options in Liberia further compounded the tension surrounding the cessation clause. Finally, the revocation of refugee status would mean that resettlement to a Western

country and access to its resources and status would no longer be possible. As simultaneous hope for resettlement and anxiety about the closure of the camp spread, my own ideas about the camp turned increasingly negative. I could not understand why people were staying at the camp. How could they stay and hope for resettlement when host governments, such as the United States, had shifted their priorities to the resettlement of newer, more urgent refugee populations? Underneath this "hope," lay an entire complex web of power relations, between refugees, the system and nations through which refugees negotiate social meaning. This dissertation is a result of my exploration and analysis of how power and social status impact migratory decisions and why people stay at Buduburam.

The Creation of a Problem

In 1951 following the end of World War II, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was established with the mission to "lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees" (UNHCR 2011a). The UNHCR defines a refugee as someone who "owing to a 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 to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country"

(UNHCR 2011b). To provide emergency protection and care for refugees, the UNHCR often collaborates with host governments to establish and maintain refugee camps.[3]

As a longer-term approach to protection and the resolution of refugee crises, the UNHCR has devised three "durable solutions": voluntary repatriation, local integration and third country resettlement. Voluntary repatriation includes UNHCR assistance (travel, basic supplies) for those refugees who are willing and able to return to their country of origin, and local integration means that refugees will permanently settle in the host country. For refugees who are unable to repatriate voluntarily or integrate locally, third country resettlement – permanent settlement in a third country of asylum – remains the only UNHCR solution available. Each of these "durable solutions" carries its own set of bureaucratic procedures and politics. In practice the solutions are not equally available to refugees. As a result, refugees often continue to live in a camp environment for years and decades at a time such that camps have become a default "solution" – the norm rather than the exception.

The long-term use of refugee camps is not a new practice. Palestinian refugee camps in Gaza and elsewhere have been around for more than half a century. However, a surge of political and academic discussion at the turn of the 21st century brought the long-term use of refugee camps into question. Most notably the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants heralded the Anti-Warehousing Campaign as a movement to criticize the

[3] The UNHCR also provides protection and services to refugees outside of camps all over the world; however, I focus on refugee camps as a site of protection and contention.

abuse of rights in long-term camp settings or "protracted refugee situations" (Smith 2004). In a 2004 report, the UNHCR defined a protracted refugee situation as

> one in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance….Protracted refugee situations stem from political impasses. [UNHCR 2004:1]

For statistical purposes, the UNHCR determined that 25,000 or more refugees living in a developing country for five years or more constituted a protracted refugee situation. While these numeric distinctions provide a crude measure, the UNHCR stated that the severity of the protracted situation depends upon the conditions of population (UNHCR 2004:2).

Solutions?

Scholars have studied and written about the UNHCR's durable solutions from various perspectives ranging from macro-political analysis to micro-level analysis of refugee experiences. In this section I briefly outline the macro-politics of each of the durable solutions to contextualize of my research question.

Elaborating on the conditions of protracted refugee situations, scholars and advocacy campaigns have highlighted the chronic abuses of refugee rights, most notably the rights to move freely and pursue gainful employment (Loescher and Milner 2005:10). Protracted refugee situations have also been criticized for perpetuating poverty (UNHCR

2004: 3), fostering chronic reliance upon humanitarian aid (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992:8), and creating security threats, particularly through the recruitment and training of guerilla forces (Loescher and Milner 2005). Perhaps influenced by this critical attention, the UNHCR (2006) recognized that its durable solutions were not available to the majority of refugees, leading to the question: What is the solution for refugees?

Voluntary repatriation has been cited by aid practitioners and leaders as the best, "natural," most favored, optimal solution in the "hierarchy of durable solutions" (Bakewell 2000:42). The UNHCR's preferential treatment for repatriation is rooted in the assumption that a post-war period conclusively leads to the return of refugees. Scholars have amply criticized the supposed naturalization of repatriation, suggesting that such beliefs are rooted within a problematic nation-state ordering of the world (Hammond 1999, 2004; Harrell-Bond 1989; Koser and Black 1999; Malkki 1995, 1996; Rogge 1994).

As it does not involve physical movement across borders, local integration as a solution tends to be less visible and more difficult to define or evaluate in practice and tends to be "under-reported" (Fielden 2008). However, local integration has been defined as a 1) a legal process whereby refugees obtain rights from a host states; 2) an economic process whereby refugees become self-reliant; and 3) a socio-cultural process whereby refugees live in a host state without discrimination or exploitation (Meyer 2008:6-7). One of the key challenges of local integration is that the UNCHR views local integration as a permanent solution whereas most host states perceive the presence of refugees as

temporary (Kibreab 1989:478-9). Within the critical discourse surrounding protracted refugee situations, local integration has re-emerged as a potential solution. At the turn of the twenty-first century the UNHCR adopted a policy of "development through local integration" in hopes of promoting local integration as a solution to long-term refugee camps (UNHCR 2003:5).

Third country resettlement is the least used of the three durable solutions, with less than 1% of the world's refugees resettling in a third country (UNHCR 2011c). The top ten resettlement destinations include, in order of most to least refugees received: the United States, Australia, Canada, Sweden, Norway, Finland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Denmark, and Netherlands (UNHCR 2011d:2). Some scholars have argued that resettlement has been underutilized (Loescher and Milner 2005), while others cite resettlement as a financial burden, aiding a comparatively few number of refugees for a substantial amount of money (Jacobsen 2005). Nonetheless, the actual possibility and practice of resettlement as a solution remains heavily dependent on the nation-state policies of the prospective resettlement locations.

As one response to the limitations of the UNHCR durable solutions, Van Hear (2002) has suggested transnationalism – living between locations and the transfer of resources between families in different nation-states – as an enduring solution for refugees. However, as Van Hear has noted, the practice of transnationalism as a solution would not address legal rights to work and freedom of movement and citizenship of refugees. The search for solutions, be they temporary or enduring, presumes that we have

a firm grasp on the problem. In many cases those creating the policy do not have the opportunity to sufficiently understand the lives and experiences of refugees. Before a solution or solutions to long-term camps can be explored, we first need to understand and ask: Why do people stay in camps?

Scope of Research

My research seeks to understand why and how people stay in refugee camps. In particular, under what terms and circumstances do refugees experience and evaluate migratory prospects or lack thereof? What are the economic and social dynamics surrounding the decisions to live in a refugee camp? What types of power govern and are created in the process of living in a camp?

I explore the case study of the Buduburam Liberian refugee settlement in Ghana to begin answering these questions. Although scholars have attempted to distinguish between refugee camps and settlements (see Schmidt 2003), based upon the language used by Liberians in Ghana I use the two terms interchangeably throughout the dissertation. Located 44 kilometers west of the Ghanaian capital of Accra, the Buduburam camp was settled in 1990 following the outbreak of civil war in Liberia. By 2008-2009, the camp had been in existence for 18 years. While difficult to obtain official census figures, the camp population reached 39,290 in 2005 (UNHCR 2005:345). Unlike some protracted refugee camps, the Buduburam camp does not legally restrict the

movement of refugees. A Ghanaian police post marks the main road entrance to the camp, but refugees are permitted to freely enter and exit the camp.

Buduburam provides an interesting case study because the international community considers Liberia to be in a post-war state, where it is safe and appropriate for refugees to return home.[4] However, Liberians continue to live at Buduburam – an indication that Liberian refugees see and experience the situation quite differently from the international community's favoring of repatriation. During my research, and even in previous years, the camp was notified of its impending closure, yet the camp remains, existing on the edge of tension and on the brink of closure.

Wolf has argued that times of crisis provide ample opportunity to learn about power and change; however he has cautioned:

> …to the extent that crises form part and parcel of everyday life, we must recognize that the generally accepted distinction between periods of normality and periods of crisis is to a large extent fictitious. Hence, ideational responses to crisis are not as divorced and separated from the ongoing traffic in mind-dependent constructions and representations as we have sometimes thought. Thus, these…"extreme" and accentuated cases may not be as removed from our everyday experiences as we might imagine and hope. [Wolf 1999:17-18]

Certainly Liberia and Liberians have experienced many extreme periods of crisis throughout the past couple of decades of war. In the Upper Guinea coast of West Africa, Ferme (2001:14) has argued that the capacity for violence stemmed from the ordinary social processes and institutions of power – "the underneath of things" – which she

[4] I use the term international community here to refer to various actors, including the UNHCR, the Ghanaian government, the Liberian government, and the US government who all have identified Liberia as a democratic, safe country.

analyzed historically through ideas and practice. My analysis of the contemporary migratory politics of refugees in Ghana, as contested, uncertain and in "crisis," traces the threads of power through ideas and practices in Liberian history to the present to understand how refugees have attached meaning to and become invested in certain migratory outcomes.

Scholars and practitioners have offered some basic answers to why refugees stay in camps, though very few have substantiated their claims with extensive ethnographic evidence (for exceptions see Hammond 2004; Horst 2008). The UNHCR has explained the extended presence of camps as a result of political impasse and does not discuss refugee reasons for staying (UNHCR 2004:1). Others have explained long-term camps as a result of fear to return to the homeland and the continuation of conflict. Integration into the camp through marriage, employment or birth have also influenced decisions to stay (Jacobsen 2005:9). Access to resources and opportunity in exile, such as education, trade, electricity etc., also encourage refugees to remain (Jacobsen 2005; Crisp 2003). Finally, scholars have increasingly cited waiting for a solution and hope for resettlement as a primary reason for staying in camps (Horst 2006; Jacobsen 2005; Jamal 2003). Often, refugees make decisions based on multiple circumstances rather than one single condition.

In this research, I focus on the latter two reasons as the site of my inquiry: access to resources and opportunity and waiting or hoping for resettlement. As linked to opportunity for social and economic improvement, both of these reasons occupy a

contested position within the broader mission of the UNHCR, which does not include protection for economic migrants. The UNHCR's distinctions between political and economic migrants are false in practice, but nonetheless require refugees to separate their economic condition from their political condition, as I discuss in greater detail below. This dissertation explores the political, economic, and social circumstances of Liberian refugees. To set the stage for inquiry into reasons for staying in a long-term camp, I have organized my discussion of scholarly literature around three broad themes related to the categorizations and broader social, political and economic conditions of refugees: 1) studying refugees; 2) theories of power; and 3) transnationalism and access to resources. Within these themes I pay particular attention to literature that considers the role of power in each of these processes. Following a review of relevant literature, this chapter closes with a refined research approach, detailed research questions, and a chapter overview of the dissertation.

Studying Refugees: Victimization, Agency and Power

The field of refugee studies has produced a vast literature on the extent to which refugees are able to practice agency in their stateless condition. While these pursuits have made invaluable contributions to our understanding of refugee conditions around the globe, specifically how refugees make decisions or attain self-sufficiency, the focus on agency has occasionally come at the expense of understanding the diverse range of power

relations in which refugees are involved. In this section I review the literature on refugees and have organized the literature and have organized my review into two sections: 1) refugee characteristics; and 2) refugees' relations to the refugee aid system.

Who are Refugees?

Early studies of refugees focused on creating models of motivation for movement, initially defined in terms of push and pull factors. Kunz (1973) introduced a kinetic model of refugee migration that classified the motivations and forces acting upon refugees in terms of push, pressure and pull. He identified two categories of movement, anticipatory and acute. Anticipatory migration was practiced by educated and wealthy individuals who could purchase a pre-paid ticket to a specific destination, while acute movement was sudden and more a result of a push motivation (Kunz 1973:131-132). Although Kunz argued that anticipatory migrants were often mistakenly considered to be voluntary migrants, the kinetic model raised questions about the expression and limits of agency and the extent to which refugees decided to migrate.

Scholars have also attempted to develop models for understanding the conditions of exile. Many of these early models were premised upon the idea of loss. "Whenever a refugee's social networks have been severely disrupted, he or she suffers loss of social competence. Their situation is similar to that of a newborn baby" (E. Marx 1990:197). Conceptual models were rooted in theories of social change and were primarily

evolutionary. For example, Stein (1981:325-326) proposed “four stages of adjustment” that took place in exile. His model predicted that after ten years refugees would reach a “certain stability.” Scudder and Colson (1982) also developed a model of the four “stages of relocation,” but did not propose an evolutionary continuum and argued that the stages were not mutually exclusive.

Within this broader paradigm of loss and subsequent re-gaining of humanity and agency, refugees were often situated as the quintessential victims, non-agents. In “Who protects the human rights of refugees?” Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Barbara Harrell-Bond quoted a former UNHCR official: “Once an individual, a human being becomes a refugee, it is as though he has become a member of another race, some subhuman group” (quoted in Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992:7).

The 1990s heralded new approaches to studying refugees that were centered on “historical actors” rather than “mute victims” and how refugees constructed their worlds (Malkki 1996:378). Scholars provided a stock of data on the agentive capacity of refugees. For example, in an ethnographic study, Sharani (1995:195)showed how educated refugees were able to plan migration whereas villagers and nomadic people had more abrupt departures from conflict but could still plan family and community efforts for migration. Similarly in the case of Liberia, educated individuals were able to depart from conflict earlier (Lubkemann 2005) and some families were able to plan and prepare for departures to varying degrees (Yaidoo 2008). Van Hear (2006:127) identified a limit to agency and has argued that refugees must have money to migrate.

Malkki (1995:509) has argued that life at home probably became "strange and frightening" and once in exile, refugees continued to live active lives. For example, Wilson (1994:243) showed how refugees were actively engaged in the process of return and wrote letters to people at home to check on the conditions at home before returning.

The question of agency might seem counter-intuitive within the broader discipline of Forced Migration, the terms of which, implied an expressive lack of agency, but Lubkemann (2006) proposed refugee movement as a process of "emplacement" such that refugees are not forcibly moved from one location to another. Instead, refugees choose to pursue opportunity in another place. Olwig and Sorenson (2002) have further proposed that refugees should be dissolved into the broader category of migrants, arguing that there are few differences between refugees and other types of migrants, such as economic or labor migrants. Yet there are limitations and costs to this conflation of categories. In grouping refugees within the broader "migrant" category, the structural features – such as lack of legal status – of the refugee condition become obscured (Shami 1996).

More recent studies have begun to tease out the links between agency and structure. Rajasingham-Senanayake (2004) wrote about the ambivalent agency of Sri Lankan refugees, who must navigate the terrain of humanitarian aid and development structures involved in the protection and maintenance of this refugee population. While interfacing with the humanitarian aid system, refugees are assumed to lack agency and must act accordingly. However, refugees who benefit from the development industry are expected to be agents on the path to self-sufficiency (Rajasingham-Senanayake

2004:154). This double-bind has become heightened in long-term refugee camps, which are often the site of both humanitarian and development aid systems. Emerging questions and propositions about the role of refugees within these systems still tend to focus on the presence or absence of agency. For example, protracted camps have been situated as breeding grounds for aid dependency (Loescher and Milner 2005:11) while others have argued that refugees develop their own livelihood structures within long-term camps because of reduced humanitarian aid (Jacobsen 2005). In the next section, I explore the relation between refugees and these governing systems.

Refugees and the International Refugee Regime

Within the broader nation-state ordering of the world, stateless refugees are identified as a problem. As "out of place," refugees challenge the categorical order of nations, itself a social and political construct (Malkki 1995a:6; 1995b:508). The international refugee regime – "an organization functioning as a global state" (Hein 1993:47) – has emerged to fill the gap created by the stateless terrain of refugees (Loescher 1994). In some ways, "refugee-ness" has become a form of citizenship such that the refugee regime offers a governing bureaucratic structure and set of limited rights to those who fall under its domain (Hoffman 2004).

A substantial component of the international refugee regime's work is to coordinate the provision of humanitarian aid to refugees. While humanitarian aid thrives

on the principles of protection and neutrality, aid is also a method of depoliticizing refugees as individuals and creating dependency (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992:8). For example, refugees must appear desperate, downtrodden and miserable to receive aid (Stein 1981; Malkki 1996). Following Goffman and Foucault, Malkki (1995a) has argued that refugee camps act as a site of "care and control" or a "technology of power" in which all elements of refugee lives are controlled and managed by the camp system. Elaborating on the complex terrain of relational power, Voutira and Harrell-Bond have outlined the potential relations of power in a refugee camp:

> 1) donors and host governments; 2) donors and intermediaries (UNHCR and NGOs); 3) relationships among the intermediaries (UNHCR and its nongovernmental implementing partners); 4) relationships between the intermediaries (international agencies) and the host government in the camp; 5) relationships between the intermediaries and the recipients in the camp situation; 6) host population and refugees; and 7) inter- and intragroup relationships among the refugees themselves. [Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995:212]

In relations between governments, the UNHCR and donors, refugees can be used as political tools to pursue certain agendas. Within relations directly linked to daily camp life, Voutira and Harrell-Bond exposed the limits to the power of aid agencies and argued that the aid workers who distribute the food into the hands of refugees possess the most power. For example, the neutral vision of humanitarian aid becomes personalized during aid distribution such that an aid worker can choose to increase, decrease or withhold aid. Individuals with "power, connections or money" have greater access to aid (Horst 2006:102; see also Crisp 2003:15). In long-term camps, where humanitarian aid has substantially decreased, what relations and positions are invested with the most power?

My dissertation seeks to chart this terrain. Below I begin to explore the flexibility and power of the aid system as outlined in the literature on refugee asylum.

One the most substantial ways in which refugees receive protection is through asylum or UNHCR recognized refugee status. Refugee camps are a place of limbo where refugees must prove their right to protection and asylum (Knudsen 1995:18). The asylum system is invested in providing protection to those who require it, but requires personal details that demonstrate a need for protection. As a result the system has become one that relies on stories of persecution (Zetter 1991) or "trauma stories" to determine the "truth" about an individual's need for asylum (Kleinman and Kleinman 1997:10). Well-adapted to this system, refugees often engage in "strategic self presentations" that coincide with UNHCR ideas of persecution and protection (Fischer 1995). In some cases, self-presentation has emerged in the form of a collective narrative. For example, Malkki (1995a) presented how a mythico-history of Burundian refugees was constructed in ways that defined and reaffirmed their presence at the camp. She analyzed the collective narrative history of struggle and enduring presence at the camp as part of a broader effort to avoid the naturalization of their refugee status. Somali refugees have also attempted to protect and promote their rights as refugees and have written letters to UNHCR officials about the problematic condition of camp refugees (Horst 2006). Jamal (2003) has also argued that camps maintain visibility of the refugee plight and the need for protection. That refugees have agency and express it in various circumstances is clear. It is now more crucial to understand how refugees engage with the various power relations that frame

camp life and refugee protection. The next section begins to outline my theoretical approach to power in this dissertation, followed by discussion of particular contexts of power, including postcolonialism and transnationalism and access to resources.

Theories of Power

Social theorists have conceptualized power in various ways ranging from discursive to political-economic approaches. Foucault described the co-existence of power and knowledge such that power comes from knowledge and knowledge has the power to control. In his work *Discipline and Punish* Foucault (1977) examined the penal structure as a panopticon through which the behavior of prisoners was controlled through the gaze of the observer and observed. Malkki (1995b:500) has likened this structure to the "control and care" of refugee camps.

Influenced by Marx, Gramsci (1971) also considered the relation between knowledge and power. Gramsci was primarily concerned with two kinds of intellectuals: traditional and organic. Traditional intellectuals were linked to formal education and specific histories of philosophic knowledge. Organic intellectuals were the people in the lower classes, who he believed also possessed knowledge and the capacity for social change through critical interrogation of traditional knowledge. Gramsci conceptualized the exploitive relations between traditional and organic intellectuals as "hegemony" – the processes and ideas through which individuals become invested in and contribute to the

conditions of their own oppression. He argued that traditional intellectuals, through the presentation and investment within a specific history of knowledge, had the power to control the commonsense notions, or ideology that ultimately underwrote their own power.

Also invested in Marxism and ideology, Althusser (1971) proposed that power and domination were wielded and perpetuated through "ideological state apparatuses" or institutions such as the family, school, church that worked to create subjects through an investment in and internalization of ideas and practices. However, individuals were limited in their agency by the ideas and knowledge put forth by these institutions. Critical of Marx, Gramsci (1971) argued that organic intellectuals had the potential to challenge existing orders of knowledge and control. Through "the philosophy of praxis" organic intellectuals could interrogate the particular histories of philosophies of knowledge held by the traditional intellectuals and in doing so, invoke a critical stance to existing knowledge and power structures (Gramsci 1971:330-331).

Using historic data from three case studies (the Kwakiutl, the Aztecs, and National Socialist Germany), Wolf (1999) outlined a conceptual framework for looking at the role of ideas (knowledge) and practice in relational power. For Wolf, ideology was a set of "ideas placed in the service of power" (Wolf 1999:58). In seeking to understand how ideas became ideology, Wolf stressed the importance of the imaginary or cosmological world in creating ideas and knowledge histories. He believed that ideas had to the potential to, though did not necessarily, become an ideology capable of power.

Wolf explored how the interplay of ideas and practice informed four types of power: personal, interpersonal, tactical and structural. Influenced heavily by Karl Marx, Wolf focused primarily on structural power – the larger forces that shape society. Throughout this dissertation I explore the interplay of ideas, practice, ideology, and interpersonal, tactical, and structural forms of power.

Postcolonialism

The importance of history in contemporary analyses of power cannot be stressed enough. Questions about the politics and practice of contemporary migration can only be understood in relation to specific historical contexts. Like any contemporary nation-state, the history of Liberia is quite complex. In 1847 Liberia became the first independent nation in Africa. However, this proclamation hides a complex colonial history. While Liberia may be one of the few nations in Africa without a technical colonial history, in chapter 2 I construct an account of Liberian history that focuses on the dynamics and lasting impact of Liberia's colonial relation with the United States. To provide a framework from which to analyze Liberian history as a colonial relation, I review key ideas in the literature of postcolonialism to illustrate salient features of both colonialism and possibility of postcolonialism in Liberia.

In defining the parameters of study, scholars have asked, when and where is postcolonialism? Generally, postcolonialism refers to the politics of resistance

surrounding the end of a colonial relation or period. Clifford has suggested that "postcolonial does describe real, if incomplete, ruptures with past structures of domination, sites of current struggle and imagined futures" (Clifford 1994: 328). Expansive scholarship has emerged from the example of the Indian state, though scholars have certainly considered the postcolonial dynamics of many other states. In one of the first postcolonial texts, Said (1979) challenged the predominant Western gaze or mode of interpreting the Arab world.

A substantial portion of postcolonial literature draws upon critical theory, psychoanalysis and post-modernism. As a result, many scholars have focused discussions of postcolonialism on questions of subjectivity, identity, relation, and power. For example, Bhaba (1984) introduced the concept of "mimicry" to represent the complex and ambivalent relation of between the two subject positions of colonizer and colonized. Rather than a pure or clear relation between dominant and dominated, the colonizer and colonial subject lived in an ambivalent state of "intimate enemies" (Nandy 1988:1). The relation of power between the two subjects can be considered in terms of a Gramscian hegemonic relation whereby colonial subjects in their connection to the colonizer have become invested in the "natural" state of their own oppression. For example, Mbembe (2001:25) wrote of the "commandment" in a colonial state, whereby "rights" to certain privileges and violence simultaneously enforce the colonial relation.

Within the literature on colonialism and postcolonialism on the African continent, the Liberian state presents a complicated case. McClintock has proposed three kinds of

colonization: colonization ("territorial appropriation . . . exploitation of resources and labor . . . systematic interference in the capacity of the appropriated culture . . . to organize its dispensations of power"), internal colonization (domination of one group over another within a country), and imperial colonization (large-scale territorial domination) (McClintock 1992:88). These distinctions need not be used categorically to define a particular situation, but help to illustrate the complex nature of variety of colonial relations and conditions. Further dispelling a singular experience of colonization, Nandy has challenged attempts to "try to define colonialism as a shared culture which may not always begin with the establishment of alien rule in a society and end with the departure of the alien rulers from the colony" (Nandy 1988:2). The boundary between colonial and post-colonial are also blurry, as McClintock has noted: "Ireland may at a pinch be 'post-colonial', but for the inhabitants of British-occupied Northern Ireland, not to mention the Palestinian inhabitants of the Israeli Occupied Territories and the West Bank, there may be nothing 'post' about colonialism as all" (1992:87).

In the context of the African continent, Mbembe presented the postcolony as an "age" – a "time of entanglement" of the "relationships among the privatization of violence, the appropriation of means of livelihood, and the imagination of the self" (2001:66). Mbembe posed questions about power and subject positions in the postcolony age and has suggested that the relation between rulers and the ruled are so closely embedded that they can shift immediately from support to opposition, producing disempowerment on both ends (Mbembe 2001:111). Spivak (1988) proposed a way in

which the colonized re-appropriate their position and provoke change through the use of "strategic essentialism" – the means by which actors strategically deploy and use an essentialized identity to gain access to power and resources.

Critics of postcolonial theory have argued that focusing on the internal politics of colonialism has come at the expense of considering the impact of broader political and economic processes on the postcolonial condition (see Dirlik 1994). However, Mbembe (2001:67) accompanied his discursive analysis with a discussion of the "violence of economics." Historically, Mbembe identified the violence of economics within the shift in economic processes from market trade in slaves to market trade in "so-called legitimate goods" that resulted in the entry of colonial powers (Mbembe 2001:69). Mbembe cautioned that in the contemporary age of the postcolony, the "violence of economics" does not merely replicate history in a process of re-colonization. Instead structural adjustment programs have impacted processes of state formation on the African continent such that decision-making power has become concentrated outside of the state in the hands of international lending institutions (Mbembe 2001:67-70). By exposing the power and impact of structural adjustment policies, Mbembe dispelled the presumption of contemporary African states as chaotic. Following Mbembe, this dissertation situates contemporary questions of migration within broader political and economic structures to illuminate the ways in which colonial histories and postcolonial conditions influence, but do not dictate the contemporary conditions of Liberian refugees.

Transnationalism and Access to Resources

Transnationalism is the practice of living or being between nations (Glick Schiller et al. 1999). Ethnographies such as Levitt's (2001) *Transnational Villagers* or Glick-Schiller's and Fouron's (2001) *Georges Woke Up Crying* have introduced the social practices involved in living between two nations, showing the complex social, economic and cultural negotiations that go on between places. Scholars have used a variety of approaches to make sense of or conceptualize these complex processes. Economic approaches to transnationalism have presented the idea of "mobile livelihoods" to refer to the practice of transnationalism as moving between livelihoods rather than nation-states (Olwig and Sorenson 2002:2-5; see also Perez 2005). However, the application of transnationalism as "mobile livelihoods" to refugee populations obscures the legal processes that contribute to or inhibit transnational mobility. For example, economic poverty does not constitute persecution from the perspective of the UNHCR, thus when refugees apply for asylum they cannot cite economic reasons for migration.

Discursive theoretical approaches situate transnationalism less in terms of a concrete practice but as an idea, such that home is nowhere and everywhere (see Appadurai 1996). However, discursive approaches to transnationalism risk obscuring the "contexts of power within which different travelers move" (Eastmond 2006: 231). The study of "transnationalism from below" challenges the libratory or celebratory character (home can be anywhere!) of discursive approaches and asks "how [transnationationalism] affects power relations, cultural constructions, economic interactions, and, more

generally social organization at the level of the locality" (Smith 1998:5-6). In her case study of Chilean and Bosniak refugees, Eastmond (2006:218) approached transnationalism as a strategy used to keep options open at both ends of the migratory destination spectrum – home and elsewhere. In this model, transnational individuals optimized life chances and social reputations as they moved between refugee, returnee and citizen statuses (Eastmond 2006:231). However, it is crucial to explore the limits of transnationalism for refugees, particularly when transnationalism is proposed as a potential solution to the refugee "problem."

Within the broader body of literature on transnationalism and migration, a few scholars have attempted to theorize transit migration. First appearing as a concept in 1993 by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, transit migration was defined as the intention to go to another country (Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008:3). In 2004, the International Organization of Migration defined transit migrants as refugees awaiting resettlement. Duvell (2006) outlined a set of intention-based criteria for transit migrants that included the actual migration to a final destination through an intermediary (transit) destination. Duvell's criterion are technical and refer to migratory intentions that must have existed "prior to departure from the country of origin" such that a person must be "taking concrete steps to realize this aspiration, e.g. making savings, or otherwise preparing for the journey" (Duvell 2006:19).

Responding to Duvell, Papadopoulou-Kourkoula (2008) wrote about transit migrants in the Mediterranean and conceptualized transit migration as a process informed

by and contingent upon macro-level policies, social networks and micro-level forces. As such, migration strategies and intentions are not fixed but interact with experiences. "Transit migration is not a migrant category and not a new policy area – it is a process and a contingency" (Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008:5). In Papadopoulou-Kourkoula's (2008:2, 10) model, transit migrants may or may not actually reach the desired final destination, but exist in a set of conditions that may be subpar, waiting for an opportunity to travel. Despite his focus on intention, Duvell nonetheless provided ample insight on the social processes the accompany transit migration by highlighting the inherent class bias and "criminalization" of transit migration.

> Those who have sufficient financial resources may simply book a flight to their final destination, and because they must be able to prove that they are bona fide tourists or businessmen - even though their purpose may be economic and their intention may be (temporary and irregular) immigration - they need to be able to prove that they have savings, a job, house etc. to convince the immigration officials of their honest intentions. [Duvell 2006:13, author's clarification]

In contrast, those who have limited resources to travel may have to hitch rides and work along the way to pay for their travel, thereby existing in a state of transit migration (Duvell 2006:13). Duvell's work raises questions about social inequality and the power relations that frame migratory opportunities and the social and economic processes involved in waiting.

Van Hear (1998) has outlined "migration orders" as a way to consider the structural forces and micro processes that shape migration in terms of class. Migration orders refer to the migration patterns and creation of diasporas over time for a particular

national or ethnic group. Van Hear (2006) focused on migration orders as class-based access to migration with a clear hierarchy of destinations. Like Duvell, Van Hear argued that access to a particular destination was limited by access to economic resources. While Van Hear outlined a detailed conceptual scheme, more research is needed that links ethnographic data to theoretical concepts of capital, class and migration. In particular, how does a preferred "final" destination come to exist? And how do individuals work towards this destination? What economic, social or cultural processes and power impede or enable migration and possible hierarchies of destination?

Diaspora

Historically the concept of the Diaspora is rooted in the Jewish community (Tololiyan 1996; Safran 2004), but as used today, the diaspora concept embodies a range of migrant populations. For some, diaspora groups must be created from involuntary migrants (Cohen 1997; Scheffer 2003), while others recognize diaspora groups emerging from any type of migrant population (Safran 2004:14). Many definitions of diaspora foreground the issue of political agency and allegiance to or involvement in a homeland. Shared history – such as oppression or persecution – and a social position as away from "home" instigates the creation of political subjects. In some instances scholars require concrete political agency, such as affiliation or involvement in political associations, while others situate the creation of diaspora allegiance to the homeland as a mental

process (e.g. Clifford 1994), often occurring through the construction of imagined memories (Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001). Some definitions have instituted geographical parameters whereby a diaspora cannot exist in proximate border lands, but must be further afield (Scheffer 2003). In contrast, Sanders (2000) has illustrated how a shift in geo-politics can lead to being displaced while in place. For example, ethnic Russians living in the former Soviet republics following the fall of the Soveit Union suddenly found themselves to be displaced. Although they never moved, the shift in defining state borders lead to the experience of discrimination and the formation of a diaspora.

By following the experiences of a single family spread across the world, Olwig (2004) demonstrated how common representations of diaspora groups often focus on elite members who are actively engaged in homeland politics. However, individuals engage in politics to varying degrees, with some not participating at all. Olwig's work raised an important point about the inherent bias to focus on political agents in diaspora studies. For political and non-political agents alike, Lubkemann (2009) has suggested that the diaspora is a process that "expands the topography of political and socio-economic life." By considering diaspora lives and processes other than political engagement we can better understand the ways in which macro-political processes impact individual agency and lives.

For example, Holsey (2004) has exposed the dissonance between the mental imaginings of a diaspora homeland and larger global socio-economic structures. African-

Americans in search of their roots in Ghana received a cold reception in Ghana because Ghanaians resented the position that African-Americans occupy in the global economy (Holsey 2004:179). Connected to the history of slave trade, African-Americans did not understand the contemporary migration struggles of Ghanaians who wished to migrant to the United States for socio-economic purposes. Friedman (2005:161) has also exposed the power dynamics of diaspora formation such that global elites tend to benefit from the multiculturalism of transnationalism, while lower class people do not have the opportunity to be transnational.

Many migration studies have been rooted in a dual-nation notion of transnationalism (for example, moving and living between the United States and Liberia) and diasporization. However, Van Hear's distinction between near and far diasporas – defined in relation to proximity to the homeland – allows for consideration of multiple and distinct diasporas that extend beyond a dual-nation model. In his discussion of near and far diasporas, Van Hear located power, particularly economic power, within the far diaspora. For example, Sri Lankans living in the near diaspora (India) could not afford to remit to the homeland (Van Hear 2006:137).[5] As a result, many studies do not often consider the potential and impact of near diaspora groups. To fully understand processes of transnationalism and diaspora, particularly as linked to structures of power, conceptual

[5] Van Hear (2006:147) proposed the same lack of financial power for the near diaspora of Somaliland. In both cases, Van Hear makes the claim, but does not provide systematic data to substantiate the conclusions.

models need to be rooted in the more expansive framework of "migration orders" with multiple destinations and diasporas.

Power and Resources: Social Networks and Remittances

As suggested in the previous section, strong connections exist between resources and migration. In this section I further elaborate on these relationships. Social theorists have conceptualized resources in terms of various types of capital and power. Max Weber identified three types of power: economic, social or status honor, and political party. Within these three domains, Weber prioritized economic power: "The economic order is for us merely the way in which economic goods and services are distributed and used. The social order is of course conditioned by the economic order to a high degree, and in its turn reacts upon it" (Weber 1946:181).

Influenced by Weber's model, Bourdieu (1977) theorized relations between capital – economic, social, cultural, symbolic – in terms of social reproduction to articulate the ways in which different forms of capital influence or translate into one another. Bourdieu proposed *habitus* – "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions"* – as the vehicle for social reproduction (Bourdieu 1977:83). Much like Gramsci's (1971) notions of "common sense" and hegemony, habitus structures the daily lives of individuals such that through these

dispositions, social reproduction subconsciously occurs. However, Gramsci was less convinced of a mechanic, automatic reproduction of common sense, as I explore in greater detail in chapter 6.

Scholars have applied Bourdieu's ideas about capital in a variety of fields and migration studies are no exception. Van Hear (1998) introduced "migrant capital" as a unifying element of all migrant populations such that migrants possess the knowledge and skills that emerge from the experience of migration. Van Hear (2006:125) demonstrated how existing capital – social networks, financial resources – have significant impact on an individual's opportunity to migrate such that access to economic resources influences the route, means and destination. I address both forms of capital, social and economic, in greater detail below.

Social Networks

Theories about the function and impact of social networks fall into two broad categories: "functional" and the "dark side" (Field 2008:36). Functional approaches are based upon the premise that social networks are rooted in the expectation and practice of reciprocity and are inherently helpful to people. Proponents of this approach have argued for the maintenance or creation of social networks for the good of society. For example, Putnam (2000) has argued that the decline in social groups in America leads to all sorts of societal problems, including ethnic tension. According to Putnam, "the core idea of social

capital theory is that social networks have value…social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups" (Putnam 2000:18-19). In the field of migration, social networks have been perceived as enabling migration or providing ways of coping with migration. For example, Marx's work on the "social worlds of refugees" applied a functional analysis to social networks. The social worlds of refugees were "disrupted," but in the process of seeking and being in exile refugees would once again build social network in order to cope with and manage their new lives (E. Marx 1980:201). While Marx identified social worlds as existing on multiple levels, he focused on the immediate social worlds of refugees as he believed they had the most impact. Marx argued that over the long-term the social worlds of refugees would follow a continuum ultimately leading to the development of social organizations when refugees would once again be full-fledged members of society (E. Marx 1980:201).

The "negative" (Portes 1998) or "dark side" (Field 2008) of social capital reveals many limitations in functional approaches to social networks. Portes (1998) has argued the social capital also has four potential negative impacts. First, social networks can be insular to the point of excluding outsiders from accessing the network and its resources (Portes 1998:15). Second, excess requests from individuals within a social network can restrict ability for personal gain. Here Portes used Geertz's work in Bali to show how entrepreneurs were limited in their capacity to grow due to excessive demands from their kinsmen for support (Portes 1998:16). Third, social networks require a certain degree of social conformity that functions as a mechanism of social control and restricts individual

freedom (Portes 1998:16-17). Fourth, social networks often exist in solidarity based upon a common experience. In some instances, Portes (1998:17) argued, this common experience could result in "downward leveling norms" whereby an individual cannot be within the group while simultaneously aspiring to rise out of the situation through which they are united. Each of these potential "negative" outcomes is rooted in social control. As I outlined earlier in this chapter, the category of "refugee" often transforms into group solidarity, as Malkki (1995a) illustrated among Burundian refugees in Tanzania. To what extent does this solidarity empower or limit refugees?

In his exploration of the role and transformation of social networks in wartime Afghanistan, Harpviken (2009) considered the potential "dark side" of social capital as he defined the extent of the voluntary nature of wartime migration. "People who are poorly equipped in terms of networks have few options and in that networks are transformed or breakdown in the face of war may prove unreliable or may be used for repressive or bellicose purposes" (Harpviken 2009:167). Harpviken (2009:177) concluded that social networks during conflict have varying impacts under different circumstances, such that the changing network relations can be broken or broken and replaced depending on the hierarchical nature of the relationships. While Harpviken presented an in-depth study and analysis of the social networks, his overall question is about degrees of agency, rather than the negotiation of power. Research on power and the "dark side" of social capital is limited and requires more ethnographic study. In particular, within the transnational

social networks of refugees, how do individuals negotiate differences in power? How do these differences in power impact the migratory opportunities and decisions of refugees?

Remittances

The topic of financial remittances has garnered attention in the academic, development and corporate worlds. While the United Nations Development Program collects national level remittance data, micro-level data on remittance practices remains limited and uncertain due to limitations on data collection. For example, individuals often keep financial matters private or do not disclose all income sources (Jacobsen 2005:61). Furthermore, individuals in need of assistance may not want to disclose their financial circumstances for fear that they may not receive aid (Van Hear 2006:135). Finally, it is an extremely time intensive effort to understand the details and impact of transnational financial exchanges. This section reviews the small, but growing, body of literature that addresses the impact of remittances.

Similar to debates surrounding the impact of social capital, theories about remittances can be categorized in two broad categories, those who conceptualize remittances as beneficial and those who consider the "dark side" or potential negative impact of remittance practices. In the context of refugee studies, remittances are often framed as a social safety net (Jacobsen 2005:63; Horst 2006:147) or a sign of status and security (Shandy 2006:33) for the recipient. For example, Horst's ethnography on social

networks, camp survival, and migration proposed remittances as "giving refugees a level of power and choice when determining their livelihoods" (Horst 2006:130). Yet individual choice in the use of remittances has been tempered by moral arguments about the use of this money. Van Hear (2006) has countered moralistic claims about the use of remittances through application of Bourdieu's concept of the conversion of social capital. Van Hear (2006:137) has proposed that the use of remittances for ("non-productive") fancy clothes and expensive household goods can help refugees gain social status that in turn can improve their economic opportunities and standing. Moral claims about the use of remittances are derived in part from the inequality between members of the exchange. For example, those who send money often experience a degree of social pressure or obligation to remit. Scholars labeling this exchange as one of "forced transnationalism" (Al-Ali et al. 2001) or "pressured transnationalism" (Lindley 2007b:16) misidentify the underlying social dynamics of the exchange. Instead, Horst (2008) has demonstrated how remittance exchanges between Somalis in the far diaspora and refugees in East Africa are relations rooted in "responsibility" rather than obligation. Participants on both ends of the exchange have invested meaning into the relation and exchange.

Ethnographic research has also shown that remittance exchanges are not uni-directional. In some cases, people who receive money provide services for those who send it (Shandy 2006:34). The capacity of a recipient to reciprocate in the remittance exchange raises an on-going debate among scholars: do remittances spread wealth out or create inequality within recipient locales? In her study of Somali refugees in Kenya,

Horst (2006) maintained that remittances spread out among individuals at the refugee camp. However, she does not provide substantial ethnographic data beyond reference to an unknown number of individuals at the camp who said that remittances were shared. On the other side of the debate, Jacobsen (2005:29) maintained that in protracted refugee camps, the very few refugees who receive remittances are by far wealthier than non-remittance receiving refugees at the camp. Again, ethnographic evidence to support this argument is thin as Jacobsen does not reference data to support specific cases. Van Hear (2002:248) has also suggested that remittances create inequality, but empirical evidence remains sparse. The question of the socio-economic impact of remittances on recipient locales, such as refugee camps has become increasingly important as debates and questions about remittances have become framed in terms of development practice.

Lending institutions such as the World Bank have become interested in the potential of individual remittances to act as agents of development. Scholars have weighed in on the prospects, arguing that: individuals who receive remittances are released from the aid relationship (Lindley 2007b) and the one-to-one flow of remittances is a more efficient form of aid than development aid (Van Hear 2002:248). Scholars have also raised important structural questions about remittance practices. For example, will the vast economic disparities between North and South foster long-term remittance practices (Lindley 2007b:18)? Similarly, remittances do not often lead to sustainable livelihoods, as evidenced in the ethnographic work of Horst (2008:127) who showed how refugees had to use “development” remittance money (money intended for small business

investment) to pay monthly bills. More speculatively, remittances have also been called into question for encouraging the desire for South to North travel (Horst 2006:158; Lindley 2007a:11). As I seek to understand the reasons for staying in a long-term refugee camp, the last question has particular importance – what impact do remittances have on migratory options and decisions? In my analysis I approach remittances first in terms of impact on livelihoods and social processes at the camp and secondly in relation to broader questions about migratory options.

Social Mobility: Hope and the American-Dream

Scholars have suggested the prospect for upward social mobility as a reason for staying in long term refugee camps. In particular, the opportunity for social mobility has become linked to western countries of resettlement. In this section I introduce ideas about the process of social mobility and then link these processes to travel dreams of refugees.

Social mobility and change occurs on different levels ranging from the individual to the collective. Theorizing social revolution, K. Marx (1976:93) believed that social change occurred through a social collective such that laborers could become a dissenting, revolutionary mass - "a mass of instruments of production." For M. Weber, the possibility for social mobility in part emerged from the specific ethos of efficiency of the Protestant ethic and Calvinist ideas regarding the accumulation of wealth. "The middle classes, above all the strata ascending with and out of the middle classes, were the bearers

of that specific religious orientation which one must, indeed, beware viewing among them as only opportunistically determined" (M. Weber 1946:308-309). Weber's analysis considered how the larger ideas of the time – Protestantism and Calvinism – shaped individual circumstances and aspirations.

Bourdieu suggested that cultural capital and the attainment of education enable upward social mobility. However, Bourdieu (1977) acknowledged that family social position and the acquired dispositions imposed serious constraints to social mobility and economic capital remained as the primary driving force of social position.

Contemporary ideas about social mobility have their roots in Weber's idea of the Protestant Ethic and take shape in the prospect of the American dream. The American dream is based on individual merit as a means for getting ahead. Edgell (1993) used the term "multiclass classlessness" to refer to the idea that all people have the opportunity for upward social mobility. However, analysis of the myth of the American dream has revealed numerous structural factors – race, class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality – that inhibit access to the American dream (L. Weber 2010).

As gaps in wealth between North and South countries continue to grow, the prospect of the American dream has expanded outside of the domestic sphere. While the idea of traveling to another place in search of opportunity is not new, the contemporary geo-politics that frame the particular conditions from which current travel dreams emerge must be considered. Within the context of the international refugee regime, travel dreams have emerged in relation to asylum through resettlement to a third country. For example,

Horst (2006) has explained the complex Somali concept of "buufis" as meaning: 1) resettlement; 2) the longing to travel overseas; and 3) the condition of madness that occurs when overseas travel is not realized. Horst (2006:169-171) argued that buufis existed because of the poor conditions in the camp, the need for peace and security, and the imagining of a better life elsewhere. Buufis became a way of providing hope in a hopeless situation. Influenced by Appadurai's concept of "mediascapes," Horst argued that "sweet stories" heard from abroad also helped to build a collective imagination of travel to a Western country.

Rousseau et al. (1998) have expanded on the duality of buufis as both a coping mechanism and condition of madness. By looking at the historical importance of travel, Rousseau et al. demonstrated how social structures and obligations interact with and construct the meaning of travel dreams (Rousseau et al. 1998:390-391). For young Somali men in refugee camps, the prospect of travel enabled young men to fulfill their social obligations to support family members and a wife. If the men were unable to travel, the feasibility of financially supporting their family remained dim and they risked exclusion from their kin groups.

> It is here [the camp] that those who are successful rub shoulders with those who fail. The boundary between living and "being bound for glory," on the one hand, and allowing defeat to gnaw away until possibly sliding into madness, on the other, becomes clear. Going home is associated with defeat, whereas leaving and facing the unknown are linked with success. [Rousseau et al. 1998:394]

The young Somali men had a lot at stake in the prospect of resettlement travel and Rousseau et al. have demonstrated the importance of investigating the social meaning and

impact of travel dreams. Without understanding social meaning, we risk "diagnos[ing] the problem to be in the head of the refugees instead of in the structural position in which some refugees find themselves" (Horst 2006:106).

Despite such cautioning, contemporary ethnographic accounts of long-term refugee camps have described a situation of "waiting" and "hoping" for resettlement (Horst 2006; Jacobsen 2005). Although Horst (2006) discussed the idea of hope throughout *Transnational Nomads,* she did not provide a theoretical or conceptual framework from which hope can be understood as influenced or informed by processes outside "the head of the refugees" who were waiting and hoping. What are the structural elements that inform hope? Without asking and answering such questions about the "hope" for resettlement, analysis of the reasons for staying in refugee camps runs the risk of situating hope as a passive characteristic such that refugees, in their hope, are responsible for the structural limitations of refugee camp life.

Research Focus and Chapter Overview

In exploring the reasons why refugees stay in long-term camps, this dissertation focuses on the economic and social processes of refugee camp lives and transnational relations. In my analysis I expand upon Voutira and Harrell-Bond's (1995) sets of relational power in refugee camps to include the transnational relations between refugees, the far diaspora, and Liberia. Rather than assume an inherently beneficial character of all

social relations and networks, I consider the potential "dark side" of social capital to influence the power relations between and within the transnational social worlds of refugees.

My research aims to address: 1) how power is created and utilized within the near diaspora setting of a long-term refugee camp. Specifically, what power relations govern lives within the camp? How is power construed between refugees in the near diaspora and the far diaspora? Between refugees and the homeland? 2) What is the impact of the postcolonial state of Liberia on contemporary transnational relations? How do these relations frame migratory options and decisions? 3) What are the economic and social dynamics surrounding the decisions to live in a refugee camp? How do these structural conditions interface with concepts and ideas rooted in individuals, such as hope? These questions culminate in a broader understanding of why Liberian refugees are staying at Buduburam. In the following pages I provide a brief outline of each chapter.

Chapter 2 presents a historical account and analysis of the enduring relation, riddled with ambiguity, between the United States and Liberia and, in turn questions how this relationship has influenced the organization of power and inequality within Liberia. This complex history provides the foundation from which I seek to understand why Liberian refugees have stayed in exile in Ghana for more than twenty years. This chapter introduces the concept of the shadow colony as an analytic device to interrogate historical and contemporary relations of power, such that the shadow colony is a vehicle through which certain ideas become ideologies and put into the practice of power.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology, including a description of the individual methods, their purpose, implementation and limitations. This chapter frames the research methods within the broader problem of anthropological positionality. In particular, it considers my position as a researcher in relation to the larger humanitarian industry and how this impacted data collection and analysis. Finally, I link my role as an American researcher to the larger framework of the shadow colony.

Chapter 4 introduces the primary research site, the Buduburam Liberian refugee camp in Ghana, and begins with a brief history of the camp from which I then examine the contemporary practices and politics of the refugee bureaucracy at Buduburam. This chapter also considers how livelihood strategies connect to social structures and hierarchies within and outside of the camp. Ethnographic accounts are complemented with an analysis of survey data.

Chapter 5 analyzes the interpersonal power dynamics of transnational social relations, including those between refugees in the camp, refugees resettled in a third country and Liberians living in the homeland. This chapter presents an analytic (not empirical) concept of the Liberian-American dream – rooted in the interplay between ideas and practice – as one way of understanding the meaning invested in various migratory options, strategies and decisions. This chapter asks: what kinds of power relations govern the social worlds of refugees? How do these power relations impact refugees' migratory opportunities and decisions surrounding the UNHCR solutions? What meaning have individuals invested in particular migratory options? What larger

social structures and practices is this meaning linked to? To answer these questions, analysis focuses on the concept of the "grace of God" and whiteness.

Chapter 6 looks at the relationship between the Liberian-American dream and structural power to understand the potential limits to the pursuit of the Liberian-American dream. The discussion is framed and analyzed in terms of the power relations within and between refugees, the larger aid system and nation-states. In particular, I consider how ideas and ideology become locked in a struggle for power. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section outlines the different ideas or commonsense notions held by refugees and the refugee aid system. The presentation and analysis focuses explicitly on ideas of the future and migratory "solutions" as I outline the tensions and power dynamics between the various entities. The second section analyzes two events or instances of ideological struggle – a women's demonstration and a UNHCR data collection exercise. Analysis draws upon Wolf's distinctions between tactical or organizational power and structural power to illuminate how certain ideas fail to or become an ideology or hegemonic force.

Chapter 7 summarizes the key points of this research by considering the future of Liberia. This concluding chapter also discusses the implications and potential applications of this case study for Liberians and other protracted refugee situations. Finally, I make suggestions for future research and alternatives to the solutions-based framework of refugee aid.

CHAPTER 2

LIBERIA AND THE UNITED STATES: TRACING AN AMBIGUOUS COLONIAL HISTORY

A hand-scrawled sign read, "America, what more do you need to see?" Piled on sheets of cardboard, eleven bodies were lined up outside the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia. As the 2003 fighting encroached upon the Liberian capital, Monrovia – claiming more and more lives – Liberians had become uncharacteristically angry at the United States and President Bush's non-response to the on-going civil war. As a Vanity Fair journalist explained:

> You meet many, many people who, seeing that you're a westerner, come up to you and just beseech you to somehow communicate with the American government, to please, please send troops, send peacekeepers and stop the suffering of Liberia. But increasingly, you are... I'm experiencing real aggression, people that are now angry at America, angry for not intervening, for ignoring the suffering of these people, and angry for allegedly supporting the Lurd rebels. [Junger 2003]

The expectation that the United States could and should intervene to stop the violence and the increasing anger at the lack of protection descends from a long, intimate and contested history between the two countries.

Politicians, social notables and scholars have used various terms to describe the relations between the U.S. and Liberia, including: "'maternal relations,'… 'object of peculiar interest,' 'an imperative duty,' 'the nation's ward,' 'at no time a colony of this

government,' 'our national duty,' 'a moral obligation,' 'peculiar relations'" (Azikiwe 1934:18).The contradictions inherent in these descriptions illustrate the ambiguity of the relation, ranging from one of protection to exploitation. In writing about the history and colonization of Liberia, U.S. history must also be considered. The version of Liberian history in this chapter purposively selects historical accounts and examples that speak to the construction and contestation of power between these two nations. In this dissertation I use and distinguish between "America" and the "United States" to connote ideas of place and power. My use of "America" refers to an idea of the United States envisioned by many refugees. In this chapter I trace the history of this idea and in the following chapters I explore the contemporary terrain of this idea. When I use the "United States" I am referring to the geo-political nation-state of the United States of America.

My purpose is to create a historical account and analysis of the enduring and ambiguous relation between the United States and Liberia and, in turn question how this relationship has influenced the organization of power and inequality within Liberia. This complex history provides the foundation to understand why Liberian refugees have stayed in exile in Ghana for more than twenty years.

The chapter is organized into six sections that follow a general chronological trajectory of Liberian history. The first section presents a theoretical framework for the investigation of how ideas and ideology became an instrument of power. The second section focuses on pre-Liberian social groups and structures and presents the prominent ideas and institutions that guided these diverse societies. In particular the section provides

a brief historical account of slave trade and focus on the ideas of paternalism and republicanism that accompanied plantation life in the United States. This section also explores burgeoning ideas of black freedom and nationhood, particularly as they conflict with the ideas of the American Colonization Society (ACS). Finally, I explore how the ACS attempted to create ideologies of salvation and humanitarianism to remove blacks from the United States.

The third section discusses the actual pursuit of colonization, focusing on the ideas and ideological struggle between the US government and the ACS. I return to ideas of freedom to examine the extent to which various actors in Liberia (white colonizers, black colonizers and Africans) were able to maintain or wield power during the early settlement of Liberia.

The fourth section focuses on the politics of territorial expansion and the creation of nationhood to interrogate how certain ideas of social organization gained power. I analyze the role and impact of the US government and U.S. corporate involvement in the struggle for power between the U.S. and the fledging Liberian government.

The fifth section explores how an ideology of national unification shaped Liberia and consolidated power within the hands of one group, which eventually erupted in war. I explore the limits of the ideologies of "country liberation" and Christian salvation during the Liberian civil wars. The final section looks at the contrasting ideas of diaspora and non-diaspora groups within the context of contemporary Liberia, paying particular attention to the connections between ideology and power.

Ideas, Ideology, Power and History

My approach to power draws from the basic premise that ideas and practices dialectically interact and influence the construction of power. Influenced by Eric Wolf, I specifically focus on "the questions of when and how ideas are thus concentrated into ideologies, and how ideologies become programs for the deployment of power…" (Wolf 1999:4). To this end, important questions are: What ideas have underwritten ideology? What ideologies and practices have supported power? Who is served by power? When and how do ideologies and power fail or dismantle?

The concept of ideology, originally appearing in Marx and Engels', *The German Ideology* (1970) as the "science of ideas" has since been interpreted, deconstructed and reconstructed; put most simply, ideology is a set of "ideas placed in the service of power" (Wolf 1999:58). For example, dominance is asserted in the name of something, such as Christianity or freedom. However, as Wolf has argued, "Equating all ideation with ideology masks the ways in which ideas come to be linked to power. . . . They [ideas and ideology] demand a separate kind of inquiry" (Wolf 1999:4).

Ideology works through the unconscious, much in the way of common sense, such that individuals are not aware that they are contributing to their own domination. While Wolf contended that power depended on "'production' (the active interchange of humans with nature) and on 'society' (the normatively governed interactions among humans)," he also stressed the importance of the imaginary in the creation ideology, such that "Aspects

of cosmology are further extended and elaborated into ideologies that explain and justify the aspirations of particular claimants to power over society" (1999:281, 290).

In exploring the shape of power in history, this dissertation draws upon the role of ideology. In Marxist interpretations, ideology – Gramsci's common sense – often belongs to the bourgeoisie classes and acts as a tool for suppression of the working classes, who unaware of their own contributions to their oppression, exist in "false consciousness." Criticizing the overly functional aspects of bourgeoisie ideology and social reproduction, Hall challenged Marxist notions of "false consciousness" and "distortion," asking "why some people … cannot recognize that it is distorted, while we, with our superior wisdom, or armed with properly formed concepts, can.…The terms [distortions, false consciousness] are, clearly unhelpful as they stand. They make both the masses and the capitalists look like judgemental dopes" (1985:33). Hall offered a re-reading of Marxist "false consciousness" whereby consciousness considers only a moment, rather than the

> differentiated whole or "ensemble" of which it is a part….thereby produc[ing] an explanation which is only *partially* adequate – and in that sense, "false."…The other "lost" moments of the circuit are, however, unconscious, not in the Freudian sense, because they have been repressed from consciousness, but in the sense of being invisible, given the concepts and categories we are using. [Hall 1985:37]

Gramsci argued that all people are intellectuals, but that traditional intellectuals most often created ideologies and gained power. For Gramsci organic intellectuals had access to "party" or political power, helping to push their ideological agendas forward. However, Gramsci (1971:330-331) stressed the importance and potential of traditional

intellectuals in his "philosophy of praxis" where he suggested that the task is to uncover and interrogate the ideas that shape common sense; this would be the terrain of ideological struggle.

Drawing upon Gramsci, Hall argued that "historical connections define the ways in which the ideological terrain of a particular society has been mapped out. They are the . . . 'stratified deposits in popular history'. . . , which no longer have an inventory, but which establish and define the fields along which ideological struggle is likely to move" (Hall 1986:42). In this chapter I use Hall's interpretation of "false consciousness" as a backdrop for a historical inventory and consideration of the ideas that have been used to interpret the historical and contemporary conditions of power in Liberia.

During my fieldwork, I was provoked to consider one of the organizing ideas behind power in Liberia when I interviewed a Liberian humanitarian aid worker in her nicely air-conditioned office in a quiet suburb of Accra, Ghana. After discussing the details of her professional work, we shifted into a conversation about Liberian history and identity. I tried to suppress a look of surprise when she explained to me that she is from Georgia. Naively, I asked some bumbling follow-up questions to learn that she (and her child) lived in Georgia, U.S., but she also works and lives in Ghana as well as travels back and forth to Liberia. Shortly after clarifying these points, the stakes of our conversation were raised yet again as she described herself as Americo-Liberian, explaining that her ancestors were sold by Africans to American slave traders. "So who was colonized?" she asked.

Data in this dissertation suggest that ideological struggle occurs at the site of the shadow colony. Feldman has suggested that "a historical theory of the shadow . . . would delineate the intersection of social structure as historical unconscious and the visible dynamics of domination" (Feldman 1999:6). In Liberia the histories of colonization and the politics of power that are connected to them recede and emerge like a shadow in contemporary society. The shadow colony thus refers to the power relations and ideological struggles attached to the histories and contemporary experiences of colonization in Liberia. As discussed in chapter 1, McClintock (1992) proposed three types of colonization: colonization, internal colonization, and imperial colonization, each of which has shaped the colonial experience of Liberia. In the first instance, white colonizers from the ACS launched a mission with African American settlers and established a colony in Monrovia that eventually expanded to become the Liberian nation. The efforts toward the expansion of the Commonwealth of Monrovia were framed and limited by the larger imperial colonial pursuits of the United States, France and Great Britain. Furthermore, in the process of expansion, the colonial leadership shifted from white colonists to the black settlers. Over time, the leadership of the colony and nation was handed down from the original black settlers to their descendants, who ruled in a manner of internal colonization – which "occurs where the dominant part of a country treats a group or region as it might a foreign colony" (McClintock 1992:88).

While these three types and processes of colonization exist in contemporary Liberian society, Liberian history is often constructed through the ideology of an

independent nation, with the United States situated as a benevolent caretaker and motherland of Liberia. Thus, the concept of the shadow colony not only references the power dynamics resulting from an ambiguous colonial history and present, it also refers to the on-going fluctuation and struggle of ideas surrounding these power dynamics. Left unexamined, these ideational aspects of the shadow colony have the potential to obscure the actual dynamics of power embedded in the national history and the lives of the people who live there. As K. Marx argued: "Man makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth; he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds close at hand. The tradition of all past generations weighs like an alp upon the brain of the living" (K. Marx 1913:9). By looking within the shadows of colonization, the relations and dynamics of power can be understood. Using Wolf's types of relational power, this dissertation examines how power and the "dynamics of domination" get tangled up between interpersonal, tactical and structural power. The goal is to understand how the migratory circumstances of the Liberian refugees in Ghana are wedded to historic and contemporary elements of power in the shadow colony.

Historian and scholar of Liberia, Stephen Ellis (2007) identified two situations of power deployment in Liberia. The first, alluded to in the depositing of bodies in front of the U.S. embassy, involves relations between the Liberian and U.S. nation states. The second involves "the elite which governs the Liberian state and its subjects of citizens" (Ellis 2007:184). While Ellis accounted for the primary sites of power contestation, analysis here includes the following key actors: U.S. and Liberian governments,

colonization agents, black nationalists, enslaved people in the U.S., the settler elite (Americo-Liberians and Congos), Africans (those who lived in pre-Liberia) and Liberians in the diaspora. While I follow contemporary language use in Liberia and combine Americo-Liberians and Congos within the category of "settler elite" in this chapter, historically these were two distinct groups. The Americo-Liberians were people who came from the United States to West Africa and the Congos were recaptured slaves sent "back" to the West coast of Africa. Over time these two identity terms converged and were often used interchangeably to refer to a person with diasporic origins, though this too was fluid. Throughout my analysis I work back and forth between convergent and separate identity categories to illustrate the formation of specific ideologies and power. On the following page, Figure 1 illustrates a timeline of key events in the relationship between the Liberia and the United States.

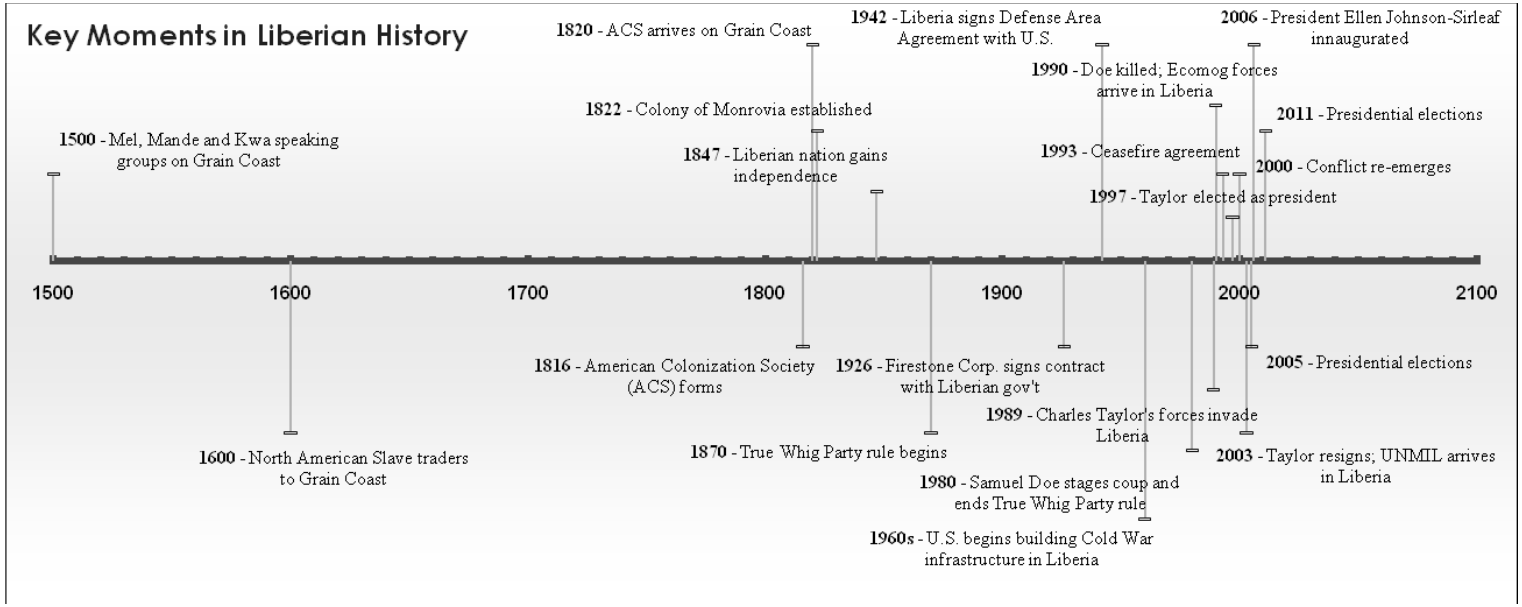

Figure 1 Key Moments in Liberian History

West African Grain Coast

This section explores the social and political structures existing on the West African coast prior to the attempts to create the Liberian colony and later nation state. Scholars have limited information about the societies existing at this time, but have nonetheless presented accounts of the time period beginning in the late 15th century. This account of the early history draws primarily from the work of Sawyer (1992). I accompany my presentation of history with an analysis of central ideas about land, political power and social hierarchy. I begin with an exploration of these ideas among West Africans groups, but also look at the ideas and ideologies, including republicanism and paternalism, of potential colonists.

People and Social Institutions

The area of West Africa known as the "Grain Coast"[6] is thought to have been populated by people migrating from the disintegration of the Malian empire. By the 16th century there were three major language groups – Mel, Mande and Kwa-speaking – in the area. Within these language groups a total of sixteen ethnicities have been identified, usually based upon a specific founding history or myth. The Mel-speaking ethnicities included the Gola and Kissi peoples. The Mande-speaking ethnicities included the Vai, Mende, Mandingo, Gbande, Kpelle, Loma, Mah (Mano), and Dan (Gio) peoples. The Kwa-speaking ethnicities included the Dei, Bassa, Belle, Kru, Krahn and Grebo peoples.

[6] The area was named the Grain Coast due to the heavy trade in grains of paradise also known as melegueta pepper (Azikiwe 1934:34). Melegueta pepper is a member of the ginger family and the name "grains of paradise" comes from the seeds of the plant that are used as a spice.

These ethnic groups were politically autonomous, though there was substantial overlap and movement within and between the groups as political communities often consisted of multiple ethnicities (Sawyer 1992:54). Competition between the various groups often centered upon access to trade routes. In this dissertation, I refer both to individual ethnic groups, but also the 16 ethnicities as "indigenous Africans" to distinguish them from settler populations. When referring to contemporary populations, I largely use the term "Liberians" regardless of ethnic background or settler lineage.

The Mel and Mande groups organized social hierarchies from a patrilineage system linked to a founding ancestor, whereas Kwa groups had a segmentary social organization based on age-sets whereby power and authority were vested in a council of elders. The Mel and Mande groups used the Poro institution, a male society that taught young men the rules of society and also played an important role in mediating social organization within and between groups. The Poro leadership was held by male elders. Women had a similar society called Sande. Once Mel and Mande people began trading with Europeans and new forms of wealth and prestige were introduced, the Poro played an important role in mediating these new hierarchies (Sawyer 1992:55).

The household acted as the primary unit of social organization, with all members of the household deriving their status through the position of the household head. Individuals could also be members of multiple households, as the structures were fluid with kin and non-kin members. Households worked together as units on a family farm whose land was allocated through lineages. Individual landownership through purchase did not exist and chiefs, through consultation with constituents, allocated land based upon

use. Individuals within a household worked on the family farm, but could also farm on their own for personal profit.

Trade on the Grain Coast

Spanish explorers first arrived in the West African region that is known today as Liberia in the 13th century. Active trade in natural resources – ivory, camwood, wax and gold – during the 15th century gave West Africans access to the goods that Europeans brought with them, including cotton cloth, rum, guns, and mirrors (Sawyer 1992:60; Beyan 1991:29). Some African chiefs were able to gain significant wealth and power by connecting to European trade opportunities.

It has been debated the extent to which Africans had their own systems of slavery at the time of European arrival. Some have suggested that the Vai practiced domestic slavery and the Dei used domestic servitude prior to the European slave trade (see Sawyer 1992:61; Holsoe 1970; Holsoe 1977; d'Azevedo 1962b). Uncertain whether African systems of slavery existed prior to or following European slave trade, Sawyer (1992:62) has commented that the two systems "nourished" one another. Pre-Liberian societies practiced several forms of internal slavery: indentured labor, pawning, domestic slavery (household and agricultural) and export slavery. Enslaved people were obtained through the seizure of war captives, enslavement of criminals and debtors, taxation, and raiding of peasants (H. Klein 1999:106).

In 1444, Portuguese traders were the first Europeans to raid and seize African slaves (M. Klein 2002:xiii; H. Klein 1999:103). By 1455 the Portuguese abandoned the

raid and plunder approach and began trading goods for people (H. Klein 1999:51). Other Europeans soon joined suit; Dutch traders arrived in 1553 (M. Klein 2002:xiii), followed by the British in 1562 (Azikiwe 1934:35). European slave traders required the assistance of Africans who were adept at navigating ships and had acquired European language skills in the course of working in the natural resource trade. The Dutch were assisted by Vai middlemen and the British were aided by the Kru (Beyan 1991:27). Kpelle, Mandingo, Mende, Gola, Bassa and Kru peoples captured slaves at various times during the 18th and 19th centuries. Relations between European traders and Africans were not necessarily harmonious. For example, in 1562 British slave traders warred with the Kru after accusing the Kru of stealing from their ship (Azikiwe 1934:35). Such tensions continued to characterize relations between Africans and foreigners for centuries to come.

The first African slaves to North America arrived in Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 (M. Klein 2002:xiv). At the height of slave trade to the United States, nearly 80,000 people were brought to the American colonies in the decade of the 1780s (H. Klein 1999:57). Until the 19th century, European slave traders built and warred over numerous castles along the Gold Coast (contemporary Ghana), in which they held people before sending them along the horrific "middle passage" across the Atlantic Ocean. However, transport of slaves from the Grain Coast did not occur due to a lack of accessible harbors. Arriving in the United States, Africans were taken to auction blocks, where Americans purchased the arriving men, women and children.

Colonization

This section outlines the historical beginnings and implementation of the colonization movement in the United States and explores how the ideas and ideologies of African-American emigrants to Liberia and white colonizers converged and conflicted during the colonization project. Specifically I focus on how ideas of Christianity, Black Nationalism, republicanism, and humanitarianism variously became ideologies to underwrite power in the Liberian colony. In constructing this particular history, I primarily use the works of Staudenraus (1961), Azikiwe (1934) and Sanneh (1999). While I focus on the specific ideas and ideology of the Liberian colony, the colonial endeavors of Americans and African-Americans coincided with larger worldwide imperial pursuits and Black Nationalist efforts. My purpose in constructing this history is to demonstrate how this particular colonial pursuit was confounded by the idea and ideology of racial unity.

The idea of colonization first appeared in U.S. law books in 1691, when the Virginia Legislature established a policy of manumission that was envisioned as emancipation with removal (K. Harris 1985:xiv). Spurred by the zealousness of evangelical Calvinism, in 1773, Protestant Reverends Stiles and Hopkins developed plans to train missionaries who would travel to Africa, establish Christian colonies and provide salvation.[7]

[7] After the American Revolution, in 1790, Ferdinando Fairfax, a wealthy Virginian landowner, proposed a colonization project to Congress, but Congress did not respond. The issue of emancipation was too controversial, and many land and slave owners did not want to dismantle the system of enslavement that was quite profitable for the slaveholders (K. Harris 1985:xvi).

The North Americans were not the only people interested in creating West African colonies for black people. In 1725 and 1726 French explorers secured Bushrod Island (the contemporary name of a small Liberian island) twice, but the French government rejected the territorial claim each time (Azikiwe 1934:35-36). The Swedish also designed unrealized plans for West African colonization in 1776. Without a doubt, the most "effective" colonization scheme during the 18th century was the British shipment of 350 people to Sierra Leone in 1787 (Staudenraus 1961:8). The British efforts were nestled in between two projects: the expansion of empire through colonization and the removal of unwanted black populations from Britain. Taking seed in the late 18th century, competing imperial interests became a point of contestation in the early part of the 20th century, as I discuss later in this chapter.

African-American Emigrants

In the United States the work of many abolitionists brought the ideas of freedom to the forefront of public debate. "'Freedom' was equated with the acquisition of new names and residences, stabilization of families, Black control of churches, expansion of schools and benevolent societies, development of economic independence and the forging of a distinctive political culture" (Burrowes 2001:32). Eventually, these same freedoms "would also be sought in Liberia" (Burrowes 2001:32).

Paul Cuffee, a wealthy black businessman who was interested in expanding trade routes and spreading Christianity to West Africa led the initial efforts to "uplift" blacks through the creation of a black nation, when he traveled to Sierra Leone in 1810 and

established the Friendly Society, through which he planned to take African Americans to West Africa. The prospects of missionary work in West Africa appealed to quite a few blacks. "As Black Culture in the New World became increasingly creolized [culturally mixed], dreams of a spiritual return to Africa were replaced by visions of the continent as a field for Christian conversion and commercial opportunity" (Burrowes 2001:33). For example, Burrell Mann of Richmond, Virginia wanted to "'preach the Gospel to heathens' in Africa 'all for the Sake of Christ and the Glory of his people in that continant [*sic*]'" (Grant 2008:63).

Cuffee eventually set sail to Sierra Leone in 1815 with nine African American families. Cuffee did not experience the criticism that previous colonizationists had for their racist agendas, since he did not own slaves (Clegg 2004:24-25). While Cuffee was assumed to be united with freed blacks on the basis of a shared race, the Black Nationalist efforts in the 20th century were criticized for class-based discrimination, as I discuss later in this chapter.

The American Colonization Society

Reverend Robert Finley initiated the colonization project as rooted in spirituality, not vanity: so-called "colonization without empire" (Sanneh 1999:192). As an ideology, Christian salvation was rooted in Calvinist ideas and practices of "disinterested benevolence" (Sawyer 1992:17). After the war of 1812, benevolent societies, many of which focused on saving "pagans" and "heathens," were on the rise in the United States (Staudenraus 1961:12). At the fore of this movement, Rev. Finley launched his campaign

for colonization at a public meeting in Princeton in November 1816. Finley insisted upon the divine nature of the project: "I know this scheme is from God" (Staudenraus 1961:17) and argued that the U.S. government needed to support colonization as a means of "atoning sacrifice" for the "public sin of slavery" (Sanneh 1999:192). While Finley initially believed that colonization would end slavery, his desires on this front were tempered by the politicians who comprised the ACS; they had no interest in abolishing slavery, were not invested in a mission from God and largely wanted to protect their own slave-holding interests.

Lacking the political power necessary to promote and actualize colonization, Finley had turned to his politically connected brother-in-law to recruit meeting attendees (Staudenraus 1961:24). On December 21, 1816, Finley was joined at the initial American Colonization Society (ACS) meeting by congressmen, senators, clergymen and wealthy socialites, including Bushrod Washington (the nephew of President George Washington), Speaker of the House Henry Clay, and Francis Scott Key, among others. These men were convinced to attend for a variety of reasons. Some attended with interests in growing their already substantial wealth by opening commercial trade routes with West Africa (Staudenraus 1961:39). Others attended the ACS meeting on the grounds that the colonization project would not promote emancipation (Staudenraus 1961:28), but would prevent insurrection in the south by ridding "our country of a useless and pernicious, if not dangerous portion of its population," in the words of Henry Clay (quoted in Clegg 2004:30). These politicians and wealthy men set out to deport an unwanted, "dangerous" free black population, just as the British had removed unwanted poor populations to the American colonies (Beyan 1991:7). These racist beliefs later became coated in the

rhetoric and ideologies of freedom, asylum and salvation, but on that day in late December 1816, the ACS set out to protect the institution of slavery.[8]

Just one week after the initial ACS meeting, on December 28, 1816, the men signed a constitution for the "American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color in the United States" (known as the American Colonization Society, ACS), with Bushrod Washington presiding as the president of the organization. The ACS aimed "to promote and execute a plan for colonizing (with their consent) the free people of color, residing in our country, in Africa or other such other place as Congress shall deem most expedient" (American Colonization Society 1818).

Shifting Racist Ideas to Ideologies of Humanitarianism and Salvation

Despite the U.S. ban on slave trade enacted in the 1808 Slave Trade Act, slaveholders in the United States still invested in and profited from the institution for decades to come. The beginning of the 19th century was marked by President Jefferson's rhetoric of free, but not equal.

> Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate, than that these people are to be free; nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government. Nature, habit, opinion have drawn indelible lines of distinction between them. When freed, [the slave] is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture. [Thomas Jefferson quoted in Sanneh 1999:183]

Jefferson's statement reflected policies of emancipation with deportation, rather than Black Nationalist and Christian benevolence ideas of education and the opportunity for

[8] Eleven of the initial twelve members of ACS were from the South and many owned slaves and were interested in and quelling the upsurge of slave revolts in the South (Beyan 1991:3). For another interpretation of ACS interests, see Burin (2005), who argued that the ACS actually worked to dismantle slavery.

self-improvement. The idea that freedom was practiced as deportation also coincided with the rhetoric of asylum as the "*morally* acceptable method of expatriation of free blacks" (Sawyer 1992:19). The ACS attempted to cloak its paternalism with an ideology of humanitarianism, rooted in ideas of asylum and the freedom to create a black nation (Beyan 1991:6).

The idea of asylum was underwritten by an essentialized belief that black equaled Africa or the assumption that race would unite people (Sawyer 1992:39). Extending this logic, asylum became a return to home. In the words of Reverend Finley: "The 'land of liberty' could not disappoint a sorrowful mother 'panting for the return of her absent sons and daughters. Happy America,' . . . 'if she shall endeavor not only to rival other nations in arts and arms, but to equal and exceed them in the great cause of humanity'" (quoted in Staudenraus 1961:21-22). Although Finley was interested in Christian salvation, "by supporting the ACS, slave owners hoped to rid themselves of both undesirable groups under the guise of humanitarian ideals" (Gershoni 1985:9). However, the ACS did not understand the contradiction of their plans: on the one hand free blacks were inferior and not worthy of education, but on the other hand, they would become the leaders of a black nation, providing "civilization" and salvation for African "heathens" and "pagans."

Nor was the ACS's humanitarian ideology seamless. In the December 30, 1816 edition of the National Intelligencer, an anonymous article charged that the ACS's "'self-styled benefactors' had arrogated the right to 'decree that other men are miserable'" (Staudenraus 1961:31-32). The anonymous writer painted an ugly picture of Africa that challenged idealized rhetoric of a beautiful, receptive African homeland. In January 1817, 3,000 black people presented an alternative idea of freedom and asylum. At a protest in

Philadelphia, blacks demanded the ACS recognize the unity of black families and ensure the basics freedoms and opportunities denied to African Americans (Clegg 2004:35). These black leaders in Philadelphia, as well as the Quakers, opposed the colonization movement because it would undercut much-needed reform in the United States (Sanneh 1999:193). Reverend Finley travelled to Philadelphia to meet with his opposition, but died shortly afterwards, and functional dialogue did not take place between the ACS and black leaders.

Mission of Inquiry

The ACS petitioned the US Congressional Committee on the Slave Trade for support of the colonization project on January 14, 1817. One month later Congress rejected the request, suggesting the ACS collaborate with the British who had established the West African colony of Sierra Leone (Staudenraus 1961:34). Given the impossibility of collaborating with the British in 1817, the ACS decided to build their case for colonization by sending a mission of inquiry to the west coast of Africa. The ACS had been building auxiliaries in Philadelphia, New York City and Baltimore and appealed to these entities to support the mission of inquiry. However, it proved extremely difficult to raise sufficient funds and the ACS ultimately took a loan from a wealthy shipper to make its journey to West Africa (Staudenraus 1961:41). Benevolent fundraiser, Samuel J. Mills and Ebenezer Burgess set sail in November 1817 and arrived in West Africa on March 12, 1818 (Sanneh 1999:195).

When they arrived, Mills and Burgess were intent on gaining territory on Sherbro Island, even against the advice and hospitality of British officials in Sierra Leone, who warned that the chief of the island refused to give up the land. Mills and Burgess persisted and went to Sherbro Island where they met great opposition. The people at Sherbro Island were adept at extracting rum from the ACS men and delayed meetings to discuss the prospect of land acquisition for days on end, while Mills and Burgess prayed and sang hymns (Staudenraus 1961:45). Following the land tenure system, the chief on Sherbro Island could not sell the land; only the inhabitants could cede the land. Mills and Burgess asked for a meeting with all the people, but this was not possible; the people were working in the fields and could not take the time to have a meeting. Disgruntled and unable to wield power over Africans on the coast, the ACS men eventually left the island after a final set of prayers. Before leaving West Africa, Mills and Burgess were warned by the Sierra Leonean colonial Governor McCarthy that they would need federal support for their project to succeed (Staudenraus 1961:46).

On the return ocean journey, Mills wrote a report of the mission, claiming great successes and citing the receptiveness of the Africans to the prospect of a new settlement (Sanneh 1999:198). Mills died aboard ship and Burgess had to present the report to Congress and Speaker of the House, Henry Clay. While the report did not result in outright federal support for colonization, the introduction of new legislation provided a small loop-hole through which the ACS was able to jump-start its colonization project.

Congressman Mercer from Virginia introduced a bill that shifted the power of responsibility for captured slaves from the state to the federal government (Staudenraus 1961:50). While the second Slave Trade Act, enacted on March 3, 1819, did not

specifically mention colonization, Congress authorized the presence of a U.S. navel squad in West Africa to help police and prevent on-going slave trading. It also appropriated US$100,000 for the resettlement of slaves who had been intercepted on the Atlantic Ocean (Staudenraus 1961:51). The ACS saw these provisions as a sign of support for colonization and petitioned President Monroe to allocate US$100,000 to the ACS (Clegg 2004:36). While Monroe personally supported colonization, he was uncertain about interpreting the 1819 Slave Trade Act that prohibited slavery in favor of colonization because several members of his cabinet, including Secretary of State John Adams, opposed the allocation of funds to the ACS on the grounds of unconstitutionality (Staudenraus 1961:52). Ultimately on March 16, 1819, Congress denied Monroe's request to buy land in West Africa.

By the fall of 1819, Secretary of the U.S. Treasury and Vice President of the ACS, William H. Crawford with the help of Francis Scott Key had pushed President Monroe to send two federal agents, a war ship and "colored laborers" to Africa (Staudenraus 1961:55). Crawford argued "the new Slave Trade Act allowed the President broad authority because Congress was unable to anticipate the details of creating and operating an African agency" (quoted in Staudenraus 1961:56) and the US$100,000 would be used for the settlement of recaptured slaves. Skirting the problem of the federal purchase of land, the ACS planned to buy the land and President Monroe and Secretary of the Navy Thompson directed the federal agents to stay away from the ACS (K. Harris 1985:9).

The Establishment of Monrovia

On January 31, 1820 the Elizabeth set sail alongside the USS Cyane navel ship. Aboard the Elizabeth were two federal agents, appointed by the ACS, one ACS agent and 83 hired, free black "laborers" (Staudenraus 1961:56-58). Reflective of a failed humanitarian ideology, the ship was prepared to take 300 emigrants, but the ACS was unable to recruit enough blacks willing to emigrate (Sanneh 1999:201). Half-heartedly attempting to disguise their plans from federal policies that opposed colonization, the so-called laborers aboard the Elizabeth were colonists and settlers. They did not have return arrangements for their mission to Africa and, once aboard the ship, the ACS agent outlined the rules for dividing the purchased land among them (Staudenraus 1961:57-58).

Arriving in West Africa, Uncovering a False Report

The conditions that the agents and settlers confronted once they disembarked from the Elizabeth onto British territory in West Africa (contemporary Sierra Leone) did not reflect those reported by Mills and Burgess. The settlers were surprised and angry to encounter a swampy marsh climate rife with fever, from which they suffered greatly (Staudenraus 1961:61). By April 15, 1820 the ACS agent had died from fever, followed by one of the navel officers and both federal agents. Before dying, the ACS agent had appointed Reverend Daniel Coker, a "mulatto" preacher, as a stand-in agent (Staudenraus 1961:61). The nascent settlement was rife with opposition and rebellion, divided in allegiance to the informally appointed Coker and John Kizell, the black official of the British Sierra Leonean colony. Further compromising the new settlers, Kizell and

Africans raided the wealth of supplies aboard the Elizabeth. By January 23, 1821 new agents set sail from the United States, including two federal agents, two ACS agents, and an additional thirty-three emigrants. The last thread of distinction between the U.S. government and the ACS was torn shortly after these men arrived in West Africa when both federal agents died, leaving the ACS agent, Reverend Andrus, in charge for the federal government.

While Andrus signed a treaty on April 12, 1821 for land in Grand Bassa (the eastern shore of contemporary Liberia), his authority, and the treaty, did not last long. The U.S. government rejected Andrus' treaty on July 28, 1821because it was not consulted prior to its signature (K. Harris 1985:28).

In a feat of intimidation and pistol diplomacy, Stockton seized land in Cape Mensurado (about 130 miles long, 40 miles wide) from King Peter, chief of the Dei people, while holding a gun to his head. Stockton and Ayres gave US$300 worth of goods for the territory. In an attempt to separate the deed from the hands of the US government, Stockton and Ayres acquired the land on behalf of the ACS (Sanneh 1999:205). In 1822, Cape Mensurado was be christened as Monrovia, after President Monroe. Although the colonists had obtained land, African chiefs and people continued to resist, oppose and challenge the colonial settlement.

Opposition and Failed Ideology

Despite the implied support of its namesake, the settlement of Monrovia had little revenue and was struggling on the verge of bankruptcy, especially without official

support from the U.S. government (Sanneh 1999:207). The initial financial support from the U.S. government had been intended only to dissuade the on-going slave trade. While the ACS attempted to gain full federal support of its project, it was always a struggle for the ACS to obtain federal funds and support for their endeavors in West Africa. These financial failures were not due to lack of access to power within the U.S. government, as the backgrounds and political connections of the initial officers of the ACS indicate below in Table 1.

LIST OF AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY OFFICERS, FIRST ANNUAL MEETING 1818		
ACS POSITION	***NAME***	***FEDERAL & STATE APPOINTMENTS/OCCUPATION***
President	Hon. Bushrod Washington	Associate Justice, U.S. Supreme Court 1798-1829
Vice President	Hon. William H. Crawford	U.S. Secretary of the Treasury 1816-1825
Vice President	Hon. Henry Clay	U.S. Representative, Kentucky; Speaker of the House
Vice President	Hon. William Phillips	Lieutenant Gov. of Massachusetts 1812-1823
Vice President	Col. Henry Rutgers	Presidential Elector, 1816, 1820
Vice President	Hon. John E. Howard	Former U.S. Senator; VP running mate 1816
Vice President	Hon. Samuel Smith	U.S. Senator, Maryland
Vice President	Hon. John C. Herbert	U.S. Representative, Maryland
Vice President	John Taylor of Caroline, Esq.	U.S. House Delegate, Virginia and U.S. Senator
Vice President	Gen. Andrew Jackson	Military governor, pre-Florida; future president
Vice President	Robert Ralston, Esq.	Unknown
Vice President	Richard Rush, Esq.	U.S. Attorney General 1814-1817; Minister to Britain
Vice President	Gen. John Mason	Commander of D.C. Militia 1802; Business owner
Vice President	Samuel Bayard	Clerk, U.S. Supreme Court
Secretary	E.B. Caldwell	Clerk, U.S. Supreme Court
Treasurer	David English	Unknown
Recorder	John G. McDonald	Unknown

Table 1 ACS Officers and Federal/State Appointments, 1818

In his theoretical work on hegemony and power, Gramsci (1971) stressed the importance of access to political party and unity in securing a hegemonic position of authority. As the leadership of the ACS demonstrates, the society was amply connected to political power; however, the ACS continued to be divided by ideas – Christian

benevolence, removal of blacks from the United States, and continuing interest and investment in slavery – without a single, unified ruling ideology.

In part due to the lack of a coherent ideology, the ACS continued to struggle to recruit emigrants to settle in West Africa. In the course of 12 years, the ACS sent only 2,885 emigrants, almost two-thirds of whom had been manumitted on the condition of "repatriation" (Sawyer 1992:40). However the lack of emigration was not just a result of a failed ACS ideology, blacks had their own ideas of freedom. For example, Grant (2008) has demonstrated the importance of family unity in black ideas of freedom. "Stranded families," composed of both free and non-free members, thwarted ACS emigration efforts because free family members would not emigrate as long as their family members were enslaved and unable to emigrate with them (Grant 2008:61). Additionally, all blacks did not necessarily view Africa as a homeland, but rather as "dark and unredeemed" (Sawyer 1992:40); many wanted to pursue freedom in the United States. By 1830, the ACS had little support, and both free blacks and abolitionists stood in outright opposition to the organization (Sawyer 1992:35).

The ACS also struggled to maintain organizational power and authority within the U.S. political structure. Just prior to 1830, individual state colonization societies, such as the Maryland Colonization Society, began to emerge with the goal of abolition (K. Harris 1985:39). These stood in contrast to the ACS's slave-holding interests. State societies in Maryland, Mississippi, New York, Pennsylvania, and Louisiana among others, created their own settlements in West Africa. As federal support for the ACS continued to nosedive under the Van Buren administration, these state societies were more successful than the ACS is sending emigrants to Africa.

Politics of Exclusion

This section, drawing primarily upon the ideological analysis of Burrowes (2001) and Brown (1982) who have pointed to the importance of the "civilized" category in shaping social relations of power, presents a historical outline of social structures in and outside of the Monrovia colony. Variously described as a "colonial caste system," a "class structure reinforced by ethnicity," or an "ethnic kin system with a bit of class," social structures in pre- and contemporary Liberian have been interpreted in a variety of ways (Sawyer 1992:1). This discussion focuses on conflicts between white colonists, black settlers and Africans about access to freedom and explores the pursuit of power through the ideology of "civilization."

Imperial Struggle

During the early 19th century, African chiefs interacted with and negotiated between competing European and American imperial powers. American colonists faced the encroaching territorial interests of the British from the west of the colony and of the French from the East. Both the British and the French were interested in expanding their territory along the West African coast. Competing imperial forces attempted to gain territory through agreements with African chiefs in the name of "protection." However, African chiefs, especially those along the coast collaborated with Cuban and Spanish slave-traders by providing slave laborers. To protect and expand its colonial territory, the US government sent three American warships to protect the Monrovia settlement from Spanish, British and French imperial forces (Sanneh 1999:208). In addition to external threats to the Monrovian colony, the settlers had to contend with opposition from various

African groups, mostly immediately in 1822 when the Dei people attacked the settlement (Clegg 2004:103). As I will demonstrate, various revolts against the settlement required the protection and support of the U.S. government, who in their own interests against the British and French, were obliged to protect the Monrovia settlement.

White Colonists, Black Settlers: the Push for Nationhood

The administrative structure of the Monrovian settlement situated power within the hands of the white colonists who governed with remote assistance from ACS members in Washington, D.C. However, out of necessity black settlers occasionally acted as surrogate leaders when white agents died, but eventually the positions would be refilled by white agents (K. Harris 1985:17). In practice, the actual power and control held by white colonists was tenuous in the face harsh living conditions combined with black interests in power over the new settlement. Black settlers resented this white authority and rebellions against the white settlers began as early as the 1820s, when Lott Carey, a black settler, led two rebellions. In 1826, Carey became a vice-agent, but only after he publically apologized for instigating rebellion (Sanneh 1999:210). Federal agent Jehudi Ashmun believed that he could accomplish his imperial pursuits while also giving some positions to black settlers and in 1827, the Colonial Council included two settler positions, but executive power was still wielded by white male leaders of the ACS in Washington DC (K. Harris 1985:17).[9] The conflicts between white colonists and black

[9] Ashmun wanted to create an American empire and used federal funds to expand the colony and build in Monrovia, including his own residence which was built with yellow pine imported from the United States (Staudenraus 1961:151).

settlers (Americo-Liberians and to a lesser extent, Congos) centered upon conflicting ideas of freedom. According to Liebenow (1969:12),

> Particularly annoying to the educated Americo-Liberian were the Jeffersonian ideals of many of the religious and philanthropical supporters of the society who believed that the independent settlers should seek the serenity of a rural, agricultural existence and disavow the evils of commerce and industry….They associated agriculture with the life of servitude they or their parents had experienced.

The ACS's racist ideas of blacks as naturally linked to the earth did not successfully become an ideology in which black settlers invested. Instead, the republicanism of antebellum south – "an ideology that advocated representative democracy based on an informed, land-owning politically active citizenry" – influenced the ideas of black settlers (Burrowes 2001:32). Black settlers were invested in the pursuit of their own land and variably, their own nation.

In 1839 the colony became the Commonwealth of Liberia and in 1841, Joseph Jenkins Roberts became the first black governor (Akpan 1973:218). As a private society, the commonwealth of Liberia did not have the authority to collect custom duties from traders; nor would the U.S. government step in and claim the colony as its own, enforcing the payment of customs (Gershoni 1985:13). Under these conditions, on July 23, 1847 Liberia became an independent republic with Joseph Jenkins Roberts presiding as the first president of the independent nation. An educated, freeborn man from Norfolk, Virginia, Roberts traveled to Liberia with his mother, a former slave in 1829. Prior to arriving in West Africa, Roberts was in the upper stratum of free black society in Virginia, due to his trading endeavors. Roberts maintained his privilege once in West Africa through continued trade activities and the privilege that white settlers attached to

his "mulatto" status (Beyan 1991:88-89). When crafting the Liberian Constitution, the black, primarily "mulatto," settlers addressed the racial oppression experienced in the United States:

> We were everywhere shut out from all civil office. We were excluded from all participation in the government. We were taxed without consent. We were compelled to contribute to the resources of a country, which gave us no protection. We were made a separate and distinct class, and against us every avenue to improvement was effectually closed. Strangers from all lands, of a color different from ours, were preferred before us. [Liberian Constitution, quoted in Burrowes 2001:37]

Influenced by Enlightenment thinking about freedom and individualism, the constitution prioritized the rights of black "mulatto" settlers, but did not address the ramifications of protecting one set of rights over another, namely the rights of less privileged black settlers and Africans. The new Constitution also reflected the ideals of the republicanism of the antebellum south by linking land ownership and citizenship, as stated in the words of the president of the Constitutional Convention Samuel Benedict: "We are the proprietors of the soil we live on, and possess the rights of freeholders" (quoted in Burrowes 2001:36). As indigenous Africans were not permitted to be citizens, in the eyes of the Liberian government, Africans were unable to own land. However, outside of the Monrovian center, Africans continued to practice their own communal and use-based concepts of land tenure, though government officials could and did intervene in these systems.[10] The Liberian Constitution stipulated that only blacks could be citizens of Liberia and that the U.S. Constitution acted as the default authority in the event of unspecified terms in the Liberian Constitution. The ideas about freedom put forth in the Constitution replicated the ideals of white freedom for blacks.

[10] Concepts of land tenure continue to be a contentious issue in Liberia, as discussed in chapter 7.

Black Settlers, Africans: An Ideology of "Civilization"

Underneath the black settlers' rhetoric of freedom, internal domestic relations between the settlers and Africans were marked with social strife. As numerous anthropological accounts have demonstrated, any discussion of the relations between black settlers and Africans in Liberia requires consideration of "civilized" status (Brown 1982; Fraenkel 1964; Liebenow 1969; Tonkin 1981; Moran 1990). Not unique to Liberia, the term "civilized" has been used in other colonial settings. However, the particular development and use of the "civilized" term in Liberia has been influenced by two key historical features of the Monrovian settlement (Moran 1990). First, as alluded to in the preceding discussion of the Liberian Constitution, the initial settlers were primarily middle class, free black men whose success in the United States was limited by pervasive racism (Moran 1990:58). For these settlers, West Africa offered the potential of limitless opportunities, as the colony existed outside the restrictive confines of U.S. racism. Initially in West Africa, the settlers' status as middle class in America did not bear meaning in Liberia. Without the physical marker of race to distinguish the settlers from Africans in Liberia, Africans could pass into the settler elite. However, through the concept of "civilization," a privileged status, similar to middle or upper class status in the United States, was ascribed to the settlers. To maintain exclusion, Liberian settlers used "group endogamy" and "individual geneology" to maintain the purported superiority of the Americo-Liberian settler elite (Moran 1990:59). In part this settler superiority was filtered through the concept of "civilization." While education (Moran 1990) and salary (Tonkin 1981) were prominent features of being "civilized," – or *kui,* a Kru word

meaning "western"[11] – speaking English, lifestyle, dress (men wearing western suits, women wearing dresses), food habits, cleanliness and mannerisms also demarcated "civilized" status.

In contrast to being "civilized," one might be described as "uncivilized," "country," "native," or "tribal." In a study of class in urban Monrovia during the middle of the 20th century, Fraenkel described the distinction between "civilized" and "uncivilized" as the defining features of a continuum of an "embryonic class structure" along which individuals could variously be positioned (Fraenkel 1964:67-68). However, scholars, including Fraenkel to some extent, have also stressed the fluidity of these social categories. A person could be considered a "civilized country" man, such that *kui* was epitomized by settler life but was not restricted to it (Tonkin 1964:319). Likewise, d'Azevedo has stressed the strategic use of "civilized" and "native" identity, such that men would chose an identity, Gola, Kpele or Americo-Liberian "in order to reinforce alliances or pursue an advantage" (d'Azevedo 1970:112). This ambiguity of "civilized" status lends itself to ideological use:

> Not only does the idiom of civilization function, therefore, to articulate competition for social status on terms which are subordinated to the value standard of the centre, but it serves also to extend the terms of the competition into the community, in ways which mask the nature of this subordination, and hence serve to consolidate it. [Brown 1982:295-296]

Particularly as manifested in cleanliness – e.g. keeping one's yard swept, eating with utensils or keeping house – "civilized" status transposes social inequality into moral worth, such that "*kui* is a concept for aspirants, not achievers, who need not measure themselves in such terms" (Tonkin 1964:321, 323). The double-edged ideological sword

[11] *Kui* is used widely throughout Liberia, but other languages also have words for western habits.

works such that the "power of its ['civilized'] imagery [can function] as an agency for social differentiation, or as an index of moral worth" (Brown 1982:288).[12] "Civilized" ideology was linked to the social categories of Americo-Liberians and Congo peoples. However, similar to other groups in Liberia, these categories were fluid, though intimately linked to power.

Institutions of Social Mobility and Exclusion

In 1838, the settler's council enacted the Apprenticeship Law, which enabled black settlers – Americo-Liberians – to keep Congo and African children as wards in their homes to do household work in exchange for clothing and sometimes education (Gershoni 1985:27). Within a few years, the Congo people had been subsumed within the Americo-Liberian settler population. The ward system has been described with varying degrees of severity, from domestic slavery to adoption of the ward child, who was permitted to bear the family name, inherit property, and enjoy the prestige of his father (Liebenow 1969:16). Indicative of the unequal and exploitative relations between Americo-Liberian elite and Africans, one American visitor to Liberia in the 1880s commented:

> The natives of Liberia have been to the emigrants from America just what these ex-slaves were to the whites of the South. …I have seen a civilized native boy…frequently enter a house on a business errand by the back way and the mistress of the house, a woman who cooked and washed in the United States for a living, wanted it to be distinctly understood, that her "front do" was not to be used by "country people." [quoted in Sundiata 2003:59]

[12] Writing at the cusp of the 1980 coup in Liberia, Brown (1982) questioned the continued relevance and use of the term "civilized."

In the following section I discuss the power and politics of on-going enslavement and internal hierarchies in Liberia, especially as they linked to geo-political processes.

A New Nation

This section analyzes the competing ideas behind the creation of the Liberian nation. In particular it focuses on the interplay between the ideas of nationhood held by the Liberian settler government, Africans, and to a lesser extent, the U.S. government. My analysis of ideas and ideology considers the political and material practices and manifestations of power from 1847 to 1943. This time period includes a wide range of domestic and international political and social forces and change, including: territorial expansion, corporate imperialism, world war and internal revolts. This analysis draws upon the concept of the shadow colony, which acted as a mediating force in the political and material relations between the Liberian government, Africans and the U.S. government.

Post Independence

In 1848, one year after Liberia announced its independence, the British government recognized the Liberian nation-state, with France following suit in 1852. However, five U.S. presidents (Polk, Taylor, Fillmore, Pierce and Buchanan) would ignore Liberian treaty requests for commerce and to accept a Liberian diplomat in Washington for fifteen years before President Lincoln finally acknowledged the Liberian nation in 1862 (K. Harris 1985:68). The refusal, of course, had to do with slavery and

racism. Slaveholders did not want to treat black diplomats as equal (Bixler 1957:11-12), but also

> Both the Democratic and Whig parties had disagreements between the northern and southern wings over tariffs, internal improvements, territorial expansion, and slavery. This issue of Liberian recognition compounded these disagreements because recognition of a republic of free blacks, many of them former slaves, could worsen the slavery-emancipation controversy. [K. Harris 1985:69]

Coinciding with a tenuous position in international politics, the new nation continued to flounder financially. A worldwide depression and sudden drop in the price of coffee exports led the Liberian government to secure a US$500,000 loan from a British bank in 1871 (Beyan 1991:135). This loan marked the beginning of many loans that the Liberian government would be forced to take, compromising the independence of the nation. This first loan was wildly mismanaged and resulted in the assassination of President James Roye, a member of the True Whig party, the primary political party in Liberia (Dunn 2009:13). Despite Roye's death, the True Whig party endured, dominating political rule from 1870 to 1980 for all but one year.

Building a "National Organism": Territorial Struggle and Indirect Rule

The Liberian government's task of creating a unified nation faced substantial external opposition as well as internal opposition from many African populations in the region. Throughout the 19th century and into the early part of the 20th century multiple African revolts threatened the new government. For example, dissatisfied with severe political slights of hand, the Grebo Reunited Kingdom or Confederation, a political and geographic entity in southeastern Liberia rebelled in 1875. Comprised of an educated

constituency from the larger Grebo group, the Confederation did not oppose the Americo-Liberian rule, but wanted to be a part of it and staged a revolt. The U.S. government intervened to quell the hostilities and Grebo Confederates were granted rights to citizenship so long as they adopted an Americo-Liberian lifestyle. Some of these Grebo eventually received posts in the government (Gershoni 1985:78-79), although the position of Africans in the Liberian government was short-lived. In 1884 President Johnson ended African representation in the legislature – two non-voting representatives from each county. Instead, President Johnson introduced "Native African Commissions" that were appointed to each of the counties. These commissions had few resources to enforce federal laws and could only occasionally collect the required taxes (Gershoni 1985:31). The Liberian government sought to maintain power and control over African confederations outside of Monrovia through the implementation of restrictive laws, such as the ban instituted against the missionary schools that had been responsible for the education of Grebo people who had revolted.

The Liberian government's attempts to expand its territory also faced external challenges. At the beginning of the 20th century, the British and French began taking parts of Liberian territory along the outskirts of the national boundaries, also engulfing the "declining merchant class" into their arms, further reducing Liberia's economic vitality (Sawyer 1992:172). As Liberia's financial problems persisted, the government took another US$500,000 loan from the British in 1906, which required the presence of British custom receivers in Liberia. Of the US$500,000 President Barclay (1904-1912) used US$150,000 to pay debt and allocated the balance to the Liberian Development Company, a British owned rubber interest, "for use in the construction of roads, paying

off the liabilities of the company and financing a bank" (Azikiwe 1934:113). When Barclay realized the company had quickly spent US$200,000 of the funds, he requested an audit, which the company refused. Barclay and the Liberians were left with only US$150,000 of the original loan (Azikiwe 1934:114).

In addition to these financial problems, the receivers that came with the loan tightened British control of Liberia, as they had veto power in the Liberian legislature, despite opposition from the Liberian government. The receivers also established a military, the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF) in 1907 (Dunn 2009:13). Equipped with British arms, the LFF, comprised primarily of lower class Americo-Liberians and Congos not fully incorporated into the social elite, received training from British officers (Gershoni 1985:43; Liebenow 1969:53). The creation of the LFF coincided with President Barclay's "national organism" plan to control Liberia's land. While on the surface this policy sought to integrate Africans into the Liberian nation, Barclay basically administered a form of indirect rule whereby Africans were able to obtain citizenship if they owned land, adopted Christianity, and lived a western lifestyle (Gershoni 1985:36-38). However, the African concept of land tenure was based upon use and collective ownership. LFF soldiers were intended to spread the republican ideology of the Americo-Liberian government through force in the counties (Liebenow 1969:53). In practice, the soldiers, many of whom were Congos and outside of the elite circle, were disgruntled with their low social position within the Americo-Liberian hierarchy and were more concerned with improving their own social condition rather than promoting the Liberian government's agenda of territorial expansion (Liebenow 1969:60). With the aid of British

training forces, the LFF revolted against the Liberian government in 1909 in an attempt to gain more power within the Americo-Liberian hierarchy.

Following the LFF revolt and newly realized potential for internal opposition to Americo-Liberian power, the Liberian government quickly severed relations with the British (Gershoni 1985:44) and began to look for alternative financial support. In 1909 President Barclay sent a commission to the U.S. to request aid (Sundiata 2003:30). American Secretary of State, Elihu Root, testified before the U.S. Congress on behalf of Liberia: "so far as they need assistance toward the maintenance of free, orderly and prosperous civil society, we are under the highest obligation to assist them" (quoted in Azikiwe 1934:116). Reflecting this shadow colony sentiment, President Theodore Roosevelt expressed the "imperative duty" to help Liberia and sent an investigative team to Liberia (quoted in Azikiwe 1934:116). Upon return, the committee reported to the new administration of President Taft that the United States replace the British loan obligations and take control of the LFF. The report further recommended the United States solve the on-going border encroachment issues with France and Great Britain and suggested that the United States build a research station in Liberia to explore natural resources (Harris 1985:73). Although President Taft urged that it was "our national duty" to help the African nation, the report clearly set forth plans for an imperial project that the U.S. government regarded with hesitancy.

Implementing some measures of the report, in 1912 the U.S. government responded to Liberian requests for aid by securing a US$1.7 million loan from bankers in the United States, France, England, Holland and Germany; however, the bulk of the loan paid off existing debt and the Liberian government received only US$126,482 (Azikiwe

1934:117-118). The new loan terms required that the United States act as the primary customs receiver and U.S. Army officers train the LFF (Gershoni 1985:44). Additionally, U.S. officials demanded that Americans be appointed as district commissioners.

As the Liberian government shifted between loan agreements, the resulting restrictions imposed by various European and American powers were compounded by internal strife in Liberia, further challenging the authority and sovereignty of the nation. In 1915 the Kru staged a major revolt, seeking to establish independence from the Liberian nation. In several years prior to the revolt, the Kru had struggled with British and German merchants who had refused to pay fair wages. In 1915 when the Liberian government imposed a hut tax, the Kru revolted (Dunn, Beyan, Burrowes 2001:196). To quell the revolt, the Liberian government requested military support from the U.S. government, which supplied the Liberian administration with arms to use against the Kru (Liebenow 1969:7; Gershoni 1985:49).

Shortly after the Kru revolt, in 1918, the Gola people revolted against the behavior of American district commissioners, some of whom were practicing slavery in the counties outside of Monrovia and abusing Liberians (Gershoni 1985:52-53). Eventually in 1921 all the American district commissioners left Liberia and new commissioners were not appointed. While reflective of struggles for power within Liberia, these incidents also exemplify the historic and growing tension between the black Liberian government and the white American colonial officials and U.S. government, which was intensified in the wake of world war.

The US Tightens its Grip on Liberia

After entering World War I in 1917, the United States asked the Liberian government to also declare war on Germany. World War I had significantly impinged on the import and export activities of Liberia (Gershoni 1985:48-49) and hoping to open trade with the British, the Liberian government complied (Azikiwe 1934:120). German forces entered Liberia to destroy a French wireless station, killing civilians in the process (Dunn 2009:15). It took the U.S. government about a month before they sent a military ship to the shores of Liberia; this was not the protection one would expect after the Liberian government entered the war at the request of the United States (Dunn 2009:15).

Struggling in the wake of default on the 1912 loan, the Liberian government requested a US$5 million loan from the U.S. government. Requested under wartime measures, the Secretaries of the Navy and Treasury nonetheless rejected the Liberian government's appeal for a loan. In response, the U.S. Department of State appealed to President Wilson on the grounds of "moral responsibility toward a heretofore ill-used colored stepchild" (quoted in Dunn 2009:15-16). In response the U.S. government proposed a loan that critics of the time suggested was basically akin to a "white dictatorship" in its placement of multiple foreign officials with veto power in Liberia (Dunn 2009:16). Displeased with loan terms "so humiliating to the dignity of the Liberian people," the Liberian government made changes, which resulted in further alterations of the loan contract by the U.S. government (Dunn 2009:16). Careful not to alienate the friendship of the U.S. government, the Liberian government eventually accepted the loan terms, but the U.S. Senate ultimately rejected the loan, leaving Liberia in a state of near financial ruin (Azikiwe 1934:121-122). The negotiations of this loan are reflective of an

attempt to shift the conflicting ideas of the shadow colony into an ideology reflecting on particular dimension of the colonial relations. The relation of the U.S. government as the step-parent of Liberia attempted to frame the restrictive loan in terms of a moral act. However, as a failed attempt at ideology, the Liberian and U.S. governments could not agree on loan terms.

Competing Nationalisms: Garvey, President C.D.B. King & W.E.B DuBois

At the end of World War I and in need of financial assistance, Liberia became the prospective site of a black Zionist project led by Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Garvey was a man with a vision: "Where the wilderness is, we will build great townships. Where there is no place of human abode, we will make great settlements. Where there is not even the semblance of government, we will make a great nation" (quoted in Sundiata 2003:49). Creating a black nation in West Africa was a way out of the "national minority status" problem in the United States (Sundiata 2003:26). However, Garvey was not the only man with a national plan; by the end of 1923 W.E.B. DuBois had been appointed as the U.S. Minister plenipotentiary to Liberia (Robinson 1990:44-45). Enemies of one another, Garvey and DuBois aligned themselves quite differently with Liberian President C.D.B. King (1920-1930) and the Americo-Liberian elite, revealing "the ambiguous conjuncture of the discourses of race and class" (Robinson 1990:39). From his upper class position in the United States, Du Bois encouraged Harvey Firestone's rubber venture in Liberia:

> I believe that in this way you can inaugurate one of the greatest and most far reaching reforms in the relations between white industrial countries like America and black, partly developed countries like Liberia if it can once be proven that industry can do the same thing in a black country like Liberia that it does in a white country like Australia: that is, invade it, reform it and uplift it by incorporating the native born into the imported industry and thus make it the industry a part of the country. [quoted in Robinson 1990:46]

Unlike DuBois, Garvey was highly critical of this black on black oppression in Liberia. President King initially supported Garvey's interest in black nationhood, but eventually withdrew his support and deported the U.S. immigrants, fearing the potentially widespread support and power of Garvey. King claimed he withdrew support his support of Garvey to promote unity based on nationalism, rather than race (Dunn 2009:18). However, as discussed below, the conflict between Garvey and King was also rooted in labor exploitation.

Firestone – 1926 Loan

Following World War I, imperial pursuits became wrapped up in the rubber industry. British corporations produced 75% of the world's rubber, while the United States used 70%, creating a strong U.S. dependence on the British. In 1922 the British Stevenson Act attempted to regulate low rubber prices by restricting the production of rubber, leaving the U.S. in great need of a new rubber source. The U.S. Congress allocated US$500,000 to find its own rubber source (Sundiata 2003:99). It was under these auspices and financial support that Harvey Firestone first traveled to Liberia in 1923: "We are trapped by a maneuver for British imperial advantage, we can minimize the immediate cost to America…by meeting an invading nationalism with a defending

nationalism" (Firestone quoted in Sundiata 2003:99). President C.D.B. King promoted Firestone's interests in doing business in his country because he believed it would lead to economic independence for Liberia (Dunn 2009:18). However, with the involvement of the U.S. government, the opposite transpired.

On November 18, 1926 Firestone and Liberia signed a contract, the terms of which follow: the Liberian government would extend a 99 year lease for a maximum of 1 million acres for 6 cents an acre to the Firestone Corporation. Firestone would only be charged for land under development, but within 5 years needed to pay for at least 20,000 acres. At the signing of the contract, Firestone projected employment figures of 350,000, but in reality by 1930, the company only employed 18,000 laborers (Sundiata 2003:99-100). After breaking ground in Liberia, Firestone struggled to hire the projected number of laborers because of the system of forced labor whereby Americo-Liberian elites, including government officials, and African chiefs sold laborers to the Spanish and Belgian colonizers in the region who required laborers for their own industrial and imperial pursuits (Sundiata 2003:115; Dunn 2009:20).

Facilitated by the new Finance Corporation of America (FCA), expressly minted for the purpose of this agreement, the terms of the arrangement tightened the noose on the finances and sovereignty of the Liberian government. The terms of the agreement with FCA replaced the initial three customs receivers (from the 1912 loan) with eight new officials: a financial advisor (designated by the U.S. president), five fiscal managers and two U.S. army officers responsible for administering the Liberian Frontier Force (Sundiata 2003:112). These officials cost Liberia greatly: collective annual salaries of US$42,000 and US$8,000 paid for the financial management positions and military

officers respectively (Azikiwe 1934:126). Within a short time the maintenance of these salaries created great controversy.

In the words of a Venezuelan delegate to the League of Nations, the deal was "an establishment of an African 'Monroe Doctrine' by the U.S. in West Africa" such that the new agreement strengthened the U.S.'s imperial hold on Liberia and prevented the colonial efforts of European powers (quoted in Azikiwe 1934:128).

League of Nations Investigation

On June 8, 1929 the United States notified the Liberian government that it had been informed of "a system which seems hardly distinguishable from organized slave trade" in Liberia (quoted in Dunn 2009:20). In a hypocritical accusation – debt peonage, lynching and slavery were actively practiced in the United States – the United States intervened in Liberian politics (Sundiata 2003:101-102). In response to the United States' accusation, on April 8, 1930 a League of Nations commission was sent to Liberia to investigate the labor practices and the alleged use of forced labor to supply the Spanish colonists on Fernando Po island. The commission was comprised of three men, one each from the United States, Europe and Liberia.[13]

The findings of the League of Nations Commission claimed that Liberia engaged in forced labor but did not have an organized system of slavery. The commission proposed several recommendations, including: bans on domestic slavery and pawning,

[13] Having been charged with persistent racism towards Liberia, the U.S. government had tried to recruit an African-American representative to serve on the Commission, imagining that an African-American critic of Liberia would quell the accusations of racism (Sundiata 2003:132).

the reestablishment of chief authority, a cessation in sending laborers to Fernando Po and other foreign locations, increased discipline of the Liberian military, the appointment of Americans to administrative positions in the government, an increase in African American emigration, and the creation of opportunities for foreign investors (Sundiata 2003:134). The Commission implicated President C.D.B. King and many of his officials in participating in and benefiting from the practice of forced labor (Sundiata 2003:134). Top officials, including senator (and future president) William V.S. Tubman, were indicted on charges of forced labor. Internal strife led to a call for the resignation of President King, which eventually took place on December 3, 1930; President Edwin Barclay ascended the presidency.

The commission's report was incomplete; beneath the slavery accusations lurked the labor practices and needs of the Firestone Corporation. A British plantation manager in Firestone recorded the forced labor of 150 men who had been brought to the Firestone plantation by armed guards sent by the Liberian Government Labor Bureau in 1925 (Sundiata 2003:115).[14] The Government Labor Bureau had been established to respond to Firestone's labor needs, which were not being met by the domestic labor force. In a 1931 letter to the U.S. Secretary of State, Firestone wrote "to express my appreciation of the firm stand which our Government is taking in demanding that Liberia take effective measures to abolish enforced labor…As you know [this] has seriously interfered with our obtaining free labor" (quoted in Sundiata 2003:117).

[14] A Rockefeller-funded labor conditions research project carried out in Liberia from 1925-1926 by Harvard Professor Raymond Leslie Buell uncovered Firestone practices of paying district commissioners for laborers (Sundiata 2003:118).

Revealing the material motives behind US government involvement in Liberia, the incoming Liberian President Barclay stated: "Mr. Hoover has helped the Firestone Company take Liberia" (quoted in Azikiwe 1934:132). Exemplifying the inequality and exploitation accompanying Firestone's arrival in Liberian, foreign officials were paid monthly salaries while civil servants received a salary only once per year. In further insult to the Liberian economy, foreign officials "sen[t] most of their salaries out of the country" (Azikiwe 1934:131-132), removing potential opportunities for economic investment and growth within Liberia.

In the wake of the exposure of the ideas behind the humanitarian ideology of an anti-slavery investigation, President Barclay responded in 1932 by informing the Firestone-cloaked Finance Corporation of America (FCA) that it would not make loan interest payments until the national annual revenue reached US$650,000. Furthermore, the Barclay administration voted to reduce FCA salaries, for example from US$12,500 to US$10,000 for different financial advisors (Azikiwe 1934:130).[15] While President Hoover responded by rescinding recognition of the Barclay administration, the U.S. still maintained some diplomatic relations with Liberia as it attempted to remove the moratorium on FCA payments (Azikiwe 1934:132). At the urging of a U.S. Secretary of State under a new political administration in Washington, in June 1935, President Franklin Roosevelt officially recognized the Barclay administration.

During this time Barclay also had to attend to domestic problems and threats to the Liberian government. Conflict surrounding land tenure issues and unpopular chiefs

[15] Interestingly, both DuBois and Azikiwe defended the Liberian government in the wake of the slavery accusations, although DuBois critically reflected on white capitalist investment in Liberia (Robinson 1990:46-47). See also Sundiata (2003).

transpired between Kru political factions, ultimately erupting in revolt against the Liberian government. As the conflict deepened, the Liberian government responded with violence, killings hundreds of Africans (Azikiwe 1934:289). Despite the attempts of the Americo-Liberian elites to gain power through the ideological mediation of "civilized" status, the ideas had not fully spread to areas outside of Monrovia and power – over the Kru, for example – had to be obtained through force.

World War II – Further Exploits

In 1941 the Firestone Corporation and Pan American Airways broke ground on the construction of Roberts Airfield, the first of the strategic facilities built on Liberian soil to support U.S. wartime activities. In the 1942 Defense Area Agreement

> The Government of Liberia has requested that the Government of the United States because of its traditional friendly interest in the welfare of Liberia, give such aid as may be possible in the circumstances in the defense of the Republic. [U.S. Government and Liberian Government 1943:86]

Roosevelt's Lend-Lease aid legislation allowed the U.S. government to provide war supplies to allied nations without repayment, and the 1942 Agreement with Liberia solidified U.S. strategic interests. The United States could use the airport to transport aircraft to North Africa and Europe and, in the event of a national emergency, the airport could become a temporary U.S. air base (Dunn 2009:70).[16] The Agreement also allowed for the construction of roads and seaplane facilities, while the United States also promised to give Liberia money for defense purposes and the organization and training of Liberian military forces. Once President Barclay removed his stance of neutrality in the

[16] While the Defense Area in Liberia was under Liberian sovereignty, the United States maintained jurisdiction within defined areas (Dunn 2009:27).

war, more than 1,000 US "combat engineers" arrived in Liberia bearing "anti-aircraft artillery, machine guns, and numerous other weapons" (Sisay 1985:135-136). The number of U.S. troops ultimately reached 5,000 and an additional 3,000 LFF soldiers were trained by the U.S. military (Dunn 2009:27). Although not an "army of occupation" the US troops did not arrive or live quietly in Liberia – with them they brought the U.S. dollar, marking the conversion from British pounds to U.S. dollars in Liberia. More disturbingly, combat engineers were known to be perpetrators of abuse against Liberians, including: mistreatment and forced entry into private homes; robbery; assault; arrests, most notably of a Liberian government official; and even the seizure of hut tax collections from a chief. President Barclay spoke out against these abuses, reiterating that the United States did not have jurisdiction over Liberian citizens (Sisay 1985:136-137). U.S. government officials responded with criticism of Barclay for his mistreatment of "natives" and the creation of "totalitarian" rule (Dunn 2009:29).

While the two countries disagreed, they nonetheless maintained diplomatic relations. President Roosevelt visited Liberia in 1943, promising to build a port that would be used for American warships, among other activities, such as transporting Firestone rubber. Hoping to solidify plans for the port, President Barclay accepted an invitation to visit Washington DC later that year. In an address to the U.S. House of Representatives, Barclay reaffirmed his country's support for American war interests: "We have neither large armies, air forces, nor navies to contribute, but we have what is important in the prosecution of war – natural resources and a strategic position" (in Sisay

1985:139).[17] Barclay also stated that he would oppose any port location with strategic interest for Firestone and criticized the implementation of the 1942 Defense Area Agreement because the Americans did not consult with Liberians on road needs and constructed based on their own interests (Sisay 1985:139-140). After returning to Liberia, the promised port was built at a St. Paul river location (55 mi from Firestone) and used to help transport war materials to Northern Africa and the Middle East. Again, like Roberts Airfield, the U.S. could use the Free Port of Monrovia as a temporary naval base (Dunn 2009:70). Conveniently, the port also accelerated the shipment of Liberian rubber to the United States (Sisay 1985:141).

Prior to involvement in WWII, President Roosevelt stated he was not responsible for the corporate interests of Firestone. While U.S. wartime measures were not entirely separate from rubber and other commercial interests, Roosevelt did not always intervene in Liberian politics on behalf of Firestone. For example, in 1943 the Barclay administration passed a "Labor Law for Minimum Wages and Hours for Workmen" that raised the minimum wage, limited the work day to eight hours, and required Saturdays off and a two-week notice for dismissal. In many ways, Barclay's demands reflected the ideas behind African resistance, including the 1915 Kru revolt that was partially motivated by the unfair wages provided by foreign industries. Most infuriating to Firestone were the provisions of Section 9; penalties up to $1,000 could be issued for the "utterances of any abusive language having a racial basis directed against any Liberian by a foreign employer" (Sisay 1985:147). Embroiled by the specific targeting of foreign

[17] After social visits to legislative bodies, Barclay visited the Firestone plant in Ohio, but Firestone, unable to secure lodging for the black president, had to host Barclay in a private railway car (Sisay 1985:139).

business and the proposed increase in wages, which Firestone claimed were already fair wages, Firestone asked President Roosevelt to get the Liberian government to retract the law. Neither Barclay nor incoming President Tubman repealed the law (Sisay 1985:147-148). Accused of creating totalitarian rule and the solidification of the True Whig party, the Barclay administration set the stage for the upcoming six-term presidency of William V.S. Tubman.

True Whig Power and the Patronage Machine

While the Liberian Constitution allowed for only one 8-year presidential term, starting in 1944, Tubman ruled for six terms and eventually amending the presidential term in the Constitution. The length of Tubman's reign and goodwill relationship with the United States was strikingly illustrated in a series of photographs of President Tubman with U.S. Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson in Washington (Dunn 2009:photographic inserts). Tubman reign for the dominant True Whig party was marked by a policy of "national unification" on the surface, but operated through a deeply embedded system of patronage relations. In this section I discuss the history, ideology and impact of Tubman's rule and patronage system that lead up to the 1980 coup over President Tolbert and marked the first interruption in the True Whig Party and Americo-Liberian rule over the country.

Economically, Tubman was well-known for his institution of the open-door policy, which allowed foreign investors, mostly in iron-ore, into the country (Liebenow 1969:72). Rising above European countries in investment, by the end of the 1960s more

than fifty U.S. companies were in Liberia. For a while, the country thrived in a golden age and with increased revenue, the Liberian government was able to repay the 1926 Firestone loan. Tubman also leveraged U.S. financial support, US$152.6 million between 1943-1962, to build schools, hospitals and roads (Sisay 1985:152-154).

Starting with a visit in 1957 from Vice President Nixon, the U.S. began to express concerns about potential "communist subversion" in the West African region (Dunn 2009:65). Subsequently the United States built a Voice of America relay station and CIA communications center, followed by an Omega navigation station capable of tracking the movement of all ships and planes (Wonkeryor 1997:63). Recognizing the *quid pro quo* nature of the U.S. stance towards Liberia (Dunn 2009:67), Tubman maintained diplomatic relations with the U.S. through ideas of the shadow colony, as evidenced in a 1954 speech Tubman gave in Washington DC:

> Ever fresh in our memories is the long story of an intimate and unsullied relationship of friendship with the United States, our Mother Country. Neither are we unmindful of the millions of our kith and kin who, while our forebearers went to Liberia, Africa, remained here as loyal citizens of the United States, making their concrete contributions towards the development and advancement of this great nation and participating in the great struggles of blood and toil to make the world safe for democracy. [quoted in Sisay 1985:151]

On the domestic political scene, Tubman promoted a "national unification" policy that sought to unite the Americo-Liberian elite with the rest of the nation: "We must now destroy all ideologies that tend to divide us. Americo-Liberianism must be forgotten and all of us must register a new era of justice, equality, fair dealing and equal opportunities for everyone from every part of the country, regardless of tribe, clan section, element, creed or economic status" (quoted in Sisay 1985:149). Tubman put on a show of interest in Africans outside of the Monrovian, Americo-Liberian elite; he dressed in traditional

African clothing and even hired anthropologists to study the different "tribes." One hundred years after Liberian national independence, Africans finally obtained the right to vote in 1946 (Gershoni 1985:104).

Tubman managed his long-term reign of power by developing a strong cult of loyalty, as one poetic Tubman supporter writes:

> If you love Paved Streets, you must love Tubman //
> Who has paved the dirty streets of every city. //
> If you love modern Buildings, you must love Tubman //
> The designer of modern Liberia. //
> If you love flying from country to county, //
> You must love Tubman who gave us the first //
> National Airline. [quoted in Boley 1983:70]

Yet beneath to the ideas of Tubman's "national unification" policy and show of interest in African cultures, his leadership demanded assimilation to the founding myth of Christian "civilization" (Dunn 2009:32). Tubman solidified the personalization of politics, family inheritance of political power and ensured that power remained seated clearly within the True Whig party and Americo-Liberian elite. Tubman ruled staunchly against any opposition, using paid informants to rat out opposition (Sisay 1985:158). To further control political power, Tubman appointed himself as the head of all Poros, a male society that taught young men the rules of society and also played an important role in mediating social organization and hierarchies, and controlled the leadership of unions (Liebenow 1969:88, 101). These draconian measures helped to silence opposition to Tubman's rule and his grip on power increased in the wake of the receding golden age, worldwide economic recession, and declining industrial interests and opportunities in Liberia.

The impact of the failure of the iron-ore industry on Liberia was so devastating that it required a bail-out by the International Monetary Fund (Liebenow 1969:174). Following the bail-out, an investigatory report led by scholars from Northwestern University revealed a state of "growth without development" (Liebenow 1969:174). The Liberian economy was based upon foreign investment and industries, including luxury industries, such as a gin distillery, brewery, marble tile factory and television industry (Liebenow 1969:176). The report criticized expenses such as a US$15 million executive mansion, the funds from which could have been used to construct much-needed schools and public housing (Liebenow 1969:155,176). However, attitudes towards the development of infrastructure remained cynical, as Liebenow (1969:188) suggested that the utility of a USAID loan for the construction as roads only brought bad government to the people. As Tubman fell into poor health near the end of his presidency, he tightened his grip on power even further – clamping down on student protest and even suggesting that Liberian students would no longer be allowed to study in America. Tubman's follower, William Tolbert, had a bit more compassion for these growing student interests, to the good fortune of one young Americo-Liberian man from Harper county. In 1972, Charles MacArthur Ghankay Taylor traveled to the United States and attended Bentley college in Massachusetts, became a leader of Liberian students and eventually re-appeared, quite notoriously, in Liberia (Ellis 2007:52).

Tolbert (1971 – 1980)

After the death of Tubman, Vice President Tolbert inherited both the presidency and the continuing economic problems. The U.S. Pentagon and CIA were not pleased with Tolbert's presidential appointment due to his demonstrated sympathies with Marxist students (Ellis 2007:50) and interest in lessening Liberia's traditional pro-U.S. stance (Sisay 1985:159). Tolbert granted freedom of the press, abolished the use of paid informants, limited presidential terms and also got rid of Tubman's expensive yacht (Sisay 1985:159). Doing a "poor maintenance [job] of the historic ties between the two countries [US and Liberia]" (Dunn 2009:136), Tolbert allowed Moscow to open an embassy in 1972 and refused U.S. government use of Roberts Airfield for bunkering facilities for a US Rapid Deployment Force (Ellis 2007:52). Tolbert took an increasingly pro-African stance; for example, he worked to the reform racist policy in South Africa. U.S. interest in Liberia waned.

Aside from his progressive pan-African politics, Tolbert did little to dismantle patronage and nepotism within Liberia. He gave government positions to family members, including three brothers, one sister, two daughters, one son, three nephews, one niece, five son-in-laws, one brother-in-law, four nephew-in-laws and one sister-in-law (Boley 1984:96). In doing so, Tolbert consolidated his control and power in Liberia, thereby contributing to a growing inequality.

Amidst growing student unrest surrounding Tolbert's corruption, the president's decision to raise import prices on rice, Liberia's staple food, sparked a large riot, to which the government responded with open fire, killing forty civilians (Sisay 1985:165). Tolbert's response to growing opposition was to

> be tough, mean and rough from now on. I want to show you that this is the time to carry out the law in this country to its fullest and I intend to do it. If in the past I have been lenient, I want the people to forgive me. I am not going to be lenient with them anymore. If you don't understand it now, you will understand it by and by. [quoted in Sisay 1985:166]

Shortly after this speech, Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe stormed the executive mansion in April 1980, killing President Tolbert and later most of his cabinet (K. Harris 1985:75).[18]

Returning on a wave of success as a student leader in the United States, Charles Taylor arrived in Monrovia in 1980 and obtained a position in the new Doe government. Taylor's position within Doe's government was short-lived, but highly profitable. In 1983, Taylor left Liberia, again for the United States, taking with him US$900,000 from the Liberian government. Angered by Taylor's embezzlement and flight, Doe issued an international warrant for his arrest. As a friend of Doe during the Cold War, the U.S. government apprehended and detained Taylor in a Massachusetts correctional facility. Taylor spent 15 months in the prison before he escaped (Ellis 2007:67). He paid US$50,000 to escape with three other prisoners, but the miraculous and mysterious escape, according to well-informed stories, may well have been aided by the U.S. government. Providing fuel to arguments of U.S. complicity in the escape, Taylor's lawyer, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, claimed no charges were ever pressed against his client for the escape (Ellis 2007:67). Taylor's escape afforded him opportunity to pursue power in Liberia. He vanished from the U.S. and spent time in Libya to train military forces.

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[18] Some have argued that the United States contributed to Tolbert's assassination by withdrawing support (Ellis 2007:12)

Conflict and Ideology

In this section I examine the role of ideology in the pursuit of power during the Liberian civil wars. In particular, I explore how various warlords activated ethnic ideologies to gain support. I also consider how the relationship between Liberia and the U.S. government also influenced the shape of the Liberian conflict. Finally, I look at how the ideas of the shadow colony were activated and used by Liberians during this time period.

Samuel Doe, a man without formal education from the Krahn ethnic group, sought to replace the dominant rule of the Americo-Liberian True Whig Party. Doe pursued power in the name of the liberation of "country" people, but followed many True Whig practices of government, including embezzlement, nepotism, corruption and the creation of an ethnic constituency (Ellis 2007:64). As Hall has argued, ideological struggle and counter or "subaltern" ideology – in this case, "country" liberation – occurs when people "interrupt the ideological field and try to transform its meaning by changing or rearticulating its associations, for example, from the negative to the positive" (Hall 1985:112). Through the creation and exploitation of ethnic identities and constituencies in opposition to the Americo-Liberian elite identity, Doe gained political support by pitting his own people, the Krahn, and later the Mandingo against the Gio and Mano peoples, who themselves organized into ethnic patronage systems (Ellis 1995:177-178). Doe also allocated many government positions to his own people, creating a "Krahn hegemony" (Dunn 2009:181). However, the U.S. government saw Doe as a representative of the "indigenous majority" rather than a notorious warlord and took the opportunity to exploit Liberia in support of U.S. cold war interests (Dunn 2009:181). In

1981 alone, U.S. aid totaled US$58.6 million and a grant for US$43.5million was to be distributed over four years to the Liberian military. The United States also allowed the sale of 541 M-16s to Liberia (Dunn 2009:154). In hopes of speeding up Doe's promised presidential elections, the United States also gave US$350,000 to aid Doe's Liberian Constitutional Commission to define voting precincts and register voters (K. Harris 1985:76).[19]

Doe's violence had created refugees from the Tolbert government, many of whom had sufficient money and family connections that enabled them to flee to the United States, removing vital financial resources from the country. This capital flight compounded with on-going financial crisis caused serious problems for the floundering Doe government (Dunn 2009:166). Consistent with the experiences of other countries in the region, by 1984 exports had declined while interest payments increased (K. Harris 1985:76), and the Doe government could not make government payroll. In part, the inability to pay salaries was due to Doe's increase of low-level civil servant wages by 100-150% and the overall increase in the number of government employees (Dunn 2009:166).[20] Hoping to curb financial problems, Doe began printing and issuing Doe dollars. The Liberian economy became two-tiered, with the government accounting in U.S. dollars, but paying salaries in Doe dollars (Ellis 2007:55).

Within the chaos of violent and unstable rule, Doe was finally selected as president in a fraudulent election in October 1985. In the month following Doe's "election," one of his opponents, Thomas Quinkwopa attempted a coup. During this

[19] Some have argued that the United State's urgency for elections was motivated by potential uranium and off-shore oil interests (see K. Harris 1985: 87).

[20] In 1979 the government employed 18,000 civil servants and by 1983 Doe had increased the number of civil servants to 56,000 (Dunn 2009:166).

series of tumultuous events, U.S. support waffled: first in support of Doe's election fraud; second, in complicity with Thomas Quinkwopa's attempt at Doe's life; and third, a return to support of Doe in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt (Dunn 2009:150). Quoting U.S. Ambassador Bishop, Dunn explained U.S. actions at this time as shaped by an original interest in helping Doe to manage a "modern" African government, later shifting into a self-serving interest in "'curb[ing] corruption and mismanagement in the fiscal operation of the government of Liberia,' that would ensure a retention of U.S. access to 'our strategic facilities'" (quoted in Dunn 2009:150).

After 1986, U.S. financial and military aid to Liberia was reduced (Dunn 2009:153). In part, the drop in support was also a response to the 1980 coup refugees who had settled in the United States. Several of these individuals lobbied Congress to oppose Doe's human rights violations in Liberia (Dunn 2009:151). In 1986, Senator Kennedy had also requested an audit of U.S. financial assistance to Liberia, to which the Liberian embassy responded: "Liberia is not a plantation or factory that Senator Kennedy or anyone else can close down by simply dismissing the employees and declaring bankruptcy" (Dunn 2009:148-149). Despite the human rights lobby and audit, the U.S. government still continued to provide some military support, and thereby political support, to Doe. The U.S. government justified its support of Doe using shadow colony ideology; as U.S. Ambassador Swing explained, the United States was helping its "old trusted friend" in the project of nation-building (Dunn 2009:154). While the U.S. government provided aid to Liberia, the Doe regime continually mismanaged its finances to a point of near ruin. Attempting to reform the failing Doe treasury, the U.S. Operational Experts or Economic Stabilization Support Project (OPEX) began on January

4, 1988. In the words of an OPEX expert: “The [U.S.] experts took over control of the bank account and the checkbook of the government” (Dunn 2009:169). However, the planned 2-3 year project ended after one year, because Doe would not cooperate with U.S. plans and advice (Dunn 2009:171). While some Liberians saw OPEX as a U.S. attempt to help with financial reform, the project certainly had its critics, who felt it was heavy-handed imperialism (Dunn 2009:170).

Tensions between the two countries came to a peak in May 1987, when the U.S. government pressured the Doe government for loan repayments. The cash-strapped Doe government responded in June 1987, stating that it would revalue the charges for foreign use of Liberian land. The U.S. government only paid US$100,000 annually for use of its three security and communication installations (Dunn 2009:172-173). However, by this time, U.S. interests in these facilities, built and valued in the 1960s, had declined and Doe instead held a twelve day national fund drive, raising US$4.5 million to make the loan payment. In a national Independence Day speech on July 26, 1988, a scholar speaking on behalf of President Doe publically criticized the U.S. government’s support since 1847 as “peanuts” (Dunn 2009:174). Influenced by mounting international and domestic pressure against Doe’s massive and on-going human rights violations and the waning of Cold War strategic interests in Liberia, President George H.W. Bush finally suspended military and then security assistance to Doe’s Liberia in 1989 (Dunn 2009:155).

An Invasion

On Christmas Eve 1989, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) invaded the eastern part of Liberia (Ellis 2007:75). Orchestrated from Côte d'Ivoire by NPFL leader Charles Taylor, the invasion and subsequent war factions toppled the Doe regime. However, before this shift in power, Doe invoked shadow colony rhetoric in attempting to appeal for U.S. support (Dunn 2009:176). In a letter to President Bush, Doe wrote:

> Our Capital is named after your President Monroe. Our flag is a replica of yours. Our laws are patterned after your laws. We in Liberia have always considered ourselves 'stepchildren' of the United States. We implore you to come to the help of your stepchildren who are in danger of losing their lives and freedom. [in Dunn 2009:177]

Doe's desperate letter was not dignified with a response, though the U.S. government eventually tried to arrange for Doe's exile in Togo. However, these exile plans were interrupted by warlord Prince Johnson who brutally killed Doe on September 10, 1990 (Ellis 2007:87). Despite Johnson's blood-thirst for power, his outward violence prevented him from ascending Doe's presidency.

Shortly before Doe was killed, politicians from all of Liberia's major political parties (excluding Taylor and Johnson) met in Gambia with the intention of electing a new leader for Liberia. Liberian political scientist Amos Sawyer was selected as the head of the International Government of National Unity (IGNU) in 1990 at this meeting. Critics of the IGNU referred to the new "government" as the Imported Government of No Use, arguing that Sawyer was selected only by elites who were invited and could afford to attend the meeting in Gambia (Ellis 2007:14). The IGNU was not fully recognized by the U.S. government and Taylor still controlled most of Liberia during the IGNU (Ellis 2007:15).

Following the outbreak of violence in 1990, thousands of people began fleeing from Liberia to neighboring countries including Côte D'Ivoire, Guinea, and Ghana. With the arrival of several large groups of refugees in Ghana by September 1990, the Ghana government opened the Buduburam Liberian refugee camp. The camp quickly developed and provided refuge for more than 30,000 refugees at various points in time. Chapter 4 presents a detailed history and contemporary description of the Buduburam camp.

In the wake of Doe's death, as brutal violence persisted, U.S. warships carrying 2,000 Marines lingered off the coast of Liberia. In a sign of hope, Liberians believed the US had come to intervene and stop the conflict. Unfortunately they were wrong; President Bush had sent the warships and marines to evacuate U.S. nationals (Ellis 1995:168). In the words of President George H.W. Bush: "Liberia was not worth the life of a single U.S. Marine" (quoted in Ellis 1995:168).

In 1993, a massacre at Harbel Firestone plantation brought the ongoing, yet somewhat forgotten Liberian conflict to the attention of the international community once again, leading to international pressure for a ceasefire (Ellis 2007:100). The day before Independence Day in July 1993, the three main armed factions, the NPFL, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the newly emerged United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) signed a ceasefire agreement in Benin. With this agreement the IGNU dissolved and a new Liberian National Transitional Government was created with representation from both the NPFL and ULIMO (Ellis 2007:101).

Charles Taylor had gained substantial power following Doe's death. This power operated through two ideological bases: the continuation of the oppositional struggle of Thomas Qwinkwopa, who had attempted to assassinate Doe, and the pursuit of

democratic change (Sawyer 2005:27-29). Taylor gained power through the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas and, within Liberia, developed extensive patron-client relations and support of clan chiefs (Ellis 2007:91). As a part of the wider masses, armed Taylor supporters had the power and capacity to seize natural resources – anything from food and money to diamonds and drugs. In the business of war (Reno 1996) and resulting "economy of plunder," states do not engage in capital intensive activities or sustainable use of resources, such as agriculture (Ellis 2007:187). Instead, the shadows – "the complex sets of cross-state economic and political linkages that move outside *formally* recognized state-based channels" – become more visible during war (Nordstrom 2004:106-107, emphasis in original). In the shadows of war, illicit, international economies feed the few involved at the top. For example, one U.S. ambassador estimated that from 1990-1994, Taylor received US$75 million plus tax revenues per year from diamond, timber, rubber, gold and iron-ore trade. This figure does not include his profits from marijuana (Ellis 2007:90-91).

While some have described the Liberian war as an ethnic war, caused by environmental decay and clashes in cultural identity (Kaplan 1994), ideas about ethnicity became an ideology such that politicians mobilized ideas about ethnicity to build a cause and political support. As evidence of the fabrication of ethnic ideology, Ellis (1995:183) has argued:

> Victims of militia violence from various parts of Liberia, interviewed in July 1994, reported that war-bands in fact were generally composed of people speaking various Liberian languages. This supports the view that the ethnic labels generally attached to the various militias are ideological representations used by politicians as a means of creating constituencies. They then acquire a certain political substance over the course of time. It is interesting to note, moreover, that the warlord who failed most spectacularly – Prince Johnson – did so precisely

> because he neglected to cultivate an ethnic base, that is to say a political constituency.

Liberia continued a lengthy and intermittent civil war (1989-2003), resulting in more than 200,000 casualties, about 750,000 refugees and 1.2 million internally displaced people (U.S. Department of State 1998:2). In a country with a pre-war population of approximately 3 million, the loss of life was tremendous and devastating.

Prayers for Colonization

During the early days of the conflict, Liberians prayed in churches to end the conflict. A Nigerian law student, Ewa Unoke (1993), studying in Liberia when the war broke out, wrote of the prayers for colonization heard in churches:

> We pray, Lord, let America come and colonize us now for 20 years so we can learn. At least we shall have food, 'green back,' salary, electricity and water. Yes, let us work for them and have peace, maybe, after twenty years experience with colonialism we would have learnt our lessons. [Unoke 1993:40]

Unoke then summarized the beliefs that supported such prayers:

> Whenever they [Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone] had political conflicts, they resolved such conflicts quickly and amicably too. Colonialism leaves a sobering effect on the colonized nation and its people, they copy several systems from their ex-colonial masters and all these promote development, peaceful co-existence and harmony. [Unoke 1993:40]

Ellis dismissed "Liberians who reasoned thus" as "attaching too much importance to the fact that Liberia is the only country in West Africa never to have been a European colony, for Liberia too was originally designed by colonizers" (Ellis 2007:181). Applying Hall's (1985) re-reading of Marxist "false consciousness," Liberians praying for colonization were not unwitting dupes who had constructed a false history, but were people who based their understanding of their circumstances upon ideas of the shadow

colony. At the beginning of the civil war, Liberians were emerging from a period of immense financial support. Of all U.S. administrations; President Reagan provided *the* most aid to Liberia. Bush shifted the terms of U.S. relations with Liberia; however, the new U.S. terms of non-involvement had yet to alter Liberians' ideas of U.S. benevolence. As such, the concepts available at the time did not include rhetoric critical of the United States. The problem of the war could only turn inwards upon the Liberian people, who were heavily shaped by the nationalist rhetoric of the Tubman and Tolbert regimes, which had emphasized the independent, non-colonial status of Liberia. The solution to the burgeoning civil war could only be understood in terms of this history: hence, the prayers for colonization.

Peace Interventions

The U.S. role throughout the conflict remained largely hands-off and facing the lack of U.S. and international intervention in the Liberian conflict, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was concerned about regional stability and decided to intervene, creating the Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group (Ecomog). Ecomog, comprised primarily of Nigerian forces, entered Liberia in 1990. Counter to ECOWAS' ideas of peace-keeping, the Ecomog forces proved highly corrupt and Liberians referred to Ecomog as "Every Commodity or Moveable Object Gone" (Dick and Boer 2001:26).

Attempting once again to quell unrest, the 1995 Abuja Accord gave armed factions joint control, yet the conflict persisted (Ellis 2007:106).[21] While unwilling to get involved in the war, the U.S. government nonetheless lodged criticism against the Ecomog forces for forming new militias and fuelling the war. The U.S. government persuaded ECOWAS to allow a private American security company, the Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE), to provide Ecomog logistics at the expense of the U.S. government (Ellis 2007:103-104). In a turn of events, PAE also became involved in the war during the third battle for Monrovia on April 6, 1996. Two warring factions, NPFL and ULIMO-K, both armed by Nigerian Ecomog forces, brutally attacked the unprepared ULIMO-J forces, led by General Roosevelt Johnson.[22] Appalled by the stark inequality that promised to become a massacre, PAE helicoptered arms to Prince Johnson and the ULIMO-J fighters (Ellis 2007:108).

During one last bout of massive raid and plunder, called "Operation Pay Yourself," Taylor's forces helped themselves to the riches of the country and people, while Taylor quietly took the remaining parts of Monrovia, thereby "winning" the war (Ellis 2007:108). In July 1997 elections were held in Liberia. With an 80% voter turn-out, Taylor defeated the opposing presidential candidate Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf by gaining 75% of the vote. His winning campaign slogan, "he killed my pa, he killed my ma, I'll vote for him," reflects the depth and intensity of Taylor's systems of patronage and terror

[21] For two detailed accounts of the 1990-1997 war, see Stephen Ellis's (2007) *Mask of Anarchy* and Mark Huband's (1998) *The Liberian Civil War*.

[22] ULIMO forces were a rebel group in the first civil war. ULIMO split into two competing factions in 1994. ULIMO-K forces were primarily Mandingo people led by Alhaji G.V. Kromah, while ULIMO-J forces were primarily Krahn people led by General Roosevelt Johnson.

(Ellis 1995:109). Certified as a fair election by former president Jimmy Carter, Taylor was inaugurated to the presidential office (Levitt 2005:211).

Following Taylor's election, Liberia experienced a brief period of interwar years (1997-1999), though Taylor and his government continued their violence, committing numerous extrajudicial killings. Foreign investors were hesitant to do business in Liberia due to Taylor's unstable and brutal rule (Levitt 2005:211-212). As the warlords profited, the general economy struggled. With rising food costs in 1998, Liberians were becoming more and more disgruntled with Taylor. On the international peace-keeping scene, Taylor was also losing clout. He had not cooperated with Ecomog stipulations for the demobilization of armed forces; he violated the Abuja Accord by building a Liberian military, which was the responsibility of Ecomog; and he had upset the IMF by signing all of the country's mineral rights to one company (Levitt 2005:212-215).

In 1999 Taylor was also accused of backing the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) forces that had started war in neighboring Sierra Leone. The deals between Taylor and RUF involved exchanges in arms, ammunition and diamonds; most notably, Taylor received uncut diamonds for his support of RUF (Levitt 2005:227). These valuable, uncut diamonds would come back to haunt Taylor. Following the accusation of his involvement with RUF, things got worse for Taylor: the UN imposed sanctions, banning diamond and then timber sales.[23] Then, in April 1999 Liberia was attacked by Liberians United for Reconstruction and Democracy (LURD), comprised of former ULIMO-K fighters, who entered the country from Guinea. LURD eventually took control of part of Liberia and

[23] In 2000, Taylor tightened control on his country, shutting down two independent radio stations (Levitt 2005:213-214).

approached Monrovia. Taylor appealed to the UN for support, but he was left alone in his pursuit of power.

As LURD forces encroached upon Monrovia in 2001, Taylor wrote an angry letter to the Ghanaian president, accusing him of supporting LURD by allowing Liberians to enter his country freely and stay at the Buduburam camp, which he believed was a recruitment hub for LURD (Levitt 2005:220). In 2003, Taylor experienced more opposition, as a new rebel group, Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), comprised of Doe loyalists attacked in Liberia. Later that year LURD entered Monrovia and Taylor was charged with war crimes by a Sierra Leonean UN-backed Special court.

By 2003, the pressure for U.S. intervention was immense, but the US government was evasive, and President George W. Bush only issued a statement saying that Taylor must step down. Noticeably, U.S. policy no longer referred to the special friendship of the shadow colony that it had established with Doe. After numerous failed peace talks, on July 7, 2003, Bush sent thirteen U.S. soldiers to conduct a humanitarian assessment in Liberia. After their arrival, Monrovia was attacked once again. It was then that Liberians angrily lined up eighteen bodies in front of the U.S. embassy in Mamba Point. The benevolent ideas of the shadow colony were turned on their heads, in an attempt to create an ideology critical of the U.S. involvement in Liberia.

On July 25, 2003, Bush ordered a naval force of 2,300 to the coast of Liberia. Their mission was unknown and the U.S. government claimed they were not intervening because Taylor had not yet stepped down. After numerous promises, on August 11, 2003 Taylor finally resigned and agreed to seek exile in Nigeria. Hanging onto his thin thread of Christian divinity, Taylor claimed: “I have accepted this role as the sacrificial lamb”

(in Levitt 2005:237). Following Taylor's retreat, 200 U.S. Marines arrived in Liberia. Even though fighting still persisted from August 22-24, 150 of the U.S. Marines left the country on August 24th, only eleven days after arriving. It was now very clear that the United States was not going to be involved.

New Government

In this section I trace the aftermath of Taylor's departure from Liberia and the implementation of a new government. I explore the attempt to sway national elections based on different ideological positions and also examine the task of constructing a new Liberia, with particular attention to how the new government maintains and allocates power.

The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) arrived on October 1, 2003, 15,000 peacekeeping forces strong, for a one year mission to establish peace in Liberia. Formed upon the recommendation of the UN Secretary-General, UNMIL aimed to help implement the ceasefire, protect UNMIL staff and civilians, support humanitarian and human rights assistance, support security reform and implement the peace process (UNMIL 2011). Despite the UN's optimistic projections, eight years later in 2011, the UNMIL forces still patrol Monrovia and beyond in their UN-plated all-terrain vehicles.

On October 14, 2003 Charles Gyude Bryant was inaugurated as the head of the new transitional government for a two-year term (Moran 2004:506). Bryant later left office with charges of embezzlement and corruption. Following the interim government, Liberia held presidential elections in 2005. The twenty-two presidential candidates came

mostly from the upper strata of Liberian society, each claiming assets ranging from US$200,000 to more than US$4 million – most of which were invested in property and other ventures in the United States (Sawyer 2008:184-185).[24] Three Liberians returning from the U.S. diaspora population led the most formidable campaigns in the 2005 presidential elections: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, George Weah and Charles Brumskine (Pailey 2008). The candidates defined themselves not in terms of political issues, but by constituency base (Sawyer 2008:183). Sawyer, the former head of state during the 1993 Transitional Government, illustrated the exclusionary nature of the national issues debated during the 2005 campaign. For example, the "heritage movement's" mission was to ensure that an Americo-Liberian or Congo person did not become president. Strategically, Johnson-Sirleaf, a Harvard-educated, former World Bank employee, emphasized her Gola and Kru ancestry, most notably her two illiterate grandmothers, to appeal to non-diasporan Liberians (Sawyer 2008:187). She also campaigned on her reputation; one poster merged her 1985 election poster with the 2005 version, claiming that she stands up to repression. However, her critics questioned her position in government during the 1970s and support of Charles Taylor in the early 1990s (D. Harris 2006:382).

Quite the opposite of Johnson-Sirleaf, famous footballer George Weah's popularity came from his opposition to educated elite rule and he was touted as a self-made man. Weah appealed to the masses because he earned his own wealth and therefore did not need the wealth of Liberia to exploit as his own (Sawyer 2008:188). He ran on a

[24] The Liberian constitution requires presidential candidates to have at least US$25,000 in real estate assets to qualify (Sawyer 2008:184).

catchy slogan: "9+14=23," representing his AC Milan and Liberian National team jersey numbers = the 23rd Liberian president. After the first round of elections, Weah pulled ahead with 28.3% of the vote; Johnson-Sirleaf followed with 19.8%. However, by the second round, Johnson-Sirleaf had gained enough ground to win with 59.4% of the vote, followed by Weah's 40.6% (D. Harris 2006:383,384,388). Weah's lack of education – he did not finish high school – eventually proved to be a major stumbling block (Sawyer 2008:186).

"Growth for Development"

Once inaugurated, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf appointed fellow Liberians from the U.S. diaspora to key cabinet positions in the ministries of Commerce, Finance, Information, Labor and Agriculture (Pailey 2008). Writing about the role of "diaspora returnees" in the new Liberian government, Pailey (2008) posed a haunting question:

> Could the returnees constitute a political enclave, a new constituency not based on primordial ethnic or sectarian affiliations, but based on their orientation as people who lived abroad during the war, acquired certain skills, and now have the capital and expertise with which to contribute to the country's political development?

The returnees have instituted a new order of social status "defined by the experience of life abroad – schools attended, associational affiliations, accents, and networks/alliances in the Diaspora" (Pailey 2008). Pailey likened the new terms of status to the old term "civilized," and questioned to what extent the new order constitutes a "returnee hegemony."

Johnson-Sirleaf inherited the challenge of settling the emotional and psychological wages of war. One response was to institute a Truth and Reconciliation

Commission (TRC) in Liberia and among Liberians living in the diaspora. The TRC's mandate was "to foster truth, justice and reconciliation by identifying the root causes of the conflict, and determining those who are responsible for committing domestic and international crimes against the Liberian people" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2009:2). The TRC's final report includes a section on U.S. involvement, lending critical light on U.S. commercial-driven policy:

> During the conflict period when most industries in Liberia were sanctioned so as to avoid resources fueling the conflict, rubber remained in legal production. …While the UN gave some consideration to imposing sanctions on Liberia's rubber industry in October 2001, U.S. lobbying on behalf of Firestone and the potential economic impact prevented the Security Council from taking further action. [Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2009:244-245]

The report criticized the U.S. government further for their stance of non-involvement and commercial interests:

> During the conflict from 1989-1997, however, White House officials dismissed the notion that the United States had a special relationship with Liberia. National Security Advisor Robert Gates described the historical relationship as, "meaningless; it doesn't govern us anymore; we treat Liberia just like any other country, and we have no real interest there." [Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2009:246]

Yet it seems the special relationship has resumed. President Obama received President Johnson-Sirleaf in Washington: "I have been an extraordinary admirer of her work for many years now.... The United States and Liberia are close friends, longstanding partners, and Liberia is now emerging from a very difficult period" (All Africa 2010c).

Carefully extracting herself from the disasters of Tubman's "open-door" policy, Johnson-Sirleaf responded to the 85% unemployment rate and US$3.7 billion debt in her country by working to achieve "growth for development" (Pailey 2008). However, her economic dealings remain entrenched in international lending institutions, such as the

IMF and World Bank, and foreign investment. Like other West African heads of state, Johnson-Sirleaf returned from her trip to the United States in May 2010 with spoils. She obtained US$20 million from the U.S. government for agricultural improvement; US$15 million from the Millennium Challenge Corporation; an agreement from Delta Airlines to fly direct from Atlanta to Monrovia; and a commitment from Chevron to explore crude oil in Liberia (All Africa 2010b).

As the UN removed timber and diamond sanctions, the country took on the challenging task of reinvigorating these industries to national advantage.[25] Members of Johnson-Sirleaf's cabinet have also worked to alter the 37-year extension on the Firestone loan that was renegotiated during Gyude Bryant's transitional government in 2004-2005 (Pailey 2008). Furthermore, the STOP FIRESTONE campaign, launched in 2004, charged the Firestone Corporation with massive labor abuses akin to modern slavery. "Firestone's estimated net profit from Liberia's raw latex alone was US$81,242,190, though workers on the plantation were receiving less than US$4 a day for tapping a quota of over 750 trees" (Pailey 2008). In addition to labor conditions, the campaign criticized Firestone's policy of extracting resources and processing them outside of Liberia, removing the country from further profits (Pailey 2008).

Johnson-Sirleaf has also had to carefully navigate the enduring warlord presence in Liberia. Prince Johnson and Jewel Howard Taylor, former wife of Charles Taylor, both occupy senatorial seats. According to a *Christian Science Monitor* article, Taylor also maintains support:

[25] The country has even employed new strategies for tracking trees using bar-codes (Powell 2009).

> In Taylor's old neighborhood, called Congo Town, it's not clear if Taylor could do any wrong. Most men and women milling about on a recent Saturday morning say they miss Taylor. "If even there's an election in Liberia today, Charles Taylor will win. People love him," says Maria Bappu, who was born in Sierra Leone but grew up in Liberia. She's not convinced of his guilt. [Moore 2009]

Occasionally appearing in international news, Taylor's on-going trial for war crimes in Sierra Leone attracted media attention as witnesses, such as Naomi Campell and Mia Farrow, were called to testify about Taylor's possession and gift-giving of uncut diamonds (Chivvis 2010). As the 2011 elections draw near, the future of the new Liberian state is anything but certain. Former warlord, now senator, Prince Johnson declared his presidential candidacy, calling for international observers to ensure a fair and democratic process (All Africa 2010a). Initially promising only to fill one presidential term, Johnson-Sirleaf also announced her candidacy for the 2011 election: "Her spokesman Cyrus Badio said she had not realised before the 2005 poll how much work needed to be done in Liberia,…'I know where we are today, I know where we ought to be tomorrow and I know how we will get there,'" proclaimed Johnson-Sirleaf (British Broadcast Corporation 2010).

The question remains: Who is the "we"? With all of the attention on reversing the "brain drain" effects of the war by bringing Liberians in the American diaspora to help create a new Liberia, what are the prospects for the return of Liberians living in the near diaspora within West Africa? How do they fit into the new Liberia? In the following chapters I consider the place and power of Liberian refugees in Ghana, within the West African region and on the global landscape.

Building upon the work of ideology that I have put forth in this particular history of Liberia, I analyze power at the Buduburam camp. In particular, I draw upon and

consider the lasting impact of the ideas of the shadow colony and the ideologies of "civilization" and "republicanism." The "historical traces" of these ideologies carry through my analysis, particularly in chapters 5 and 6 where I return to the ideas of freedom and nationalism. Prior to analysis of my data, in the next chapter I outline my research methodology and consider how my position as a researcher at the camp framed my data collection and ultimate analysis.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS FOR NAVIGATING THE LIBERIAN-AMERICAN DREAM

This chapter discusses research methods. The first section examines the issues surrounding my position as a researcher at the camp, particularly in relation to the larger humanitarian industry. The next section details the research methodology, including a description of the individual methods, their purpose, implementation and limitations. The final section links my role as a researcher from the U.S. to the larger framework of the shadow colony introduced in chapter 2.

Positionality and Humanitarian Requirements

Scholars (Horst 2006; Jacobsen 2005:61; Van Hear 2006:135) conducting research in refugee camps have discussed the complications of collecting livelihood information, especially remittance data, in an environment where international agencies distribute humanitarian aid. In part this is due to the de-politicization of refugees as the "universal humanitarian subject." Refugees must project an air of despair and desolation, visually evidenced by wounds, torn clothing and poverty to receive humanitarian aid, (Malkki 1996:378, 384). "Refugees are helped because they are helpless; they must

display their need and helplessness" (Stein 1981:327). In a camp setting where it can be difficult to discern an official helper from within the pool of non-refugees, including humanitarian aid workers, UNHCR staff, volunteers, journalists and researchers, the best strategy might be to put forth the humanitarian vision of a refugee to any non-refugee.

The situation becomes further complicated because the roles of researcher and aid worker rarely remain mutually exclusive. At Buduburam, a UNHCR student intern conducted research under the name of the UNHCR, and international non-profit volunteers have often provided financial sponsorship for young children. In such an environment it can be difficult to discern who has what kind of authority and power, especially the power to influence humanitarian aid and migration prospects. As a researcher, I struggled to set myself apart from the aid workers and the volunteers. However, as a white American, I could never fully separate myself from this image, and for good reason. I did give assistance to people: food, provisions, and less frequently, money. I did volunteer, at the Children's Nutrition Center and the eye clinic during my preliminary fieldwork in 2005. And I did conduct research. In the next sections, I outline and discuss my research methodology in terms of methods used, but also as a complex ethical process that required constant acknowledgment of my position, in the eyes of many, as a potential ticket to America.

The Interview

At the camp, The Interview is not to be taken lightly. While technically it might refer to any number of interviews involved in the resettlement screening process, "interview" or even just "sat" [for an interview] specifically connotes the prospect of resettlement. As a researcher intending to conduct interviews, I was presented with quite a conundrum. How could I distinguish my interviews from The Interview? Even though my informed consent process discussed (in Liberian English) my lack of involvement with the UNHCR, WFP, World Health Organization (WHO) and US government, my words could never quite extinguish hope. Often, hope sprang from my interview and subsequent arrival at someone's house.

Clarifying my role and the purpose of collecting information became an even deeper problem when I wanted to know much of the same information that immigration officers requested. My questions about household management strategies, income, remittances, food coping strategies, and the future dove-tailed a little too neatly with the information required to determine eligibility for humanitarian aid. As I outline my methodological processes in the following sections, I also address the ways in which I worked to distinguish my questions and intentions from migration and humanitarian aid programs.

One of the most important elements in conducting research at the camp was to create an understandable and clear informed consent procedure. I collaborated with my three Liberian research assistants to create an informed consent form in Liberian English. The form included key elements about the voluntary nature of participation, my status as

a student rather than aid or immigration worker, and a clear statement that the interview would not result in benefits, humanitarian or otherwise. We also informed participants that they could choose to stop at anytime and gave them our contact information so that they could also choose to withdraw their data from the project.

A key challenge to informed consent was the meaning associated with signatures. Signing documents formalized the interview process and was too similar to an immigration interview. As a result, we reviewed the informed consent form together and the participant just checked a box to acknowledge consent once the information had been reviewed and agreed upon. All names of research participants have been changed to protect anonymity.

Data Collection

In this section I outline my key strategies and methods for data collection during my seven month research period (December 2008 – June 2009), including participant-observation, semi-structured interviews, net-mapping, focus groups, a household food economy survey and daily food logs. In each section I describe the purpose and implementation of each method and identify any limitations or caveats.

Participant-Observation

The mainstay of anthropological research, participant-observation, offered the most fruitful means of shifting my presence from aid worker to researcher. In a textbook

sort of way, my willingness to haul my own water or eagerness to eat and prepare palm butter paved the way for many important conversations that allowed me to see beyond carefully crafted refugee stories. Informally, a friend at the camp that I have known and worked with since 2005 introduced me to countless people and shared all facets of her own experiences in Liberia and at the camp. My constant collaboration with three research assistants (trained community health workers) also helped me to gain access to a diverse range of people. In my initial months, my research assistants also helped me work through Liberian English language challenges.

Semi-structured Interviews

During the first two months of research, I conducted semi-structured interviews in 28 households. Informed by my period of research at the camp in 2005, I developed a preliminary interview guide with a range of topics falling under the general topic of household management, including cooking and eating; food sources; food concerns and meanings; coping strategies; social networks; economy; migration experiences; and demographics (see Appendix B for the full interview guide).

A group of six Liberian refugees who all had experience assisting with research projects reviewed the interview guide and made suggestions. Key suggestions included the ordering of questions to best build rapport. Furthermore, the group also provided feedback on the similarities between my research interviews and immigration interviews so that I could attempt to distinguish my interview from others. The group started to

correct my questions written in Liberian English, suggesting the grammar of "serious" English instead. "Speaking serious" technically referred to standard American English, but also referenced hierarchical status. In use, speaking serious was correlated with being "civilized." Speaking serious was sometimes strategically used to gain access to foreigners, who usually understand it better than Liberian English. At the same time, Liberians would tease others who chose to speak serious and in doing so, asserted themselves at a higher status.

The group of Liberians reviewing my questions explained that previous researchers wrote their interview and survey questions in "correct" English. I insisted we write the questions in Liberian English and once we completed cognitive testing to test whether the questions in the Household Food Economy Survey were understandable to a range of people, the importance of using Liberian English became clear. The research assistants found that they did not have to do an extra level of translating during interviews. In my own research I fluctuated between "speaking serious" and Liberian English. Most often my research participants and I spoke a combination of serious and Liberian English. The ability to understand Liberian English substantially shifted the quality of my data and understanding of people at the camp. In some instances, participants used Liberian English as a way to distinguish themselves as Liberians. For example, on numerous occasions, while speaking serious to me, several individuals were chided for acting outside of themselves. In other instances, research participants – such as the research assistants above who insisted on using "correct" English – sometimes preferred not to speak Liberian English. Throughout this dissertation I have transcribed

passages from interviews and conversations at the camp. To the best extent possible, my transcriptions reflect the language choices of my research participants. Thus, quotes fluctuate between Liberian English and "speaking serious."

I collaborated with two research assistants to purposively select a diverse range of households, representing diverse socio-economic situations. Given their positions as Liberian aid workers at the camp, the research assistants had greater access and familiarity with households in severe poverty. I conducted each of the 28 interviews in collaboration with one of the research assistants. In all but two cases, we both asked questions and engaged in the interview. In the other two households, the participants preferred to speak more directly with the research assistants. We held the interviews inside or outside of each participant's house, depending on their preference. When the participant agreed and there was not too much background noise, we audio-recorded the interview for direct transcription following the interview.

In each household we had to make a decision about the person with whom to conduct the interview. While I refer to the interviewees as "household heads" the term household head does not necessarily refer to the economic household head, but to the individual controlling the distribution of food in the household. Using this strategy, we interviewed primarily women. Of the 28 interviews, three were held with men. This selection technique certainly had limitations in terms of the collection of financial data, since women who were not always the economic head of the household and thus, could not always explain how husbands or other members of the household received money. When possible, we spoke with additional household members. As such, the data collected

represents the managing practices of women and single male-headed households, but does not speak to the intra-household managing dynamics between male and female partners. Nonetheless, speaking with the person who did the shopping, cooking and portioning of the food enabled the collection of detailed food purchase and consumption data.

In many cases, additional visits and conversations with these participants before and after the scheduled interview provided greater depth to my understanding and analysis of the household situation as well as the research participant's ideas about social status and migration options. These 28 interviews established a standard set of household food economy data, from which I was able to develop a survey tool to use with a wider audience, as I describe later in this chapter.

I also conducted interviews with organizational representatives from the UNHCR, World Food Programme (WFP), the Church World Service-Overseas Processing Entity (CWS-OPE, which interviewed refugees applying for resettlement to the U.S.), the camp management, Ghana Refugee Board (GRB) and various international, national and local NGOs. My primary purpose in conducting these interviews was to understand refugee policies and practices and to learn each organization's perspectives on migratory options. In some cases, the interviewees distinguished clearly between their personal opinions about Liberian refugees in Ghana and their organization's official perspective. In my analysis, I distinguish between the two perspectives where necessary. Finally, I conducted in-depth interviews with eight refugees about social status at the camp and in Liberia. These interviews focused on the relationship between social status and various

migratory prospects. These interviews were completed in the last month of fieldwork, given the necessity of cultivating strong relationships with research participants before being able to talk freely upon such a sensitive topic.

Net-Mapping

The data in the semi-structured household interviews and informal conversations was insufficient to define the specific details of social networks, so I adapted a "power mapping" method used in Northern Ghana to assess the level of influence of the members in each individual's social network (Schiffer and Waale 2008). I created a social net-mapping exercise that would help me to understand and systematically record complex social data. My research assistants and I experimented with the net-mapping method during the 28 semi-structured interviews and later standardized the process for the Household Food Economy Survey. The methods I describe here refer to the standardized version.

For our purposes, we divided the maps of social contacts into four geographic regions (camp, Liberia, West Africa, "overseas") and then recorded information about each contact, including relationship, duration, type of assistance provided (financial, food, non-food provisions, labor, interpersonal), and quantity and frequency of assistance. Figure 2 below shows a sample map illustrating a social world with relations only at the camp and "overseas."

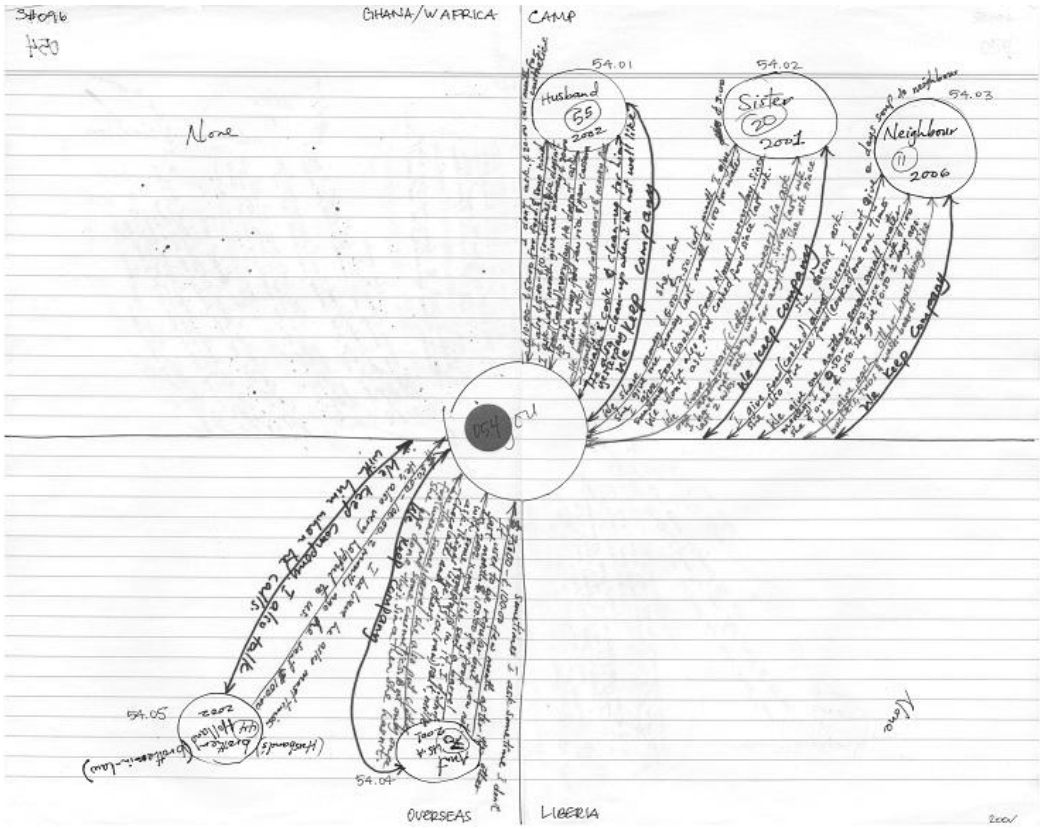

Figure 2 Sample Net-map with Social Networks at the Camp and "Overseas"

Figure 3 illustrates a net-map with social relations at the camp, in Liberia, "overseas" and in West Africa (outside of the camp).

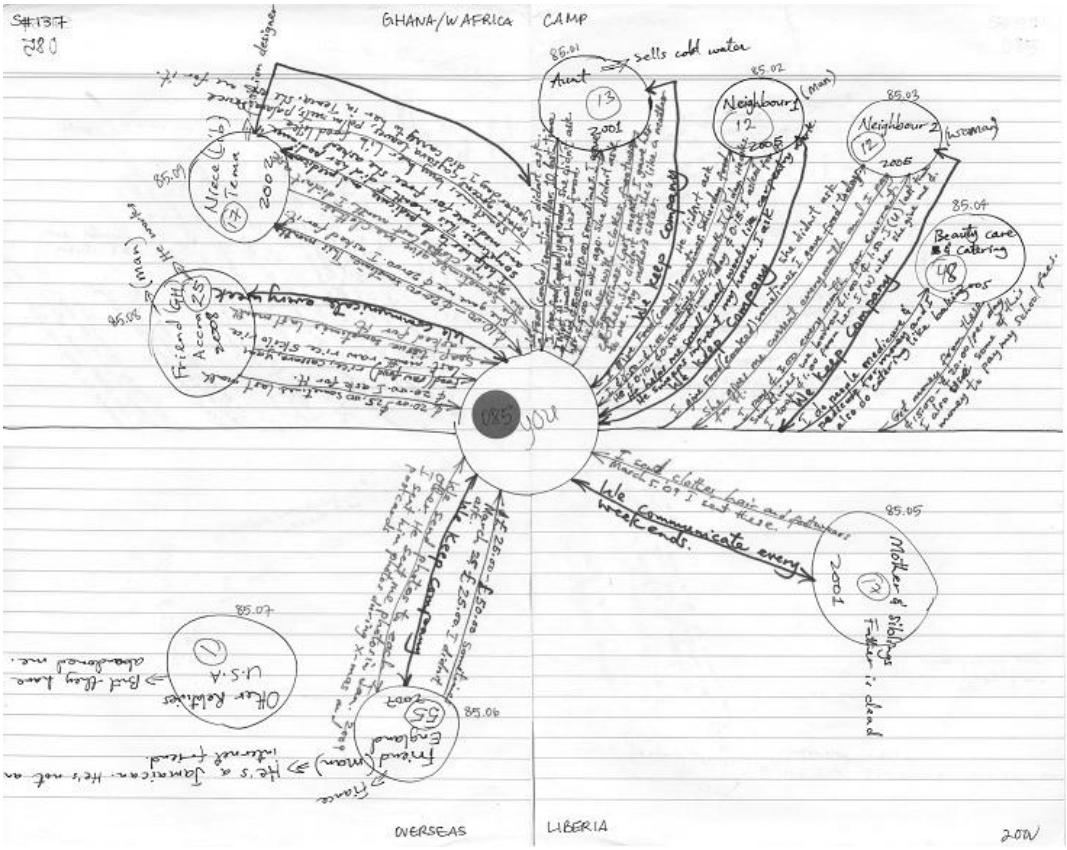

Figure 3 Sample Net-map with Social Networks at the Camp, in West Africa, Liberia and "Oversesas"

Net-mapping began with a circle in the middle of the paper surrounded by four quadrants. The circle represented research participant and each of the four quadrants represents a geographic area: Buduburam, West Africa, Liberia and overseas. The mapping began with creating circles to represent people in the social network. Circles were placed in the appropriate quadrants and contained the person's relationship to the research participant and the duration of the relationship. Next, arrowed lines connected the circles to the research participant to represent the direction of assistance. Lines were

color-coded to represent the type of assistance: red = financial assistance; blue = labor; green = food; orange = non-food provisions; purple = interpersonal (most commonly, communication or spiritual advice). Along the lines contained the details of assistance: what was given and amount, frequency and when last assistance was provided, and whether the person requested the assistance. In many cases, research participants included their businesses as a circle on the net-map. Other participants chose to include WFP rations on their social net-maps. The last step of net-mapping helped to establish relative value placed on each of the relationships. Similar to Schiffer and Waale's (2008:7-8) "influence towers," we used beans to represent value. Participants divided dry beans between the circles – people in their network – to represent the strength of different relationships. Initially an entire bag of beans was used for this step when I used net-mapping with my 28 case study households. After experimenting with net-mapping during semi-structured interviews, I standardized the net-mapping for use with a larger sample set of 148 households and for purposes of comparative analysis, only 200 beans were used with net-maps created during the Household Food Economy Survey. Though tedious to complete, net-mapping provided extensive data on the nature of social networks among refugees at Buduburam. Net-mapping provided the primary means for gathering remittance data. Similar to limitations with the self-reporting of any other form of income, the remittance data collected via net-mapping remains incomplete. Research participants only reported on their own personal income and not necessarily on remittances that other members of the household received. Furthermore, self-reporting of income does not necessarily align with actual income received as many people did not

keep detailed financial records and did not recall or chose not to share all income information. Asking for financial records was not appropriate, so I elected to work with self-reported data, despite potential limitations. The data presented in this dissertation reflects the perceptions of refugees. After returning from my fieldwork, I constructed a Microsoft Access database to store and analyze net-map data.

Focus Groups

I also held four focus group discussions (23 people total) to learn about social status at the camp and in Liberia. I organized the focus groups based on educational background, age and gender. Each focus group lasted between one to three hours. I obtained informed consent to audio-record the focus group discussions and also took detailed notes during the sessions. To facilitate discussion, we (two research assistants and myself) raised questions during the focus groups about social status and class structures both at the camp and in Liberia. Questions were purposively open-ended and sought to establish characteristics of social distinction at the camp. We also asked participants to discuss differences, similarities and exchange between the social systems and hierarchy at the camp and in Liberia. The data collected from these focus groups helped to illuminate key ideas behind social organization at the camp.

Household Food Economy Survey

Drawing from information gathered in the 28 household interviews, I created a Household Food Economy Survey to gain a broader understanding of household economies and managing strategies. The survey consisted of four components: 1) Demographic Information; 2) Household Economy; 3) Food Insecurity Module; and 4) Social Net-mapping (see Appendix C for a complete version of the survey). It took between 1-3 hours to complete the entire survey. Creating the social net-map took the longest amount of time, sometimes an hour or more, while the food insecurity module took as little as 5-10 minutes.

A team of three research assistants administered the survey to 148 Liberian households. Of this sample, 124 households were randomly selected, while the remaining 24 households surveyed were households that had participated in the initial set of 28 semi-structured household interviews. Three of the original households repatriated to Liberia by the time of the survey and the fourth household had experienced a severe medical emergency and was not able to participate. These 24 households completed two net-maps, one during semi-structured interviews and one during the survey. I only included data from the Household Food Economy Survey net-map in my data analysis.

I selected households randomly within each of the twelve zones of the camp. While the Children's Malnutrition Center had a map of the camp divided into 30 sampling clusters, I decided against cluster sampling because I thought the map was outdated, having been created more than 5 years earlier. Instead, I received data from each of the 12 zonal heads about the number of households in their zones. This data had

been collected in February 2009, the previous month. Using the random number generator function in Microsoft Excel, I created a list of random numbers with a range of 1 to 3964 to represent all of the numbered houses at the camp. These numbers were then correlated with a zone and house number. For example, zone 1 contained 327 HHs and Zone 2 contained 69 HH. Thus house #1 in Zone 2 would be coded as 328. In this way I was able to generate a list of 124 HH to be surveyed.

Participation in the survey was optional and followed the informed consent procedures I outlined earlier in this chapter. If a research assistant reached a household that did not want to participate, they went to the 8th HH to the immediate right. This procedure was also used for vacant homes or, if a family was not home after three attempts to contact them. In some cases a house number was divided into A,B,C units. In this case, the researcher would work with the HH that was present. If multiple HH units were present, each research assistant contained a random number chart to select the unit by closing their eyes and pointing their finger at the chart.

In the field, sampling methods faced several challenges. First, the settlement was mapped by different groups. The UNHCR created numbered zones (1-12) along with house numbers to mark space at the camp. Figure 4 shows a composite map of the camp zones, created from the UNHCR's individual maps of the zones. Zone 11 remains undefined in the map because the UNHCR did not have a map of this zone.[26]

[26] It is likely that the UNHCR did not have a map of zone 11 because this is a newer part of the camp that emerged through expansion and inter-mingling with Ghanaian villages. In the time between my two research visits 2005 and 2009 the camp had significantly expanded to the west in zone 11.

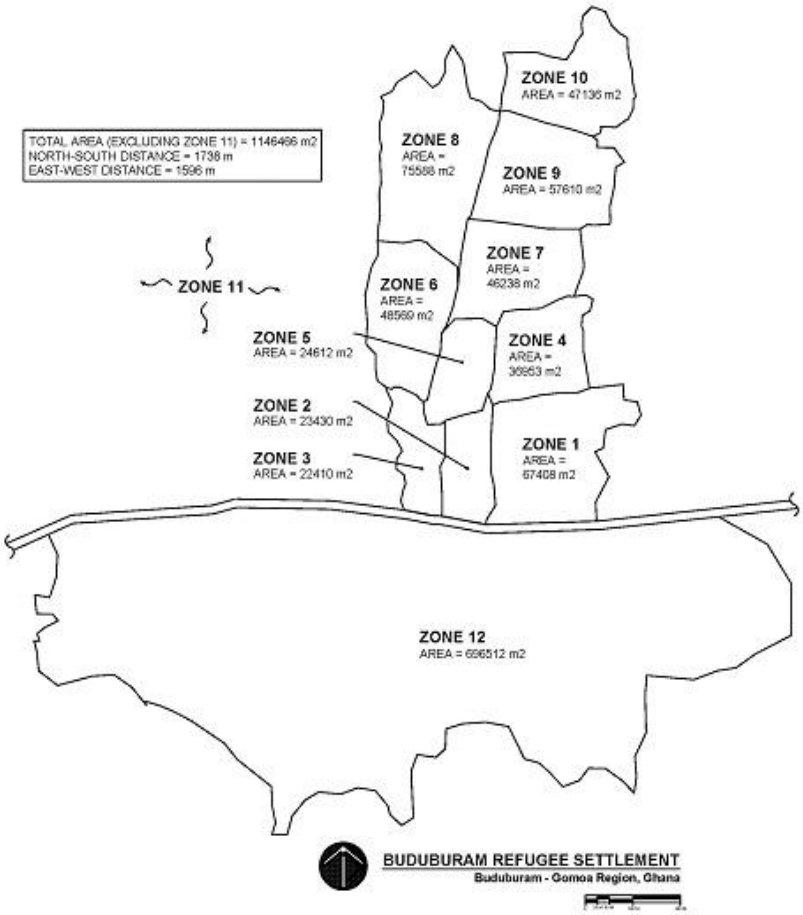

Figure 4 Map of the Buduburam camp, created from UNHCR zone maps by Robert Trapp and Mark Trapp

By the time the UNCHR created numbered zones, refugees had already established their own names for areas of the camp. Furthermore, houses often had several markings on them as numbers have been changed over time and many houses did not actually have numbers on them. Locating any given house number was extremely challenging because the houses were not numbered or arranged in numeric order, such

that house #42 could be next to #89. These conditions extended the amount of time research assistants spent gathering their sample. To the extent possible, we worked with camp maps to locate houses, though the maps were several years old and in some cases did not include entire parts of the camp that had since been developed. Further, some household numbers were never located. This may be due to inconsistent numbering. Several agencies, government and non-profit, have numbered houses in different ways. In other cases, people have painted their houses, covering original numbering. Internal migration at the camp is frequent, especially now as the camp population has declined, and many people did not necessarily know the number of the new houses.

A second challenge was the adaptive sampling strategies. As stated above, research assistants moved 8 houses directly to the right if they could not survey a household. In some cases, there were no houses to the right, so the researcher chose an alternate direction. Additionally, in zones 11 and 12, numbered household maps were scarce and the houses were large. In these cases once a research assistant found one of the numbers on the sampling list, they used that household as the focal point from which they would select the rest of their sample. They moved eight households to the right, left, up, down and diagonal planes until they filled their sample list with existing houses. In a few other zones, research assistants had to use this method when they could not locate a house number.

Before carrying out the survey, we did cognitive testing with a diverse group of six refugees to ensure that our use of Liberian English was understandable to potential participants. Diversity was based primarily on variety in age, education and language

capacity. Following the cognitive test, we did a week-long field test of the survey to work out any kinks and selected a final set of survey questions to reduce the amount of time it took to complete each survey. Each day after the completion of Household Food Economy surveys, I met with each research assistant to review the data they had collected and recorded field notes pertaining to the interview. In many cases during the actual survey, the research assistants would return to households for clarification. Although I was not present for the surveys, the research participants explained my role and also provided a piece of paper with my contact information. Constantly aware that my lack of presence influenced the high quality of data, especially regarding social networks and financial transactions, I exercised caution when deciding what parts of data to include in my research. I have also maintained communication with my research assistants and key participants to keep an open dialogue about analysis of the data we collected together.

Food Security Measure

Within the fields of humanitarian aid and development, "food security" is a key feature of assessment and evaluation for the condition of aid recipients. In seeking to understand how refugees managed to stay at Buduburam, I began my research by learning about the basic survival mechanisms of refugees. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO 2002) has defined food security as regular access to safe food that meets dietary needs for a balanced, nutritious diet. Various methods exist for the assessment of household and community food security, ranging from assessment based

upon caloric intake, coping strategies and ethnographically-based questionnaires. In my research, I followed Frongillo, Nanama and Wolfe's (2004) model for developing an ethnographically-based tool for evaluating food security. In the process of doing so, refugees at Buduburam demonstrated a more complex standing of security that went beyond daily survival mechanisms. Before discussing the limitations to measuring "food insecurity," I first briefly review my methodology for creating an assessment tool.

Upon completing the 28 semi-structured interviews, I wrote one-page household summaries, detailing information about the household, including household size, income sources, average money spent at the market, and safety nets (such as people who could provide assistance if needed and the ability to store rice). Independently, my two research assistants and I read the household summaries and classified each household as food secure, moderately food insecure or severely food insecure. These categories were intentionally undefined. Once we had each classified the households, we discussed our classifications and eventually achieved a consensus on the most applicable classification for each household. The process of this discussion began to illuminate key features of so-called "food security" and insecurity. I then collaborated with another research assistant who worked at the Children's Nutrition Center; he independently read and classified the households once again, noting criteria for classification. I then compared and reconciled the two categorizations and created a rubric of key features of food security. From these features, I developed questions to elicit data.

I developed a set of 16 multiple level questions (i.e. a main question with several follow-up questions) and through cognitive testing reduced the number of questions to 12

multiple-level questions (Appendix C contains the final list of questions). Following the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Security Module (USDA 2008), my questions were time-bound, in that they asked about a behavior within a past time-frame. For example, "Since the New Year, did you or any big person in the house wait until afternoon before finding anything at all to eat because you never had the hand?" (In the past three months, has any adult in your household waited until the afternoon before eating something because you did not have money to buy food?) Since all households included in my interviews had demonstrated at least one coping strategy, I varied the time period for which certain questions referred, as some behaviors were more frequently used than others. For example, asking if a household reduced rice portions in the last year would tell very little about the actual household situation as most households would answer "yes" to that question. Additionally, the practice of cognitive testing helped to identify key questions. For example, one of the questions asked about "begging" for food. In conducting the cognitive tests the social importance of the word "begging" became clear such that individuals attached a certain degree of shame to the concept and thus, those who did answer affirmatively to begging did experience a certain degree of uncertainty.

According to Frongillo, Nanama, and Wolfe (2004), one of the final steps in creating an ethnographically-based evaluation tool for food insecurity is to calibrate or score the questions. However, the challenge of examining such a complex phenomenon as "security" reveals that certainty about the future cannot be reduced to the answer to a single or several questions. While the results of the measure were revealing in regards to

the extent to which households had to utilize various coping strategies and the consistency with which they struggled over the past year, the data cannot be interpreted without other supporting data, such as information about social networks. Thus, I paired the rather brief food security module with the more labor-intensive method of net-mapping to create a fuller picture of the uncertainty that refugees face and how they manage in light of rather precarious circumstances. In conclusion, while humanitarian agencies need quick and relatively inexpensive assessment tools, caloric data or even coping strategy data should not be used alone to inform intervention strategies.

Daily Household Food Logs

To understand the intimate details and decisions of household management, I adopted a method used by Hammond (1999) that involved the daily recording of household food economy transactions. Hammond's goal "was not so much to gather quantitative, statistically significant data as it was to understand the kinds of decisions that the household made in the course of 'making ends meet'" (Hammond 1999:119). I worked daily with two households for a month, tracking food preparation and distribution and general economic transactions within the household.

For one month I visited both Blessing and Lucy in the evening to record income, expenditures and food preparation for the day. We started by recording the food that was purchased and prepared throughout the day and how that food was consumed within the household. This enabled me to understand clearly intra-household food distribution and

inter-household social responsibilities. Furthermore, these daily visits also enabled me to get a greater sense of the financial and food "security" situations of the two households. Each day, I usually spent about an hour in each house and our conversations went beyond the topics of receiving and spending money to include other important issues and happenings, many of which were migration related. In chapter 4, I illustrate the findings and importance of this methodological approach in greater detail.

I purposefully selected households that had a similar composition (single mother or caretaker and three children) but with very different resource bases and qualities of life to help me understand socio-economic difference. I also chose households in which I was an active social and economic participant. I informally employed Blessing to help me wash clothes and clean my house approximately once a week. In addition to paying her for her work, I occasionally brought small things – biscuits, fruit, or juice – for her three children and helped out with emergency medical and household expenses. In Lucy's household, our exchange more frequently took the shape of hospitality, meals, knowledge, and gifts. For example, if we were sitting in the yard chatting and someone walked by selling mangoes, I would buy a few to share. I often ate meals at Lucy's house and would contribute to market money or purchase a gallon of oil or bag of rice. My exchanges with Lucy also involved money, but more commonly for luxury items rather than emergency expenses. My exchanges within both households certainly complicated my data collection and the data itself. As Hammond (1999:119) has also noted, this method required a pre-existing relation of trust between researcher and participant given the highly guarded nature of household economies in refugee camps. At Buduburam one

of the only ways I could gain access to this detailed information was by working with households with whom which I had strong relationships.

Always, Already Ambivalent

The sun was so stinking hot that day, I have no idea why I decided it was a good day to turn some pristine white fabric into a vibrant green and yellow mass of swirls and turtles. As my batik teacher and I stamped the fabric with hot wax, on-lookers wandered and stood by, speculating as though I could not hear. "She gon go make business. Uh huh, dat lots a money. She gon take dat wid her and sell it." Our dipping and stamping of the hot wax mimicked the beads of sweat pouring down my face. A little boy not more than 10 years old chatted nearby with his friend. "She gonna take dat piece der and sell it for 500 dollars, US." I couldn't stand it anymore. Why? Why were they saying this? "Don't mind them, they learned it from their illiterate parents," my teacher said. She had already come under fire from people who had seen her teaching me. They warned her not to teach me, arguing that I should be buying handicrafts, not making my own and turning it around into a business. Initially befuddled by the speculation on my supposed business aspirations and somewhat inflated prospects (US$500 for two yards of fabric?!), I later came to understand the speculation and ambivalence surrounding my presence and interest in handicrafts. If the Firestone Corporation could lease land from the Liberian government for 5 cents an acre and make a net profit of approximately US$81 million

(Pailey 2008:7), why couldn't (or wouldn't) I learn to batik for less than US$50 and turn around to sell my fabric for US$500?

It was only the day before this batik fiasco that I had handed out small stacks of cedis to my research assistants who had just completed the tedious phase of field testing with me. I exaggerate a bit, but only to demonstrate that the image of handing out stacks of money in a refugee camp is not lost on me. I paid my research assistants discretely – using envelopes as Lucy, my informal advisor, had suggested – by getting 10 cedi notes from the bank so that I did not have to hand each person a fat stack of 1 cedi bills.[27] While I was simply fulfilling my end of our work contract, I was well aware of the talk surrounding the speculation of salary and benefits of those fortunate enough to land a fieldworker (research assistant) position. The positions were simultaneously coveted and rejected. During one field test attempt, a potential participant told Johnson that she had to do her own thesis. And for that matter, he shouldn't be helping some white woman with her thesis, he should be writing his own thesis. This ambivalence about my simultaneous potential to help and to exploit marked much of my presence at the camp, and serves as a constant analytic force in my questions about why people stay at the camp.

Given the stakes involved in relationships between refugees and foreigners, the balance of trust was a major challenge during my research. I attempted to address the limitations of trust and ambivalence through a combination of methods and engagement with people at the camp. First, my brief period of fieldwork in 2005 enabled me to learn

[27] At the time of fieldwork, 1 Ghanaian cedi = approximately US$0.73.

Liberian English, but more importantly helped to establish myself at the camp. During this time period I connected with a key research participant who over time has opened the world of the camp to me. My reappearance at the camp in 2009 helped to distinguish me from other foreigners who come to the camp, promise they will return, and never do. For some, the fact that I was willing to come back to the camp – a rather unpleasant place to be, according to many refugees – gave me some credibility. Nonetheless, this reputation did not reach throughout the camp and I relied heavily on my research assistants to help me build rapport and trust with a small number of individuals.[28] In these instances my willingness to hang out – most often in front of the cook-pot, learning how to make or eat Liberian food – helped to establish a mutual trust.

As demonstrated in the batik example above, my research and analysis required multiple methods. In the first instance, participant-observation and my ability to understand Liberian-English opened me to such interpretation – as selling a piece of fabric for US$500 – and engagement, which in turn gave me information about the condition of refugees. My analysis of what I heard and experienced in daily life at the camp was provoked and driven through my conversations with key research participants, who in many ways embodied insight in the way that Gramsci (1971) wrote of "organic intellectuals."

In the next chapter I work from the knowledge and insight of five key research participants and begin to analyze the outcomes of my data collection within the larger

[28] In my last month of research I was still approached by people who thought I was somehow connected to an alleged, new resettlement program.

framework of establishing an ethnographic account of the camp and how people experienced their immediate daily lives, but also managed future migratory uncertainty. In writing an ethnography, I seek to present detailed description about the camp, its history, the people who live there and the institutions that structure the camp and life of its inhabitants. I then use this background to explore the ideas and ideology that shape social institutions, hierarchy and ultimately power at the camp.

CHAPTER 4

ETHNOGRAPHY IN A NEAR DIASPORA

Kerosene flames lit the selections on petty market tables, dotting the main roadway leading onto the Buduburam camp. Lucy and I followed these flickers of light past the police station on one side and the camp manager's office on the other. The bumpy earth car-road soon spilled into a clearing, an area called the "18." Lucy, a woman in her mid-thirties who has lived at the camp since 1999, seemed to know everything about the camp but didn't know why the clearing is called the 18. On Sunday evenings, the space was packed with people, music, dancing, fried rice, grilled meat and beer. In the dark of the night a banner flew over the 18, but without light, it remained unreadable. As we walked further from the 18 it had grown quiet and dark. We passed by Rose's house – a woman in her late 40s – and from the flickering light I could tell that she was reading underneath her mosquito-netted mattress.

Monday morning awoke with the sounds of roosters, sweeping and Christian prayers. On the outskirts of the camp I walked to the market table behind my house to get bread. Blessing would soon make the long walk to my house to help wash clothes, but first she had to feed her three children kokodolo (corn porridge) before sending them off to school. Nearby, Robertson – a man in his early thirties – quickly ate his morning rice before heading off to school where he is the principal. From the screen door of a

cookshop serving *ebba* (beans stewed in red oil, served over cassava *gari*), the 18 looked empty compared to the night before; life had literally and figuratively sobered up. The few people returning to Liberia made their way to the repatriation ground at the front of the camp. Market-goers from all parts of the camp went about their business.

Figure 5 Front entrance to camp, main path through market to the 18 (2005)

Just steps away from the 18, Jacobsen reported to his office at a Liberian NGO, passing the few people who have stopped to read the communication board at north end of the 18 – the once regular announcement of resettlement interviews has trickled almost to a standstill. Nobody needed to read the notice at the camp manager's office either, but

its content – the March 31, 2009 closure of the camp – was the topic of conversation in the cookshops, at church and in the market. In the already persistent glare of the morning sun, the banner floating above the 18 was now visible: *Virgin Nigeria, Roundtrip Airfare: Accra – Monrovia – Accra ONLY US $385!*[29] It seemed that everybody had an idea about where Liberian refugees should go.

In this chapter, my goal is to introduce the Buduburam camp. In writing an ethnographic account of a near diaspora group, I seek to present a detailed description of the camp, its history, the people who live there and the institutions that structure the camp and life of its inhabitants. Furthermore, I create a foundation from which I can explore how the ideas of refugees at Buduburam interact with social institutions, hierarchy and ultimately power at the camp.[30] This chapter interweaves the lives and ideas of the five people introduced above: Rose, Lucy, Blessing, Robertson and Jacobsen. I purposively selected these individuals because each illuminated a particular element of the camp institution, social structure and critical features that define the dynamics of power at the camp.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section, Arriving and Staying, outlines a brief history of the camp by enhancing the few existing written records with Rose's primary accounts of the creation and development of the camp. This section

[29] This sign serves as a clear symbol of the degree of mobility at Buduburam. Refugees can freely move in and out of the camp, which has become sort of a regional hub for trade between Liberia, Ghana and surrounding countries. However, most refugees I spoke with were not able to afford air travel between the two countries and opted instead for the less expensive, but much lengthier road trip.

[30] As used here, the term "near diaspora" references a geographic closeness to the homeland origin of Liberian refugees. While some refugees were born at Buduburam and had never been in Liberia, camp residents nonetheless expressed a deep sense of "being Liberian."

presents a history of the two types of services available at the camp: daily or livelihood humanitarian services and future-oriented migration assistance in the form of "durable solutions." The remaining two sections of the chapter address the contemporary form of livelihood and migration services. The second section, The Economic Underbelly, analyzes data collected from my Household Food Economy Survey (HFES) and Daily Household Food Logs with two intentions: first, to clarify how refugees manage at Buduburam and second, to examine social stratification at the camp. I frame this section with the daily lives of Lucy and Blessing, and use Robertson's insight to analyze key features of inequality and power at the camp. The third section, Getting Out, focuses on the logistics of the refugee migration bureaucracy and analyzes existing options for leaving the camp. In this section, the ideas and responsibilities of Chairman Jacobsen highlight a burgeoning tension between different options for the future, including prospects for resettlement, local integration and voluntary repatriation.

Arriving and Staying

Rose and I sat inside the screened porch of her house, hiding from the mid-afternoon sun as we drank cold glasses of Foster Clarks Tropical Fruit juice drink. Although I had spent many hours inside this porch, sometimes playing chutes and ladders or learning how to cook, this day we just talked. Rose described her journey to Ghana in 1990. She and her young son had made their way from Liberia on a Nigerian ship called the River Ollie. As the River Ollie pulled away from the coast of Liberia, warlord Prince

Johnson fired a missile at the ship, attempting to prevent it and the people on it from leaving. Although Rose refers to herself as one of the Buduburam "originals" who arrived in September 1990, the first Liberian refugees flew to Ghana in May 1990. Able to afford airfare, these refugees were relatively wealthy and stayed with friends or family in Accra, the capital city of Ghana (Essuman-Johnson 1992:79-80). Consistent with scholarly literature on class-based migration orders (Van Hear 1998), the wealthiest people fled Liberia first. Then, greater numbers of refugees in need of assistance started to arrive and the Ghanaian government opened the Afienya Training School to receive refugees in need of food, clothing and medical assistance. Faced with logistical problems at the training school, the Ghanaian government offered the abandoned church land of Buduburam as a refugee reception site in August 1990 (Okae-Mensah 1997:72). The Buduburam camp is located about 44 km west of Accra in the Buduburam Gomoa district. The camp runs along the edge of the international road stretching from Togo in the east to Côte D'Ivoire in the west; Figure 6 shows the road approaching the entrance to the camp.

Figure 6 The road approaching Buduburam

The first seven refugees went to the Buduburam site on August 2, 1990 and one month later the MV Tano River ship brought another group of 50 refugees that also made their way to Buduburam. By the end of September 1990, 7,000 Liberians were living at the Buduburam camp (Okae-Mensah 1997:61). The Ghanaian government's National Reception Task Force took sole responsibility for refugees during the first three months of the camp (Assuah 2001:62). On December 1, 1990, the UNHCR stepped in and took primary responsibility for the Liberian refugees, providing services primarily in collaboration with Ghanaian implementing partners (Essuman-Johnson 1992:126). The

Ghana Red Cross Society (a Ghanaian national organization) provided sanitation, medical and supplemental feeding services. The National Catholic Secretariat (NCS, a national organization) of Ghana managed the World Food Programme's (WFP) wet (cooked) food distribution from 1990-1991 and the dry (uncooked) food distribution from 1991-1996. The Christian Council of Ghana (a national organization) organized educational, counseling and recreational activities. World Vision International, an international organization, maintained the camp's water supply and supported women's agricultural income-generating projects (Essuman-Johnson 1992:127). The geographic and demographic size of the camp increased, reaching 17,000 people in 1997(Dick 2002b:12). After the resurgence of war in Liberia, population figures at the camp increased. However, the flexible movement of refugees through and within the camp makes it difficult to establish an accurate estimate of the population. A 2007 WFP assessment reported 38,000 refugees living at Buduburam (UNHCR and WFP 2007). In 2009, the UNHCR reported a population of 24,000 at Buduburam (UNHCR 2009:196). However, the UNHCR data reflects the number of refugees possessing UNHCR ID cards and therefore is likely an underestimation of the actual number of people living at the camp. For example, in my survey of 148 Liberian households, representing 815 people, 501(61%) had a UNHCR ID card.

Fledgling Refugee Bureaucracy

As the evening set in and our conversation about the camp's history deepened, Rose pulled out photographs showing the tented days of Buduburam – a sharp contrast to the contemporary landscape of concrete block housing. Rose holds her son, maybe four years old at the time, inside their water damaged tent. In another picture taken inside their tent, she and her son sit almost lifeless and very sick. Those tents were so hot, you couldn't go inside until night time, she said. The next photograph, taken the morning after a storm blew their tent away, shows another scene of hardship. These were not easy times.

When Liberians arrived in Ghana during the rainy season of 1990, the country did not have a national law pertaining to the treatment and care of refugees. Once the Ghanaian government requested international assistance, Liberians received de facto refugee status (Essuman-Johnson 1992:147). Unable to process individual applications for the large number of refugees arriving in Ghana, the UNHCR used a group determination procedure that granted *prima facie* refugee status[31] to Liberians in Ghana and issued ID cards. *Prima facie* refugee status meant that Liberians in Ghana would receive refugee status until or unless other circumstances proved they were not refugees, as defined by the UNHCR. Group determination sped up the bureaucracy and provided refugees with quick access to urgent care and assistance. As members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Liberians can reside in Ghana for 90

[31] *Prima facie* refugee status determination is "a practice by which all persons forming part of a large-scale influx are regarded as refugees on a prima facie basis. Group determination ensures that protection and *assistance* needs are met without prior individual status determination" (International Catholic Migration Commission 2010, emphasis in original).

days without further status adjustments. In order to work in Ghana, refugees must apply and pay for a work permit (Ghana Immigration Service 2011).

The persistence of war in Liberia and the subsequent movement of refugees into Ghana prompted the UNHCR to open a full branch in Accra in 1993. The Ghanaian government also created a bureaucratic entity, the Ghana Refugee Board (GRB) in 1995 to advise the government on refugee policy, help determine programs for refugees with the UNHCR, and ensure that programs are in line with government policy. Headed by a Chairman named by the President, the GRB is comprised of representatives from the Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Education, Employment and Social Welfare as well as the Ghana Immigration Service, Ghana Police Service, Bureau of National Investigation, and the National Mobilization Program. A representative from the UNHCR also sits on the GRB (Assuah 2001:57). At Buduburam, the GRB funded a camp manager to oversee the day-to-day operation of the camp.

While the camp manager occupied the official leadership role of the camp, the Liberian Refugee Welfare Council (LRWC) participated more directly in the actual affairs of refugees. Initially the Chairman of the LRWC was an elected position in 1990, but the LRWC Chairman has since been appointed by the camp manager. The Chairman interfaces with the UNHCR, GRB and refugees and also oversees the twelve zonal heads appointed to each zone, or neighborhood, of the camp.

The LRWC takes primary responsibility for sanitation and also hears and resolves disputes. All LRWC positions are voluntary, though staff members gain non-monetary benefits, such as occasional bags of rice. In 2003, the Ghanaian government and UNHCR

opened the Social Welfare Office at the camp. The Welfare office, along with UNHCR and other aid partners, sees to the general welfare of camp residents, most specifically unaccompanied children, chronically ill, single mothers and disabled individuals.

Contemporary Implementing Partners

Shifting out of the sadness of the tent photographs, Rose handed me an old photograph of her son surrounded by a group of friends, grinning and holding a birthday cake. Rose had learned to bake in Liberia and found that she could sometimes earn money at the camp by baking and selling cakes for special occasions. Although the UNHCR and WFP worked with several agencies at the camp to provide basic food aid throughout the 1990s, these distributions did not fulfill all the food needs of refugees and refugees still needed money for fresh foods, water, bathroom facilities (which required payment for use) and self-care provisions. By 1997, refugees received half of the quantity of food aid that they received in the early 1990s (Okae-Mensah 1997:87). As a result, individuals and families created a variety of small businesses to make ends meet (Jacobsen 2005:11). Rose initially started selling pineapple slices to supplement food rations in the 1990s. In the course of two decades, there have been significant reductions in the number of refugees collecting food rations, creating more business competition. Rose had to change her business several times to support herself and her son.

In 2009, the UNHCR carried out its few remaining services through contracts with five governmental agencies and four NGOs including the Ghana Red Cross Society

and a Ghanaian organization, Right to Play (UNHCR 2009:3). The UNHCR provided funding for a number of vital services at Buduburam, including 50 vocational/technical training scholarships; 60 university scholarships; allowances for some of the teachers at camp schools; allowances for some staff and stationary at the St. Gregory Clinic; enrollment of "vulnerable" people in Ghana national health insurance; a fostering committee for unaccompanied minors; and support of the Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment, an organization with the mission of protecting refugees from sexual and gender-based violence. By contracting its services, the UNHCR did not actually provide direct services on the camp, but maintained oversight of the distribution of its funds. The contracted agencies have a fair amount of power to decide how services are delivered.

Most direct services at the camp are targeted to meet the health and nutrition needs of refugees. The National Catholic Secretariat (NCS), one of the four NGOs, operates the health projects pertaining to nutrition, HIV/AIDS, general public health, sanitation, food distribution and skills training for caretakers and mothers. In 2005, the UNHCR funded the construction of the Children's Nutrition Center and in 2008, the Save Our Soul's Day Care, which focuses on nutritional and educational support of malnourished children. In 2009, major renovations of Buduburam's St. Gregory hospital were completed. At the close of my fieldwork in June 2009, the hospital administration was still looking for a doctor to fill the vacancy that had been open for the past six months. As of February 2011, NCS continued to provide limited nutritional services.

International NGO Assistance

Clean drinking and running water have been long-standing issues at Buduburam. Drinking water is sold in 500ml plastic sachets. If electricity was on, one cold sachet costs 5 pesawas (p) or 3 sachets for 10p. I usually drank *Life Water*, but sometimes I'd drink *Standard* or *Tano Fill*.[32] I didn't drink lesser known brands of water, like *God's Blessing* or *Love Me True* because people outside of the camp would occasionally package untreated tap or well water and sell it. Tanker trucks regularly came to the camp to fill the reservoirs and polytanks of Liberian and Ghanaian water vendors. People who can't afford packaged drinking water resort to reservoir water (with potentially great risk), although the latter was also typically used for bathing, washing clothes and cooking. A bucket (about 4 gallons) of reservoir water costs 30 p. However, this changed in 2008. The American Christian radio-show hostess, Delilah ("*love someone tonight*"), started the Point Hope Foundation in 2002 and after many years was able to install sixteen running water pumps at the camp. The pump water offered a new source of clean, affordable water, costing only 15 p a bucket, a 50% savings.

[32] Various brands of water have been marketed at the camp. One company hoped to increase sales to Liberians by naming its water "Lone Star" – a nickname for Liberia that refers to the single star on the otherwise American-looking flag of Liberia.

Figure 7 Walking west along the international road to collect water, early morning (2005)

Other international NGOs have also contributed to the well-being of Buduburam. Children Better Way hosts international volunteers to the camp to support orphaned children. Unite for Sight (UFS) has collaborated with a community-based organization (CBO), Self-Help Initiatives for Sustainable Development (SHIFSD) to open an eye clinic. SHIFSD has since returned to Liberia to continue its work there while UFS maintains services at the camp.

Local Assistance

Taking a stroll around the camp, it is clear that refugees have come to their own aid. Worn and new signs boast the names of CBOs: *VOICES OF PEACE AND CHANGE*; *HELP ERADICATE LIBERIA'S PROBLEMS (HELP); SELF-HELP INITIATIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (SHIFSD)* (Dick 2002a:28). These refugee-run CBOs vary in size and function but usually address issues such as peace-building, women's development, child and adult education, computer skills, disability, agriculture and skills training. Large, prominent CBOs, such as the Carolyn Miller School receive regular financial support from international donors and have obtained official non-profit status. Smaller organizations remain highly informal, pooling money from personal resources or culling occasional dollars from international volunteers or on-line donors.

During my first trip to Buduburam in 2005, I was one of many international volunteers that came to work with a CBO. Volunteers typically paid a fee to the CBO, which often constituted a significant portion of the budget. In the course of my fieldwork, I regularly received requests to support a burgeoning project or organization. It was also not uncommon to hear of someone who promised services to on-line international donors and then kept the money for themselves (Dick 2002a:28). A representative from the GRB described previous efforts to regulate the creation of refugee CBOs, but refugees criticized the GRB for attempting to stop refugees from helping themselves. In this instance refugees strategically co-opted the development discourse of self-help to maintain their rights to establish organizations. However, both the desire to increase the quality of life of refugees at the camp and to improve one's own financial situation have

led to competition between fledgling CBOs struggling to establish legitimacy and funding.

Churches

Similar to local NGOs, churches featured prominently, if somewhat ambivalently in the Buduburam geographic and social landscape. Sunday mornings promised a wave of women in bright African dress on their way to worship. By 2002, more than forty churches had emerged at the camp (Dick 2002a:34), representing all denominations of Christianity. There was also one mosque at the front of the camp. Churches were generally set up in one of three ways: as transplants from Liberia, as branches of Ghanaian churches or as entirely new churches started by refugees (Dick 2002a:34). Churches offered substantial social and financial support, especially for those within the inner circles of the church. A woman who had been at the camp since 1990 explained the priority of the Christian church: "you can eat food; sometimes Sunday you have to take something to Jesus to thank him." Not without scandal, some church structures have been used for financial gain. Several people told me about the church that sold Australian resettlement forms for US$200. People, some eager and some hesitant, bought and filled in the forms. Only later did they learn that the church itself was not real and the pastor had just made a lot of money in the name of God. I will return to such issues in chapter 5.

Figure 8 Newly built Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witness in 2005

Food Aid and "Vulnerability"

At the entrance to the food distribution "kitchen" a young woman rifled through her list of food aid recipients, checking IDs and collecting signatures or thumbprints. She practiced flexibility in terms of who needed to be present to receive the food. Rather than let me observe and sit idly, the woman measuring beans suggested that I help her to measure and distribute the salt. Somewhat of an afterthought, the salt was a low demand commodity compared to the corn, corn-soya blend, vegetable oil and beans. It was hot

and sweaty inside the barn-like building and I hid my nose and mouth in my shirt from time to time, avoiding full breaths of corn dust. I used an old rusty cut-off can to measure the salt. Based upon WFP standards, the family size – as few as one or as many as seven that day – determined how many cups of salt I placed in each person's plastic bag.

In a long-term refugee camp setting, the humanitarian aid system is structurally shaped by "vulnerability criteria" as a means of service provision. Vulnerability is a group-based criterion that provided aid and services – primarily food aid at Buduburam – aimed to reach refugees aged sixty years and older and their dependents; malnourished children and their immediate family members; people with disabilities; people with chronic or terminal illnesses (HIV, TB, cancer) and their dependents; unaccompanied minors; and socially vulnerable refugees, as referred by the Social Welfare Office and LRWC and screened by UNHCR and the camp manager. In each case vulnerability was assumed to lead to economic need or in the case of the socially vulnerable category, the vulnerability *is* poverty. In 2008, the UNHCR reported 15,800 Liberian refugees living in Ghana. A WFP official reported a list of 8,063 vulnerable refugees at the end of 2008, representing approximately 51% of the Liberian refugee population (UNHCR 2008:92).

The vulnerability criteria for the distribution of aid also carried over to international aid organizations at Buduburam. The Point Hope Foundation started and supported by American radio host, Delilah offered limited financial support for those most in need. At the time of my fieldwork, Point Hope supported fifteen individuals with a daily allowance. One-time financial assistance, most commonly for medical expenses, was also given on a case-by-case basis as determined by the Ghanaian site director for

Point Hope, who largely followed the advice of National Catholic Secretariat staff. While the broader structure of the humanitarian system governing long-term camps outlined a policy of providing aid only to vulnerable individuals, the aid workers were responsible for identifying and assisting vulnerability. As Voutira and Harrell-Bond (1995) argued, these aid workers interpreted the rules on the ground. For example, Kwame, Ghanaian aid worker who referred individuals to Point Hope and also gave assistance out of his own pocket, described the difficulty in determining who merits assistance.

> People tell stories. Seriously, tell a lot of stories. …Basically, these mothers don't make up stories the way other people. Like today a woman came to my office saying I should please help. …I saw her in the market [a few days ago], she was selling water. The bucket she was using to sell water was not even big…so you can imagine how much she was able to sell. So I called her to the office. She has two children. She was crying. How can someone who is crying, lie?

In most cases, he had one of his staff members visit the house to see the condition, which helped him to make a decision. If they had a big television or other nice things, he said they do not need assistance. Kwame had recently made the decision to stop the Point Hope daily allowance of a man with a severe medical condition because he felt that the man was refusing medical treatment so that he could get a daily allowance. Shortly after the allowance stopped, the ill man passed away. Kwame sadly acknowledged the imperfect knowledge upon which he makes decisions to help someone and in doing so had to confront his discomfort with the power that he has.

Rather than consider how the aid system might encourage or contribute to the destruction of individuals and livelihoods, aid practitioners and academics remain preoccupied with the question of aid dependency. The provision of assistance between

socially unequal relationships has a particular social history in Liberia. As explained in chapter 2, the "sponsorship" or patronage system between "civilized" and "uncivilized" people in Liberia was premised on the exchange of household labor for food, shelter and possibly education. If lucky, the individual being "sponsored" might also gain social status or connections throughout the duration of working and staying in the "civilized" household.

In a supposedly less indebted exchange at the camp, the humanitarian aid system provided food, sometimes shelter and possibly even education to refugees. From the perspective of some aid workers, this limited aid was viewed as problematic, as one Ghanaian aid worker explained: "A lot of refugees would be self-sufficient by now, but they have a victim syndrome – they feel they should be helped all of the time." In practice, WFP statistics actually demonstrated few opportunities for refugees to depend or rely upon aid as there was an overall decrease in food aid recipients from 2008 to 2009. By the end of 2008, 8,063 individuals were listed to receive food aid and by May 2009, this figure had declined to 5,806. Finally, at the end of June 2009, all food ration assistance ended. During the period of my fieldwork in 2008-2009 my survey data demonstrated that 60 (40.5%) heads of household received food aid. At the level of the individual, of the 815 individuals included in the survey, only 195 (24%) reported that they received food rations. Numerically, the evidence demonstrates a *lack* of dependency on formal aid structures, as more than half of the households surveyed did not have any food aid assistance. However, the question of aid "dependency" is more complex than

fluctuations in the number of refugees receiving food rations, but extends into the social networks and survival strategies of individuals.

When collecting data about household economies and social networks, households described their various strategies for obtaining food and other household resources. Most commonly, refugees shared food resources with their neighbors, friends and spiritual colleagues. However, the daily sharing of cooked food with a group of people – described as "susu cooking" by one woman – was not always economically driven, but was a deeply embedded social practice of "giving when you have it." Of the 148 households I surveyed, 35 (24%) households gave food daily and 26 (18%) received food daily. Furthermore, 17 (11%) households gave and received food daily. However, many survey participants could not quantify their food sharing practices, but instead said they shared food "when visiting" or when they have cooked. Through participant observation, I learned that people share food all of the time. To gain further insight into the dynamics of food sharing, I describe the scene at one household during an evening meal.

I had been invited to Gloria's to taste the house food (daily meal) that her son had prepared – banku (a fermented corn and cassava dough) with grilled fish and a pepper sauce. Gloria had recently been in the hospital with a heart problem, so her son was briefly at the camp to take care of her. He insisted that he would not put seasoning cube in the food because the doctor had told her to cut down on salt. While he was preparing the food, a woman in the neighborhood came by the house to tell them that they should set aside some food for her when it was finished. After she left, Gloria and her son

commiserated over the women's frequent requests for food. Despite the commiseration, they nonetheless complied and set aside her food. When the woman returned and tasted the food, she said she did not like it – that it needed a seasoning cube. Gloria told her son to put cube in the food to make it taste good. He refused. Trying to diffuse the situation, they said that white people did not eat salty food and since I was eating there that day…. "I not a white woman. I a black woman!" she retorted as she stormed into Gloria's house to get cube to crumble on top of her portion. Gloria explained that sometimes she will cook her food inside the house when she doesn't have much so that she will not be pressured to share what she really does not have.

Throughout many of my conversations at the camp, people spoke of the generosity of Liberians, who were willing to share – especially food – with family, friends, neighbors and even strangers. In part these exchanges were heavily mediated by social status. For example, many people explained that they would prepare a stew with many different kinds of meat so that should company arrive, they would have the flexibility to give that person multiple kinds of meat. As one woman explained, she has to put chicken, pigfoot, fish and bonnie (dried, smoked herring) into her stew; in case a visitor does not eat pork, she can still serve them chicken and two kinds of fish. Within these social guidelines, it was not entirely unprecedented for a guest to request a specific kind of food.

The widespread and deeply ingrained practice of giving when you have something helps to understand the relation between refugees and humanitarian food aid. On the one hand, refugees believed that the UNHCR and WFP had substantial amounts

of food available for them, yet they experienced significant reductions in food aid, creating a social dissonance between "giving what you have" and hiding what you have. On several occasions during my fieldwork refugees described cases in which WFP food rations and other resources went missing. Most prominently, several individuals described a scene that took place one night after midnight. A vehicle arrived at one of the main food distribution centers and was loaded up with rations. Refugees described the culprit as one of the key Ghanaian aid workers at the camp. Ideas about "stealing" food rations were reinforced by reports of the presence of WFP food products (labeled "NOT FOR RESALE") in nearby Kasoa and Accra markets.[33]

The dynamics of the social expectations surrounding food aid involved elements of structural power. A WFP program officer explained that they had written several proposals soliciting assistance for Liberians in Ghana in the past year, but only received one positive response, from the United States, allocating $150,000. As a multi-lateral entity reliant on donor funds, the WFP remained limited by the agendas of national governments, which the program officer interpreted as follows: "Liberians seem to be doing well in their [donors'] minds and I am sure they think people should, assistance should go to Liberia directly rather than to continue to assist them through camps which by now should be closing down and so on."

Food rations were scheduled to end in June 2008, but were extended to December 31, 2008. The explanations for this extension varied depending upon the agency; for

[33] I did not look for or see WFP rations for sale in Kasoa and Accra, but was frequently told about the sale of rations there. One explanation for the appearance of food rations in Ghanaian markets is that refugees sold their food rations, especially corn, to Ghanaians, who could in turn sell smaller quantities of ration food in the market.

example the UNHCR explained the extension as a result of access to additional food resources, whereas the WFP asserted the extension came out of a request from UNHCR. These differing stories allude to the complicated politics surrounding the distribution of multilateral aid that I will discuss further in chapter 6. At the end of 2008 when food rations were scheduled to stop, the WFP still had of list of 8,063 vulnerable refugees living at the camp eligible to receive food aid. As a WFP program official in the Accra regional office explained, the distribution of food rations was extended to June 2009.

> We extended because we were told repatriation of a certain number of people would be out [of the camp] by the 31st of December and it would not be needed. But the 31st of December [those people had not left] there was still a need. We extended to June 31st based upon a request from UNHCR. The proposal [to end in June] came by looking at projections for repatriation, saying that we should have considerably reduced people….The projections were done in such a way that by June, we were to be finished. I don't think that's happening anyway.

In March 2009, the WFP and UNHCR each notified the settlement via letter of the end of the food distribution program. The letter was posted all over the camp and was sent to the four "kitchens." At the end of May, 5,806 people were still eligible to collect food. This represented about 24% of officially counted refugees (those in possession of a UNHCR ID card) at Buduburam (UNHCR 2009). The last distribution I witnessed during my fieldwork ended up being the last food distribution at the camp; WFP rations ceased after June 2009. In the next section I discuss the range of economic livelihood strategies that supplemented and later replaced food aid.

The Economic Underbelly

On an early Sunday morning in June, both Lucy and Blessing had made their way to the market at the front of the camp. Lucy had just paid her two sons' school fees the day before but still had the looming overdue payment for her daughter's high school fee. Since it was Sunday, she nonetheless planned to fix a nice soup for her family and anyone who stopped by. Blessing had just plaited a woman's hair the day before and had an unexpected 1.5 cedis (a little more than US$1) that enabled her to cook a Sunday soup for herself and three children.

Entering the market just past the camp manager's office, a woman sat selling fresh fish and crab claws from a round piece of wood that, were she not sitting, she would be carrying on her head. Blessing stopped to buy four crab claws for 20p (less than 20 cents). Along the main market road Lucy had stopped to buy seven small pieces of crawfish for 50p. Across from the woman selling crab, another woman sold small red onions, *you-will-kill-me-beans* (lentils) and when the rainy season was nearing, green torborgi bitterballs. These are a small (about the size of a marble), bitter relative of the eggplant, used in spicy torborgi stew made with fermented red oil from the Loma region of Liberia. Lucy loved torborgi, but prepared water green (a green leafy vegetable similar to spinach) torborgi that day since the bitterballs were too expensive. Further into what can feel like a maze underneath the occasional dark zinc covering of the market, women slashed and sold bright green sweet potato greens while a man laboriously cranked a machine to grind fresh cassava leaf, releasing a wonderful scent, not unlike grass. On a

lucky day a vendor or two might sell fresh fever leaf (oregano), but rarely sweet blossom (basil). Lucy stopped to buy 60p worth of water greens.

A few stalls down, the previously frozen chicken, turkey and pig vendors hacked parts into little piles. Lucy bought three chicken wings. Chicken is cheap here, but two vendors nestled inside storerooms at the back of the market also sell the more expensive beef. Near the front of the market, dark underneath the shade, both Lucy and Blessing had stopped to buy fresh "zipper" fish – three for Lucy and one for Blessing. Nearby the piles of hot peppers seemed to get smaller by the day for the money you pay. Women sold two different kinds of palm nuts and mixed the two, if you asked. Blessing bought 30p to make palm soup. If you wanted to find lettuce, carrots, cabbage or string beans, you had to make your way across the path into the small market, where a couple of women sold these vegetables in small quantities. Giant pineapples, plums (mangoes), bananas and watermelon marked the north periphery of the small market, depending on the season. Neither Lucy nor Blessing bought fresh vegetables or fruit in the new market; these foods are usually reserved for when you are feeling rich. By late morning, the freshest food was gone from the market, leaving the late market-goer with rotting tomatoes, dark sagging defrosted zipper fish or that "toxic waste" Perdue chicken.[34] On her way home, Blessing bought one cup of rice, some fufu (pounded cassava and corn with a slightly sour taste, similar in texture to mashed potatoes) for the next day and coal for her cookpot. Lucy had a gas stove and rice at home.

[34] Some people called it Perdue chicken, though I was never able to confirm the actual importation of Perdue chicken.

Figure 9 Market Seller, with pigfeet in the foreground (2005)

At the Buduburam market, both Ghanaians and Liberians buy and sell goods. If you travel 15 minutes further east down the international road on a Tuesday or Friday, you will find a few Liberians shopping at the Kasoa market, where they can get goods and food cheaper, especially if they buy in bulk. Writing about the how refugees manage in protracted refugee situations, Jacobsen (2005:25) argued that the term "camp economy" is somewhat of misnomer, given the amount of overlap and integration between so-called camp and local economies. Living just 44 km west of Accra, some Buduburam camp residents have had plenty of opportunities to engage with a much

broader economy. Nonetheless, the majority of livelihood opportunities in long-term camps tend to be dominated by petty trade and service industries (Jacobsen 2005:11). One hundred and fifty-five individuals (32%) operated a business at the camp. Every few houses, someone has set up a small table or shop to sell – oranges, cube (Maggi chicken soup seasoning), pepper, biscuits, spaghetti – or offers a service, such as hair braiding or shoe repair. In 2005, phone booths with a cell phone or land line appeared throughout the camp. In 2009, the phone booths were replaced with shops selling phone card units because many people had their own cell phones. Internet cafes have become the new booming business at the camp.

Money exchange, bars, nightclubs and cookshops can also offer high monetary returns, but one must first have money to invest in these businesses. Some have used money they brought to the camp with them, saved money or used remittances to start businesses. One night-club owner reported daily profits of US$25, lamenting the earlier camp days when he could make up to US$100 a day. Such businesses stood in stark contrast to the woman who explained to me how she and her children picked up empty water plastics from the ground and sell them to a recycling company. It took her several weeks to fill a giant plastic bag, about 5 feet high and 2 feet wide. She was paid by weight and if she was lucky, it would have rained and made the plastic weigh more. Usually she earned about US$1.50 – $2.25 for a few weeks worth of work. In Table 2 below, I illustrate the frequency of business activities reported in the Household Food Economy Survey. Businesses with mid-range incoming earning potential, such as selling

water, cooked food, petty trade and plaiting hair are more frequent than either lucrative (exchanging money in Accra) or low earning businesses, such as collecting plastics.

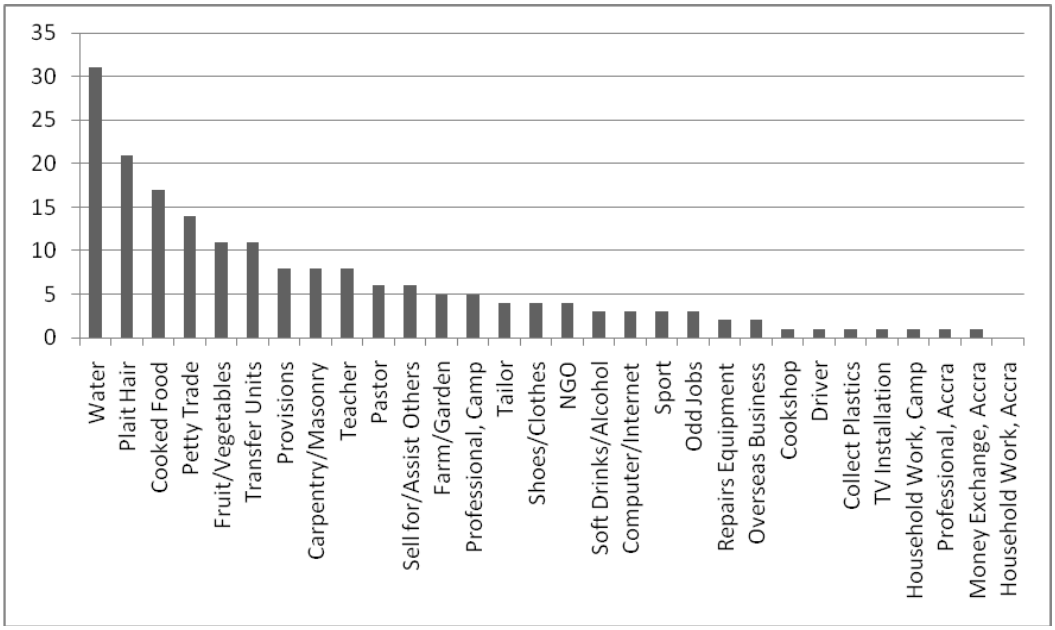

Table 2 Business and Occupation Frequencies

Jacobsen (2005:11) argued that even though petty trade dominated the market in most protracted refugee camps, these activities usually needed to be supplemented with other income-generating activities. Selling or trading food rations offers one opportunity to stretch a household budget (Jacobsen 2005:23; noted specifically among Liberians, Dick 2002; and Somalis, Horst 2006). Splitting household members between the camp and urban areas also provides other business and employment opportunities and several people at Buduburam also reported household members living in nearby towns to attend better schools (Jacobsen 2005:25). At Buduburam, formal employment opportunities

were limited: 41 individuals (8%) were employed. Most refugees who were employed worked at the camp in positions at NGOs, as teachers, pastors, or worked for someone who owned a small business. In many instances, refugees still did not earn a salary, but were paid a stipend, in the case of NGOs and teaching positions, or received commission for sales. A few individuals who had received a scholarship to attend university in Ghana were then placed in a national service position where they earned a larger stipend for their work in social service agencies or schools. In some instances, households reported that individuals might try to get contract construction work in Accra. In one instance, an individual reported that she had been able to obtain a job at a school in Accra, but could not sustain the transportation costs. In place of employment opportunities, remittances tend to provide supplemental income to a numerous refugees in long-term camps (Jacobsen 2005:29). In the following section I begin to analyze remittance data and questions of inequality.

Remittances

Economists, anthropologists and international lending agencies actively debate the quantity and impact of remittances in various settings around the globe. The World Bank reported US$126 million in remittances sent to Ghana in 2008, but did not offer Ghanaian regional data (World Bank 2010).[35] Anecdotally, a representative from the GRB claimed that the Buduburam branch of Western Union received more money than any other branch in Ghana. Extrapolating from a Western Union bank manager's claims

[35] The World Bank reported $58 million in remittances sent to Liberia in 2008.

that the Buduburam branch regularly processes US$10,000 in remittances a day, the camp manager estimated that 35% of refugees received remittances. This estimation stands in stark contrast to beliefs expressed by some of the participants in my focus groups. In my group with young adults, a young woman argued that nobody could survive at the camp without remittances and suggested that about 99% of households had to receive remittances.

The results from my Household Food Economy Survey indicate that 111 household heads (75%) have received a remittance at least once during their time living at Buduburam. Of these 111 household heads who reported remittances: 59 (53%) received from one person; 34 (31%) received from 2 people; 13 (12%) received from 3 people; 2 (2%) received from 4 people; 1(1%) received from 6 people; and 1 (1%) received from 7 people. Figure 10 illustrates the breakdown of the number of remittance senders per household.

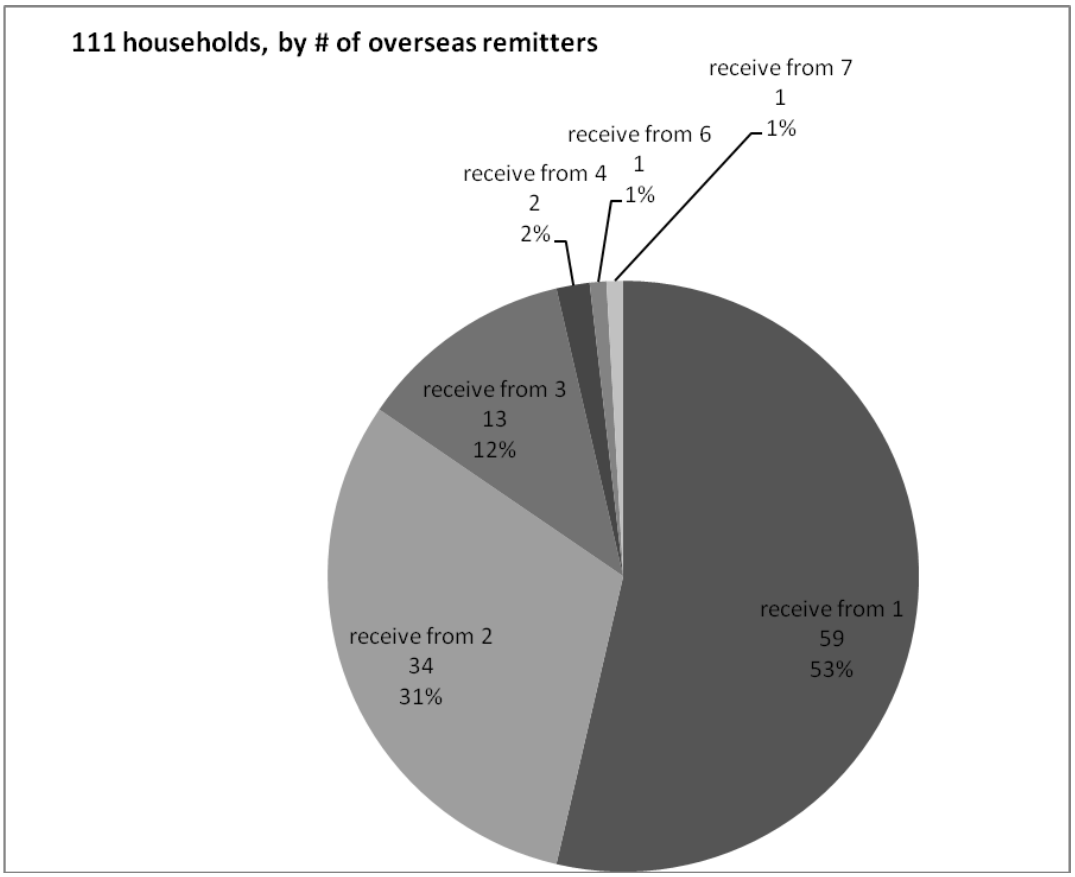

Figure 10 Households, by Number of People Remitting

These 111 households received remittances with varying frequencies. Figure 11 below illustrates the frequency per household. In households that receive remittances from more than one person overseas, I have included data from the most frequent remitter.

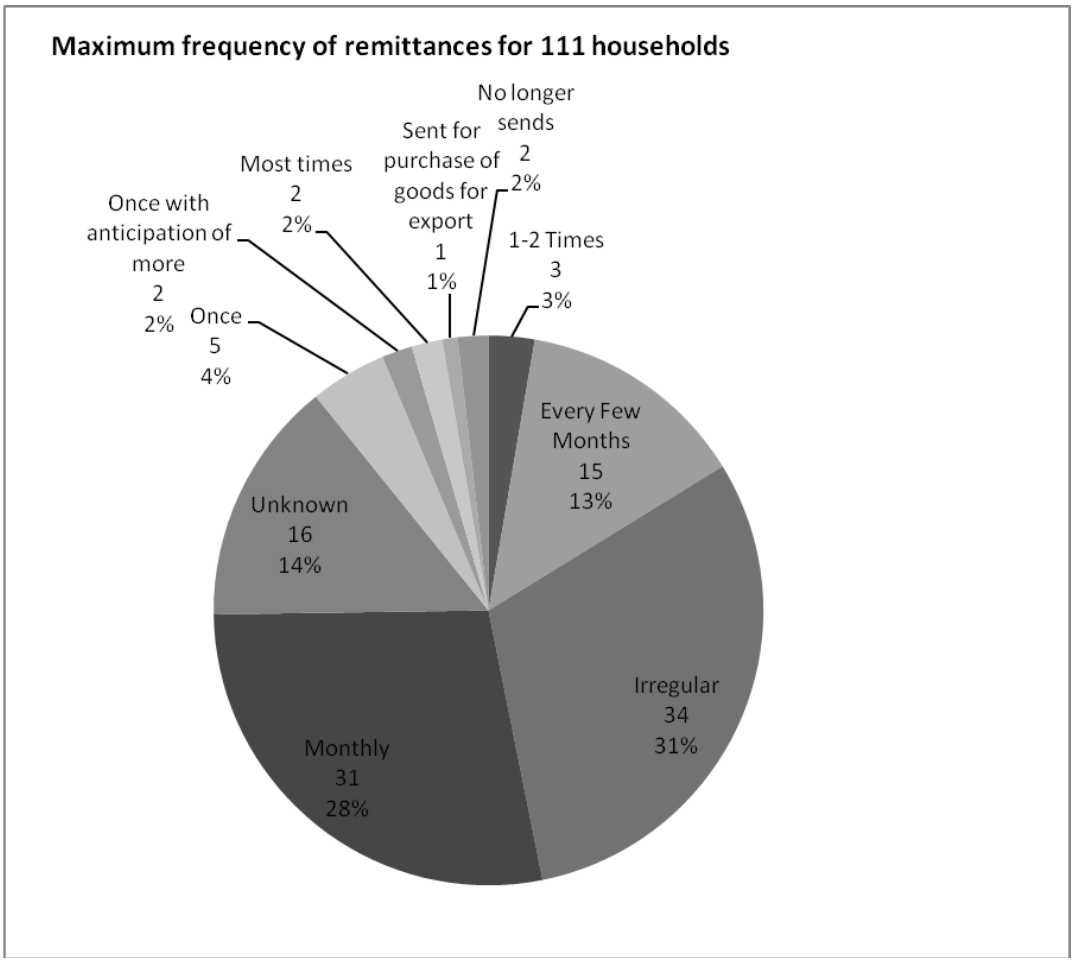

Figure 11 Remittance Frequencies

Individual monthly remittances ranged from US$50 - $1,000. The average minimum monthly remittance was US$90.84 with an average monthly maximum remittance of US$191.40. These figures may be slightly inflated due to one individual who reported a monthly maximum of US$1,000. Stories often circulated about larger remittances, especially in cases of internet "sponsors." Some refugees successfully

solicited support from individuals on the internet, often through sharing their experience and condition as a refugee. In turn, sponsors, as refugees often called them, were moved to provide financial support. Support could be provided once or on a regular basis and in some cases remittance figures from internet sponsors were claimed to reach as high as US$20,000. I return to the practices of internet sponsorship later in this chapter.

Within this group of 111 households, 51 (46%) people received remittances from multiple people for a total of 189 remittance senders. Of the 189 people sending remittances to Buduburam, the majority (144 people or 76%) were located in the United States. Remittances come from people who were resettled, but also from family and friends who traveled to the United States outside of resettlement programming, such as those Liberians who lived in America prior to the war or fled from Liberia directly to America.

In addition to direct remittances from overseas, many individuals explained that they occasionally received smaller amounts of money from someone else. For example, a woman received money from her mother in America, who had also included US$20 to be given to a friend of hers at the camp. It was not uncommon for someone to send "family money," which is a larger sum of money that will be spread out among different family members at the camp. As Robertson explained, his mother might send US$400 or US$500 to him and then call him and tell him to get a pen and paper. She would then dictate to him the amount that would be given to each person in the family, usually around ten or eleven people. In this way the sender was able to save money on Western Union fees, which are often quite costly. For example, in order to remit US$100 to

someone at the camp, the sender usually pays a fee of US$9.99 (10%) (Western Union 2011). On the receiving end of family money, the division of money can become controversial if it is not sent to a person who is "trusted." Robertson always divided the family money as it was supposed to be done, so his family at the camp was happy when it was sent to him because they knew they would get their money.

Many research participants did not regularly receive direct remittances, but were able to manage through what I call second-tier remittances, or money received from family or friends at the camp who do receive regular remittances. Of the 148 individuals surveyed, at least 38 (26%) received second-tier financial support. I suspect that this figure is low, in part because we were not able to collect second-tier remittance data from all survey participants. Furthermore, many surveys included a group, rather than specific number of friends or neighbors who shared their overseas support with them. While most research participants described limited or irregular overseas financial support, participants often described the remittance levels of those around them as quite substantial. For example, Robertson explained that some people received remittances after every pay period of the person living in America, which was weekly for some. Others talked about relatives who do not let people run out of money at the camp – "just make a call and the money comes." This was believed to be particularly true of Liberians living in Ghana outside of the camp: "you trust your pocket…you know that your Western Union money can be heavier" if you live in Accra.

Beyond family support, refugees have also tapped into internet resources to gain financial support. Visiting one of the many cafés at night, young people chat on-line with

the intent of finding a financial sponsor. However, out of 148 surveys, only one person reported having an internet sponsor and another man reported that he was actively looking for a sponsor. Five participants also reported that a family member or friend had an internet sponsor. Sponsors ran the spectrum from friends or benefactors to something more akin to "419" or internet fraud. One young Liberian man wanted to go to a university in America and had hired a friend to search on the internet for an immigration and financial sponsor in America. At the other end of the spectrum, a group of boys prominently displayed their success in getting "junk" – the colloquial term for an internet sponsor – by driving around the camp in their old teal Volkswagen bearing the window inscription "Yahooz Boyz" in fat, yellow lettering. During several focus groups on stratification, participants actively debated the morality and power of internet sponsorship, a topic I will return to in greater depth in chapter 5. In the next section I look at household economies, focusing on how refugees managed with or without remittances.

Managing and Uncertainty

On a Saturday afternoon in May, Lucy mixed a small bit of fish and soup into a cook-spoon of rice while we recounted the economic and food activity for the previous day. As she set the mashed rice outside in an old pan for the dog to eat, she shouted to her neighbor, "You went to the beach today to cook the beans!" Lucy and her daughter had enjoyed the salty taste of the beans her neighbor had given her while her sons had eaten rice with canned African Queen Mackeral and hard-boiled egg stew. Earlier in the

morning, they had all eaten kokodolo (corn porridge). Money had been a little bit tightly lately so Lucy took the corn-soya blend for the porridge from her neighbor who received food rations. She and her neighbor had a reciprocal relation and Lucy often gave them food to eat. Trying to avoid the market where she would spend more money on food, Lucy instead bought bitterball, hot peppers, kitaly and four zipper fish from someone passing by the house. She already had the right oil and (baking) soda in the house to make torborgi. Usually Lucy's fiancé in the United States sent food money in the middle of each month, but by the 25th, she had not yet received the money. Fortunately, Lucy's birthday had just passed and her mother-in-law in the United States sent her US$75 and her sister (also living in the United States) sent US$200. Lucy put US$100 in her savings account and planned to use some of the remaining money for the daily household food expenses. Lucy's ability to save was not common: sixteen household heads (11%) were able to save money while far more refugees (50 household heads or 34%) owed money at the time of the survey.

On this same Saturday, Blessing and her three children also ate kokodolo – prepared from their food rations – for breakfast, but could not afford to put milk into the porridge like Lucy had. Blessing prepared enough kokodolo so that they could eat it again in the early afternoon. Blessing and her three children lived in a single room, inside the house of another refugee. On this Saturday, Blessing and her kids had to move out of the house because the owner's family was coming back to the camp from Liberia and needed a place to stay. They moved to another single room about 500 feet away. After moving, they cooked a pepper stew with a couple of small dried fish to give it some

flavor while they swallowed it with fufu.[36] Blessing usually attended a beauty training class as well as a craft school, where she could earn 50p – 1 cedi per day (less than US$1), but the school had not been able to sell the crafts and was not paying the students. Blessing had been managing by doing housework and washing clothes for me or other refugees at the camp. She also plaited hair in a nearby Ghanaian market town and would sometimes buy bulk fruits to sell at the camp.

As I explained in chapter 3, I purposefully selected these two examples to illustrate varying qualities of life and livelihood strategies at Buduburam. Despite socio-economic differences, both households struggled in their own ways to manage the uncertainty of income and potential migratory paths. Below I complement the microcosm of these two households with a presentation of data from the Household Economy Survey. After a qualitative and quantitative understanding of household well-being, I outline a brief framework of internal camp stratification as it impacted and worked in relation to the broader Liberian national class system and ultimately, migratory options and decisions.

What is Well-being?

Tasked with identifying and protecting "socially vulnerable" refugees, the head of the Social Welfare Office, Dorothy, estimated that about 60-65% of refugees struggled to make ends meet. She justified her estimate as a result of repatriation such that an increase in those repatriating to Liberia has reduced business activities and social support

[36] Fufu is generally less expensive and for some, a sign of managing such that you did not have enough money to buy rice if you were swallowing fufu. However, fufu can also stand as a "comfort" food.

networks because the people who left the camp also took their remittance income with them. In the past the office used a specific set of criteria to identify social vulnerability, but now they "just know" if someone is "vulnerable." The office usually conducted a home visit, although Dorothy noted that fancy dress and ownership of things do not necessarily indicate sustainability or security, because many people received things from people who left the camp that they would not be able to afford.

The WFP sponsors an annual food security assessment, to provide data about the well-being of refugees. In 2007 the WFP reported that only 5% of Buduburam households were food insecure, with another 14% at risk for food insecurity (WFP and UNHCR 2007:6). As discussed in chapter 3, the WFP standard assessment uses biological, nutritional status as an indicator of food security, which does not provide information about the ability of a household to manage in the present or the future. Below I analyze data from my Household Food Economy Survey to provide a more nuanced understanding of household situations at Buduburam.

Household Food Economy Survey Data

Together with my team of three research assistants, we collected data from 148 Liberian households at Buduburam. In the paragraphs and tables below, I present relevant portions of the survey data to give a general picture of well-being at Buduburam. The 148 households included 825 adults and children, with household size ranging from one to twenty-one members (average household size of 5.6). Of the 825 individuals included in

the survey, 53 (6%) Liberians arrived in Ghana following the 2006 presidential inauguration and 178 (22%) of the individuals were born at the camp. The rapid development of the camp has led to an array of housing situations whereby refugees may "own" or rent housing. According to Ghanaian law, Liberians cannot own land and therefore cannot own a house. Yet many Liberians have built their own houses and consider themselves to be the owners. This has led to conflicts for some. Evelyn built a home on the camp, but eventually the Ghanaian owner of the land returned and started charging her rent to live in the house she built.[37] In many cases Liberian "owners" rent their homes to other Liberians and even Ghanaians. Liberians also rent homes from Ghanaians. In fewer cases Liberians obtain "free rent" by living in housing provided by the Ghanaian government or paid for by the Social Welfare Office. Additionally, Liberians who travel on a resettlement program will usually leave their home with someone who then lives there for free and in some cases becomes a de facto owner. Sixty-nine households (47%) "owned a house"; 58 (39%) rented; and 21 (14%) had "free rent." As the camp empties out, housing remains in a state of transition as individuals and families move from one house to another, seeking better or more affordable housing conditions. For example, Beatrice moved from a house that constantly flooded into a newly vacant house. Empty houses have also become home to Ghanaians, Nigerians and others. The GRB has struggled to control the internal migrations at the camp. Figure 12 below depicts a house, humorously named to hint at the desire for travel.

[37] These instances were possible particularly when camp accommodations spread into nearby villages where land and houses were owned by Ghanaians rather than the government.

Figure 12 House During the Rainy Season at Buduburam

Aside from housing, most Liberian households surveyed (135 HHs or 91%) have access to electricity, although the current tends to be highly irregular.[38] In general, the camp has afforded many refugees with various educational opportunities, including computer schools, which are less available in Liberia due to lack of electricity. Figure 13 below shows a typing school at the camp.

[38] However, in my experience, electricity was much more regular at the camp than in Monrovia.

Figure 13 Businesses and Typing Institute (left) Along the Roadside (2005)

While Liberians have been able to take advantage of educational opportunities in Ghana, many refugees occasionally lamented the lack of seriousness in the schools. Of the 825 Liberians included in the survey, 375 (45%) are currently enrolled in school, including vocational or computer programs. Table 3 below illustrates the education level of household heads.

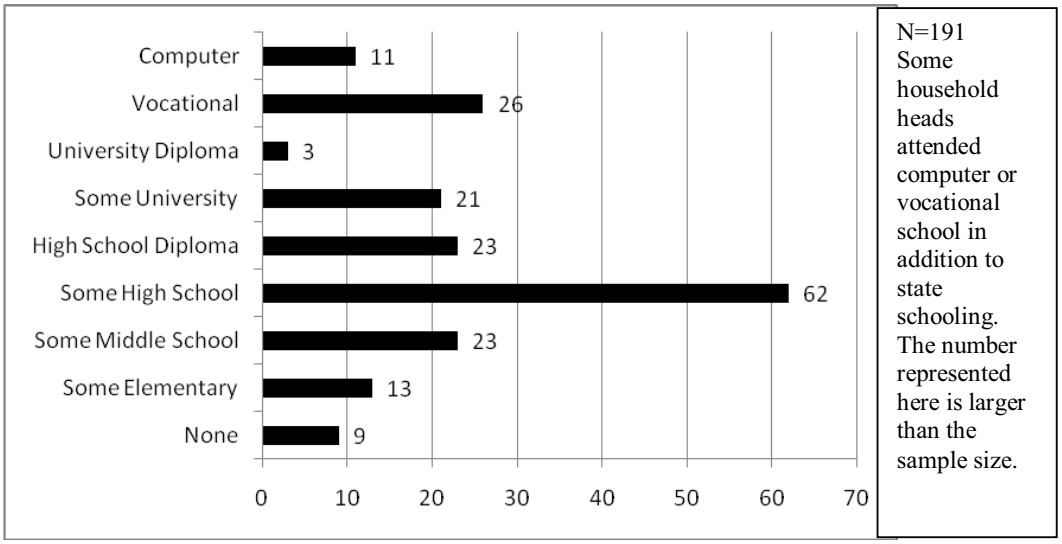

Table 3 Education Level of Liberian Household Heads

Although they are relatively educated, Liberians have had very few formal employment opportunities in Ghana and have adopted a range of coping strategies, primarily food-based, to deal with the circumstances of irregular and uncertain income. At the time of my survey, WFP continued to provide food rations to "vulnerable" individuals. Of those surveyed, 61 households (41%) or 238 total individuals (29%) received food rations. As of July 2009, these households and individuals no longer benefited from food rations. One of the primary ways that Liberians ensured any form of household food security was through the storage of rice, their staple food. Eighty-six (58%) households reported that they had been able to store a half-bag (50kg) or whole bag (100kg) of rice in the past twelve months. However, the number of households actually storing rice at the time of the survey was quite a bit lower: 40 households (27%). More commonly, households reduced rice portions to stretch the few available resources.

Ninety-one (61%) households reported having to reduce rice portions in the last three months. With varied frequency household heads begged friends, neighbors and family at the camp and overseas for food or money to buy food. Figure 14 below illustrates begging frequencies.

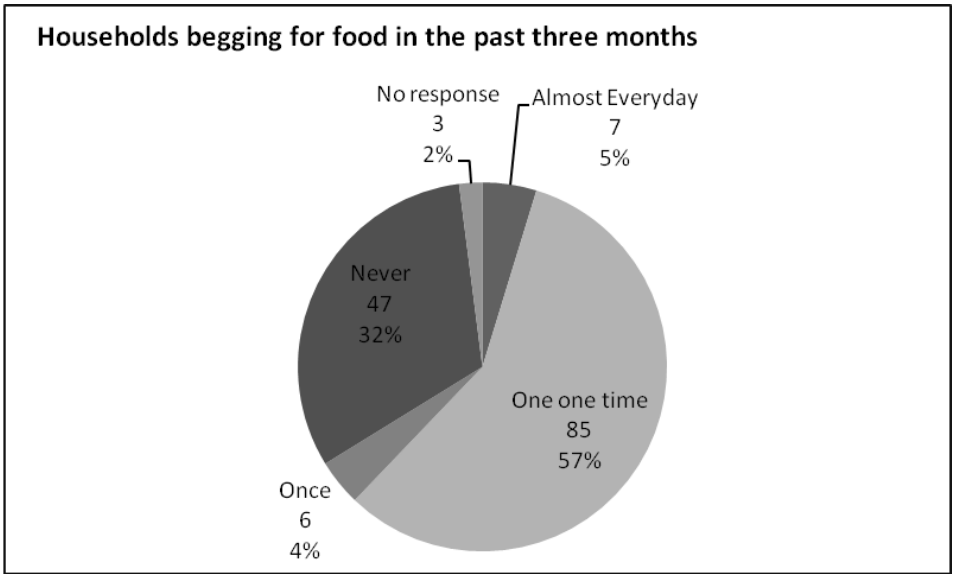

Figure 14 Households Begging for Food in Past Three Months

Few households (7; 5%) had to use begging as a primary means of survival. The majority (57%) used begging once and a while, "one one time," when they struggled financially. As I will discuss in chapter 5, there were significant differences between begging at the camp and begging overseas friends and family for money. In the next section, I further delve into my data and analysis on social stratification at the camp.

Social Stratification

During each of the four focus group discussions, at least one person would proclaim that refugees cannot be in the upper-class, citing land ownership and employment, especially within the government, as criteria for upper class status. Similar to Koenig's (2005) description of rural stratification in Mali, stratification within the refugee camp is largely defined by differential access to the same set of resources. At the camp, refugees have differential access to refugee status, food rations, money, education, and prestige through social networks and business activities. Differential access to the same kinds of resources does not have as much significance within the broader national class system, which tends to be marked by the presence of qualitatively different resources to exploit (Koenig 2005). However growing outmigration, especially to the European and North American countries has introduced potential access to new resources.

Focus group participants identified land, employment and government positions as markers of a Liberian national class system unavailable to refugees in exile. However, as Koenig argued in the case of Mali, migration and the creation of multilocal networks – and subsequent channels of financial support – have changed the social terrain such that "wealthier households began to control new assets, which, although not used to capture the labor of poorer households, did create qualitatively superior life chances" (2005:52). Furthermore, "money was crucial in turning one set of local resources into another or moving between local and national systems" (Koenig 2005:53). In a similar manner, remittance money, particularly U.S. dollars, sent from the U.S. or Liberia had the

potential to connect refugees into a broader global class system. In part, this global class system was characterized by opportunities to travel, work and attend school. In chapter 5, I discuss in greater detail how social class systems and networks, US dollars and international travel impact internal camp relations and migratory options and decisions. In the next section I outline the migratory prospects for refugees.

Getting Out

"If you say that all of those people who have one eye are going to be resettled to America, you will find people going to bust their eyes, to come to tell you they want to go to America. Yeah. They will take someone and tell [them], bust one of my eyes." Rather graphically, Chairman Jacobsen explained the intense desire for one particular migratory outcome: resettlement to America. In this section I consider the future migratory options of Liberian refugees with particular focus on the politics and opportunities within each of the three UNHCR durable solutions.

As the least used of the UNHCR's three durable solutions for refugees, third country resettlement prospects remained dim in light of UNHCR voluntary repatriation and local integration programs. In 1998, the UNHCR spent a little more than half of the Liberian refugee budget in Ghana on repatriation (Adjei Sefah 1999:38). At the end of the year, the Ghanaian government stated its intention to close the camp (Assuah 2001:67) and in June 2000 the UNHCR withdrew all assistance from the camp (Dick 2002b:16). However, when the second war in Liberia intensified in 2003 and new

refugees began arriving in Ghana, the UNHCR returned and third country resettlement picked up. With the end of the civil war and the inauguration of President Johnson-Sirleaf in 2006, both the UNCHR and Ghanaian government have stated intentions to resolve the refugee situation in Ghana. To this end, in 2007 the UNHCR conducted a verification exercise to count the number of refugees living in Ghana and collect information on their education and skill level.

After the 2007 verification, according to a UNHCR program officer, the UNHCR focused funding on skills training and education to prepare refugees for repatriation. The UNHCR also supported local development in the camp region, including the construction of new police and fire stations at Buduburam in 2009. In the spring of 2009, the UNCHR conducted another verification exercise to count the number of remaining refugees and assess skill level once again. In my interviews with UNCHR and GRB representatives, both agencies raised the possibility and inevitability of a cessation clause, which would revoke refugee status from Liberians living in Ghana. In the following sections, I outline the specific practices, politics and prospects of the UNHCR's three durable solutions in light of an impending cessation clause.

Repatriation

Visible from the buzzing international road, the UNHCR repatriation grounds figured prominently at the front of the camp. Wooden benches lined up beneath tarps shielded the sun from people as they waited for hours. Few people waited on this

particular March morning. Around 11 am the UNHCR SUV pulled up, packed with people. The UN workers piled out and headed towards their offices. They were nicely dressed in suits and heels, with perfect hair and makeup. Not one bit ruffled or sweaty from the hot and sometimes tedious traffic jam on the drive from Accra. A young staff woman took pictures of her supervisor posing with a can of Fanta. The bureaucratic work day was up and running as refugees were called to work their way through the various offices, filling in bureaucratic forms until they would finally board a flight returning to Liberia. In the days prior to travel, the repatriation grounds fill with people packing and re-packing their bags to stay under the 50 kg weight limit. Figure 15 below shows a private (non-UNHCR sponsored) bus chartered for return travel to Liberia

Figure 15 Bus at Front of Camp, Preparing to Travel to Liberia (2005)

Liberian repatriation efforts have more than a decade of history in Ghana. The Liberian transitional government issued a "declaration of the rights of returnees" on January 3, 1996. In 1997, 700 refugees repatriated with UNHCR support (Assuah 2001:63, 67), which included transportation, initial reception in Liberia and a travel stipend for internal Liberia travel. Most commonly refugees stayed in Monrovia and received US$5 for their travel. In 1998 the UNHCR expected 10,000 people to repatriate, but only 3,400 returned (Adjei Seffah 1999:43). Repatriation slowed from 2004-2007,

when fewer than 9,000 people went to Liberia. In 2008, the UNHCR started providing stipends of $100USD per adult and $50USD per child for repatriation.

Repatriation was scheduled to close – i.e. if you did not register to repatriate by this time you would not receive UNHCR benefits for your return travel – on December 31, 2008 and in the months preceding this deadline trips were scheduled to leave the camp three times per week and approximately 9,000 people repatriated. The camp closure date was then extended to March 31, 2009, but in the three months preceding this new deadline only 498 refugees repatriated. In a March 2009 interview, a UNHCR representative stated that after March 31, they would clear the list of those who registered for repatriation before the March 31 deadline. After this, the UNHCR would continue registering people for repatriation until they "exhausted the people of concern" –those who have been verified (via fingerprinting) as refugees. The bureaucratic processing of repatriation applications took a brief hiatus during the 2009 verification exercise, but began again shortly after its completion. In July 2009, one of my research assistants returned to Liberia via the UNHCR repatriation program, providing evidence that the bureaucracy was still up and running.

Local Integration

While Liberians live throughout Ghana – from urban Accra to the small Krisan refugee camp in the west, to the Upper Volta region in the east – many refugees concentrated at the Buduburam camp. Generally, for refugees to live outside of the camp,

they must have a job or access to regular remittances in order to afford the higher cost of living. In the words of one man, to live in town "you know your remittances be heavy." For refugees outside the camp, local integration as a policy to be enforced or enacted did not appear on the political radar of most bureaucrats. In contrast, local integration of Buduburam residents has been a contentious issue. In 2008, the GRB defined a local integration policy that would disperse camp refugees throughout all regions of Ghana, many of which seemed quite remote and inaccessible to Liberians, particularly given language differences. The inauguration of a new Ghanaian president of the National Democratic Party (NDP) in early 2009 required the dissolution of all existing governmental boards, including the GRB. During my fieldwork the defunct board awaited a new chairperson and was uncertain of how the new government would define local integration. Refugees nervously and eagerly anticipated how the new government would treat refugees. Many expressed hope that the NDP government would encourage resettlement because NDP party predecessors had been in power in the early 1990s when resettlement thrived.

Resettlement

"People feel that no matter how long it takes, the UNHCR will have to resettle people and they want to take advantage of that. They want to go to greener pasture. They don't want to go back to Liberia because they think on how to start their new life. They think of the package of repatriation may be very small and can't enable them to start." As

Chairman Jacobsen explained, refugees maintained a widespread belief that resettlement opportunities would become available. However, in practice the UNHCR utilized third country resettlement as a last resort when no other solutions were available. In the last twenty years Liberian refugees have been resettled to the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Norway, and Sweden among other countries. Each of these countries has its own procedures for screening and admitting refugees. For my purposes, I focus exclusively on the U.S. refugee admissions system.

The U.S. "Presidential Determination" makes an annual determination of the number of refugees allowed to enter the United States. Allocations are divided among geographic regions, such as Africa, and generally function as a ceiling rather than a target. In Table 4, I illustrate annual Liberian refugee arrivals since 1997 compared to overall African arrivals. Since the peak of Liberian resettlement in 2004, arrivals have steadily decreased.

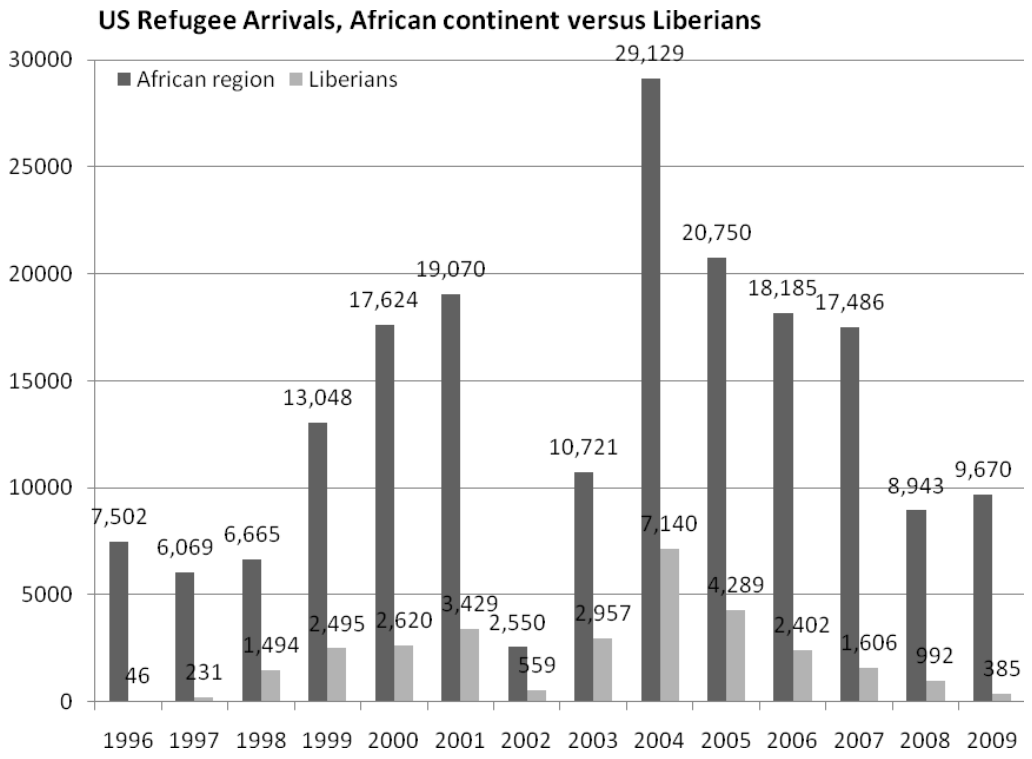

Table 4 U.S. Refugee Arrivals, African Continent versus Liberians[39]

U.S. Priority Programming

The U.S. resettles all refugees according to a three-tiered priority system. Priority 1 admits individual referrals from the UNHCR, U.S. Embassy or authorized NGOs. Individuals referred through the P-1 program are people who do not have access to any other durable solution. Priority 2 refugees are group-based referrals, based on one or a

[39] Data sourced from the U.S. Department of State, including Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) and Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (2007; 2008; 2009a) and U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2005; 2008).

combination of characteristics pertaining to nationality, clan, ethnicity, religion or location. Priority 3, Family Reunification, enables refugees resettled to the U.S. to bring their spouse, unmarried children under the age of 21 or parent to the U.S. through the refugee program. The majority (95%) of P-3 applications have been from refugees on the African continent, particularly Somali, Ethiopian and Liberian refugees (UNHCR Washington 2008:3-5). While the UNHCR can identity and refer P-1 cases at any point in time, the end of war and subsequent democratic rule in Liberia have made such urgent cases rare. Due to a lack of sufficient staff, the UNHCR stopped making P-1 referrals for Liberians on October 29, 1999 (Dick 2002b:31). The U.S. government has not had a recent P2 program for any Liberian population, and the most recent Liberian resettlement cases were admitted through the P-3 program.

U.S. Refugee Processing

Because it was the most common strategy for resettlement, I focus my discussion on the processing of P-3 applications from Liberians in Ghana. The U.S. government contracted with the Church World Service Overseas Processing Entity (CWS-OPE) to process refugee applications in Ghana. In 2002 CWS-OPE fully opened an office in Accra. From 1990 – August 6, 2009 13,120 Liberians were resettled from Ghana to the United States (Holzer 2010:27). Once a P-3 case passed initial eligibility screening by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), OPE worked on the case in Ghana. P-3 refugee applicants proceeded through three interviews with OPE staff: 1) pre-screening;

2) form filling (biographic data); and 3) case work interviews. After completing the OPE interviews, a refugee was interviewed by the Refugee Corps, a unit of DHS that travels to refugee population locations to conduct the DHS interview. DHS then approved or denied the case and OPE distributed the case decision letters to refugees at their office in Accra. Refugees could appeal the decision within a 30 day period; however a representative from OPE stated that most original decisions were upheld. If a refugee had been approved for resettlement, they needed to get a medical screening, coordinated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and attend a 3-day cultural orientation at OPE. IOM made travel arrangements and coordinated the travel loans that refugees must pay back upon resettling in the United States.

DNA Testing and Fraud

Upon hearing instances of fraud in the overall P-3 program, the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) initiated a pilot phase of DNA testing in East Africa. When less than 20% of cases could be confirmed for biological relation, PRM issued a moratorium on the P-3 program in March 2008 (UNHCR 2008:5). Prior to this time, priority given to Liberian cases had already begun to wane given the success of democratic elections in 2005. PRM stopped accepting new P-3 applications from Liberians on September 30, 2006, but stated a commitment to complete the processing of all open P-3 applications. Since the moratorium in 2008, all open P-3 cases needed to undergo DNA testing for claimed biological relationships before an application received final approval (Bureau of Population, Refugees and

Migration 2009b). During a March 2009 interview, an OPE-Accra staff member stated that the processing of applications had slowed down since the new regulations were issued and OPE experienced a no show rate of about 50% for P-3 interviews in Ghana. At the time of the interview, approximately 250-500 applications remained open for Liberians in Ghana and about 500-750 total cases remained open for Liberians in the West African region. OPE planned to clear all Liberian cases by April 2010 and the OPE-Accra office stopped processing applications as of June 1, 2010.[40]

Impending Closure

By mid-afternoon on Tuesday, March 31, 2009 the music along the road leading away from the 18 had blared loudly to passersby. Outside of a black and teal house, a man installed a TV antenna, while further up the road a Guinness delivery truck idled as men unloaded grates of beer and carried them into a club. A woman selling pineapple cake hawked her fresh sweets. One of the participants in my survey visited me to ask for feedback on a skills training project that she wanted to start in Liberia. These otherwise ordinary activities had a slight ironic shadow surrounding them on March 31 – the posted closure date for the camp. The speculations echoed by many refugees in the weeks prior about having to move to far away parts of Ghana and integrate with local families did not come true on that Tuesday. Instead, refugees spoke of waiting to hear about what the new Ghanaian government would decide for them, hoping in some way that it would be

[40]This update was originally posted on the Church World Service website in 2010 at: http://cws.convio.net/site/PageServer?pagename=action_ghana_program_serve. However, with the closure of the office in Accra, the Accra component of CWS is no longer active on the website.

resettlement while fearing a continuation of the same local integration policy. And once again the cycle continued, as a Voice of America journalist reported on December 9, 2009:

> Now there are signs posted in the camp saying the rest of the refugees will be moved to different parts of Ghana. But Lisa Quarshie of the U.N. refugee agency, says nothing is decided yet. "For now we are waiting on the government of Ghana to basically make a decision on the future of Buduburam camp. We will look at it in context of how it benefits the refugees, and we will go along with that," she said. [Boiko-Weyrauch]

It seemed then, that refugee institutions and national governments were hedging and hesitating while refugees sought to secure their futures in a sea of seemingly dwindling options.

This chapter has presented an ethnographic account of life at the Buduburam camp, with a focus on how refugees manage both their daily lives and the uncertainty of their migratory futures. Over time the camp shifted from temporary tent structures to a densely packed urban-like town. I began this chapter with a brief glimpse of several key research participants whose lives illustrated salient aspects of life at Buduburam.

Living at the camp since 1990, Rose gave historical perspective to the camp and its development. Lucy and Blessing, both single mothers with three children at the camp, illustrated the complexity of household management, highlighting elements of social stratification between people living at the camp. Despite inequality, the examples of Lucy and Blessing illustrated the extent to which almost all households at Buduburam experience uncertainty, particularly in regard to future financial security and migratory options. Robertson, a young man, shed light on the intrahousehold dynamics of

remittances, hinting at the potential for conflict and inequality, which I discuss in greater depth in the next chapter. Finally, Chairman Jacobsen painted a picture of the intensity with which people think of resettlement to America. In the next chapter, I examine this intensity in terms of ideology, practice and power.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSNATIONAL TRIANGLE: THE INTIMATE SOCIAL WORLDS OF MIGRATION

Mr. Beyan sat on a perch outside his elevated concrete grey house, while Patricia, a young neighbor managed cookpots over two charcoal fires. She deftly stirred the stiffening banku, a Ghanaian staple that Liberians typically eat when they don't have money for rice, shifted burning coals, and covered and uncovered hot cookpots with her bare hands. On this particular day in early March, Mr. Beyan and his friend declined Patricia's offer to "swallow banku," dismissing it as an unknown food. Perhaps encouraged by my presence in the yard, the friend instead described the richness of eating in America. At barbeques, he explained, Americans will just eat meat. This was a familiar conversation for me, hearing about ideas of America: people driving big big cars, eating hamburgers for breakfast, drinking milk, sitting in air conditioning.

Almost two months later in the rainy season of early June, I came upon Mr. Beyan sitting on his usual perch, muttering "America, America, America." His combined longing for and frustration with America evoked such a sad darkness that day, surely amplified by my own exhaustion with camp life and simultaneous longing for America. The luxury of my dark blue American passport stood in sharp contrast to worn UNHCR ID cards, the symbol of a chance to travel. As I regularly encountered intense and

persistent desire and hope for resettlement, the challenge was to find a way to understand and respect "hope," despite the many structural limitations that might prevent the realization of such dreams. Too frequently hope for resettlement is dismissed as a – if not *the* – primary reason for some protracted camps. However, scholars and practitioners have yet to look at how hope for resettlement works.

In seeking to understand my broad research question – why Liberians are staying at Buduburam – I turn to the social worlds of refugees. Marx defined the social worlds of refugees as "the sum of all the migrants' relationships and the forces impinging on them at any moment" (E. Marx 1990:180). For Marx, "A social world is not confined to a particular place or limited by territorial boundaries. Some of the relationships may be very important, but physically distant, while others may be almost insignificant although located close by. What is important is which social relationships play a role in a particular situation" (E. Marx 1990:194). As described in chapters 2 and 4, the social worlds of Liberian refugees are indeed transnational. In his conceptual framework Marx charted an evolutionary transformation of the social worlds of refugees – from a condition similar to newborn babies to collective engagement with the state (E. Marx 1990:197, 201). However, my analysis does not assume a linear transformation of social worlds; rather, it focuses on how power relations within social worlds impact migratory lives and options. Marx suggested that "…the larger and the more diverse the number of a person's specific social relationships, the better he or she can satisfy particular needs" (E. Marx 1990:196). As noted in chapter 1, critics of social capital have suggested that social relationships do not always enable access to resources or other kinds of capital. Portes' (1998) analysis of

the "negative" impacts of social capital and Field's analysis of the "dark side" of social capital raises the possibility that social capital (networks, relations) may reinforce inequality (Field 2008:79). Otherwise stated, social worlds are fraught with power. In this chapter I ask: what kinds of power relations govern the social worlds of refugees? How do these power relations impact refugees' migratory opportunities and decisions surrounding the UNHCR solutions?

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section, Social Worlds and Opportunity at Buduburam, looks at the ideas and practices that frame the social worlds of refugees living at Buduburam. Specifically, this looks at how ideas and practices are constructed in relation to the UNHCR solution of third country resettlement. The second section, Power and the Pursuit of the Liberian-American Dream, examines the power relations within social worlds, particularly as they shape the idea and practice of resettlement. To do this, I analyze the interpersonal power relations between and within the transnational triangle of the Buduburam camp, Liberia, and "overseas," primarily the United States. The chapter concludes by considering the broader structural relations of power that frame the social worlds and opportunities of Liberian refugees.

Social Worlds and Opportunity at Buduburam

While the previous chapter outlined individual and household livelihood characteristics and strategies at Buduburam, in this chapter I discuss the social worlds of refugees. Before analyzing social relations and interaction, I must point out two features

of camp life. First, consistent with flexible household structures throughout West Africa (Guyer 1981), at Buduburam household units fluctuated heavily in relation to travel opportunities. A household might add a member for a few weeks if a family friend is temporarily staying at the camp in route to Liberia. Alternatively, a child whose name has come up for an immigration interview might come to the camp to live with friends of the family. Venoria's household at Buduburam provides an example of how household composition varies in relation to migratory opportunities. As head of the household at Buduburam for ten years, Venoria has hosted a range of relations, including: extended relatives, "refugee sons and daughters," friends, boyfriend, in-laws, parents and children. In ten years 25 people have lived or stayed in the house. A couple of people only stayed for a few days, while some lived in Venoria's house for six years. Of the 25 people, seven moved elsewhere in the camp, six returned to Liberia, ten traveled to the United States (primarily via P-3 resettlement), one resettled in Canada and two people stayed at the house while in transit from the United States to Liberia. Such dynamic household structures are not only characteristic of refugees worldwide, but of most transnational families and social networks.

In the Household Food Economy Survey, 84 (57%) of the 148 households reported a change in size within the past year, with some households reporting more than one change. The majority of changes resulted from repatriation (52 HH); migration within West Africa (13 HH); moving within the camp (11 HH); arrival of new household members, either from within or outside the camp (10 HH); birth or death (7 HH); and overseas travel (6 HH). Due to changing policies in resettlement destination countries,

resettlement travel was much less common at the camp during my fieldwork in 2008-2009 than it was during previous fieldwork in 2005.

Second, many refugees viewed the camp as a place without opportunity, largely due to the lack of employment opportunities. However, the structural lack of opportunity also becomes conflated with personal responsibility and motivation. As one woman explained: at the camp you have a lot of "going nowhere people. What really are they doing? They are living in exile. They don't want to live in the real world." These sentiments were typically directed towards young adults whose parents "gone up der [America] and working" and were able to send money to their kids at the camp who, according to elders, used their school fees to enjoy life instead of getting an education. Others described the lack of opportunity at the camp as a result of pride, as one young man explained that his friends were not willing to go to a "refugee school" because they felt it was beneath their standard. Most frequently, the lack of opportunity at Buduburam was evaluated in contrast to opportunities outside of the camp. One young man explained that his aunt, who had three degrees, had to do something for herself when she came into exile in Ghana. Therefore she did not live at the camp, but had purchased a house in a nearby market town and started an export business to the United States.

Despite the odds, several individuals I interviewed described how they were able to overcome the suffering at Buduburam. "My life is like a testimony on the Buduburam camp," explained Rosaline. Initially she came to the camp with some people with whom she planned to resettle. Once they were at Buduburam, the people accused her of being too dependent and threw her out of the house. Rosaline went from friend to friend,

staying with whomever she could. Some days she went to the church and slept on the altar. After meeting a woman in the church, things changed for Rosaline; the woman helped her to get some clothes and taught her about praying. She was able to get a job helping a man to sell food.

> So when I went there, sincerely I went to work. Because there was food. I got food to eat there. … I really work intelligently. So he was receiving something like 500 a night, just from the food. He saw there was a big difference, because this guy [who was working there] would report around 200, 190, 150. So for the first two days I stay, he saw there was a big difference. And he asked, and I was a bit shy to explain. Then I explained. And he say ok, then we'll get you a place of your own. That was the first time after I left home, to own a place on my own.

From here Rosaline was able to go to school and eventually got a job and started her own shop. "I have fought life and I know I am going to be a millionaire before I die."

Similarly, Venoria explained that even though conditions at Buduburam are difficult, you just "gotta pick yourself up." Since she has been in Ghana, Venoria earned a B.A. degree, got married and became a minister. In part she recognizes that her opportunities were realized through the financial support of family living in America, but she explained that it was her own hard work that enabled her to do something for herself. Reflective of the ideas of the Protestant ethic and republican individualism, Venoria's self-analysis highlights an ideological construction that I return to in the second section of this chapter.

While Rosaline and Venoria were both able to take advantage of education opportunities in exile, post-secondary opportunities remained limited. The UNHCR administered a German Albert Einstein scholarship that a few refugees could benefit from each year. Otherwise, opportunities for computer education were a valued resource

because the lack of electrical infrastructure in Liberia has limited opportunities for computer education there. As such, any computer skills gained in exile tended to be of great value in Liberia. To a lesser extent, success at Buduburam was measured by being able to live independently and provide for others.

Despite these various examples of opportunity and achievement, the majority of individuals living at Buduburam describe their lifestyle as one of "managing," as demonstrated in chapter 4. The limited options available at the camp tended to be evaluated in relation to perceived opportunity outside of Buduburam. As one woman explained, when an individual travels, they can become the highest person in family (in terms of status). If they come back to the camp, you will see them walking around with their bottles of mineral water like kings or queens. Other ideas about the opportunity available outside of Ghana similarly focused on the re-organization of social status hierarchies. For example, Helena explained that an uneducated person can travel to America, save US$15,000 - $20,000 and build a house in Liberia and a "book-learned [educated] person is minding the house." During an interview with a woman in Liberia who had never been in exile, she insisted that people who resettled overseas should come back and invest in Liberia so that their "name will spread and get big."

These ideas that connect upward social mobility to America emerged from both historical and contemporary practices. As discussed in chapter 2, the construction and identification of "civilized" social status has been rooted in American habits and lifestyles. National citizenship hinged upon being "civilized" since "uncivilized," and non-Americo-Liberians did not gain the right to vote until 1946. The patronage system

enabled some "uncivilized" people to obtain "civilized" status within Liberia, but as a woman at the camp explained, Liberians weren't so obsessed with traveling to America before the war began in 1989. It was only the wealthy "civilized" people who could afford to send their children to study in America because those students would have to be financially supported by their families in Liberia. In turn educational degrees from America inserted the new graduates into higher social strata.

Contemporary politics of citizenship and power have influenced the processes of social mobility. As a post-war nation with a population spread throughout the near and far diasporas, the Liberian nation includes transnational citizens with different degrees of power in relation to the national system. As an example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission took statements from Liberians living in Ghana and the United States. However, national voting rights were not extended outside of Liberia during the 2005 presidential elections; Liberians outside of the country did not have the right to vote. Nonetheless, many of the presidential candidates had substantial financial holdings – assets and houses – outside of Liberia, mostly in the United States (Sawyer 2008:186) and the presidential candidates opened their campaigns in the United States (Lyons and Mandaville 2010:3). In this example, national belonging and political participation were centered and strengthened by place – America – and the far diaspora had greater power to influence the outcome of the election.[41] Such vast differences in power and place reinforced the importance of travel to America.

[41] People at the camp described Johnson-Sirleaf's election as fraudulent. According to several research participants, they believed that she was able to capture the presidency through the influence of George W. Bush.

Other long-term refugee camps, such as the Dadaab camps for Somali refugees in Kenya, have demonstrated similar ideas and desires about resettlement travel and ideas about the opportunities available in America.[42] While Liberian refugees fit into the standard narrative of traveling to America for social opportunity, the way in which Liberians constructed and negotiated opportunities for travel to America was influenced and shaped by a specific historical narrative and experience that resulted in a belief that Liberians had a special connection to America. By looking at the historical, socio-cultural and economic roots of the relationship between the United States and Liberia, I intend to develop a more complex picture of the desire – rather than hope – for third country resettlement.

The Liberian-American Dream

Liberians have several options for obtaining a travel visa to the U.S., including travel via: organizations, church conferences, a student visa, a personal invitation, family reunion, death, wedding, the diversity visa lottery, and resettlement. However, these options are quite limited and many people remain dependent on family money and networks to travel. Access to these theoretical migratory routes must be negotiated through mediating forces, which I examine as structural power. Wolf proposed structural power as "power that structures the political economy" as a way of understanding "why

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[42] Immigrant dreams of America have long since been documented, including immigrants' experiences in confronting the myth of American dream once in the United States (see Mahler 1995).

and how some sectors, regions, or nations are able to constrain the options of others and what coalitions and conflicts occur in the course of this interplay" (Wolf 2001:384-385). Structural power does not exist in isolation from individuals, but is shaped through ideas and practice. While Wolf primarily approached structural power in relation to tactical or organizational power, I situate my analysis around the relations between structural power and interpersonal power – defined by Wolf as "the ability of an ego to impose its will on an alter in social action" (Wolf 2001:384). My intent is to explore how structural power inhabits and is shaped by the intimate social worlds of refugees at Buduburam.

The "Liberian-American dream" is better considered an analytic concept to explore the structuring of opportunity within the social worlds of refugees. Similar to the basic tenets of the American dream, the ideas and practices that Liberian refugees associated with living in America drew upon ideas of individual responsibility, hard work and equal opportunity. These ideas of individualism reflect the historical trajectories of the ideology of republicanism traced in chapter 2. Key examples from the ethnographic data represent the characteristic elements of the Liberian-American dream. Later in this chapter I examine the limits of the Liberian-American dream and consider those who do not want to travel to America.

Many Liberians at Buduburam spoke about the wealth of opportunity in America such that all problems would be solved upon arriving in America. In conversation, people explained that going to America does not automatically make you "literate," but through hard work you can get ahead. Unlike in Ghana or Liberia, the opportunity to work hard becomes available in America: "You leave here, you will get work to do. If you not

educated, maybe sanitation, maybe cleaning gutters, strip down houses or work in factory. If you do one of these jobs in Africa, you can't put food on the table." One woman liked the education systems in "western countries" because they "don't waste your time" and another man cited the loan opportunities and financial assistance available in America as an equalizing force. "U.S. society helps you develop yourself" because even if you are in an unskilled job, you can still get ahead whereas in Liberia an unskilled job will not even help you to buy a cup of rice. Regardless of education, anyone can get "a job with a regular, on-time paycheck" in America.

Research participants frequently discussed the availability of, and opportunity in, manual labor jobs such as sweeping floors and cleaning toilets. While these manual labor jobs were associated with low social status in Liberia, working these kinds of jobs was possible in America because "nobody know you." In this regard, refugees described a suspension of social status in pursuit of what they believed would be increased social status in the Liberian homeland. Refugees explained that in America they would work two or three jobs, save money and then use that money to go to Liberia and build a house. One man in his early 40s explained that his primary reason for wanting to go to America was so that he could work hard and earn enough money to take care of his five children who are now spread out, living with different people in Liberia. This larger narrative of wanting to travel to America so that an individual could invest in Liberia or take care of family in Liberia is a prominent element of the Liberian-American dream.

Complementary to ideas about the availability of upward social mobility are the visions of American lifestyles. As described in the introduction of this chapter, American

lifestyle includes eating a lot of meat – hamburgers or meat sandwiches for breakfast – along with parties and drinking. For many youth, Tupac Shakur was an iconic figure of the wealth and lifestyle available in America. People expected to have a house with an expensive mortgage and maybe two to three cars. The inside of the house would be filled with all the things you needed. For example, one woman chided a friend that she did not even need to go to America because she was already there – she had a spacious kitchen, bed, fan, big television and a computer in her house at the camp.

Many visions of America that may have been introduced through television and media were reified and reinforced through the presence of Liberians who had been resettled in America but returned to the camp for a visit, most commonly in transit to Liberia.[43] Particular lifestyle characteristics of those who resettled included being well-dressed and wearing expensive sneakers or cowboy boots. The linking of lifestyle characteristics to the Liberian-American dream reflects the American dreams of El Salvadorean immigrants in the United States (Mahler 1995), but for Liberians, these characteristics also reference historic structures of social status as mediated by the concept of being "civilized." As another example, resettled refugees were perceived to be eating well, as evidenced by weight gain among those visiting from America.[44] One young man who had resettled was visiting the camp for an extended period of time and described the food available at Buduburam as "just snacks." His family at the camp was

[43] Paul Richards (1994) discussed the significance of VHS technology in the making of soldiers in Liberia and the particular importance of the circulation and consumption of *RAMBO*.

[44] See Renzaho's (2004) article on the links between weight gain and increased social status in Africa.

able to deal with his appetite by keeping a tab at a cookshop so that he could eat there several times a day. Food quality adjustments were often made for transiting guests, as one woman explained. When her brother was visiting the camp from the eastern coast of the United States, she bought the high quality, expensive fish in the market to cook for him every day. However, he did not stay with her at the house on camp, but stayed at the hotel located on the camp. Regardless of his individual reason for staying at the hotel, people at the camp interpreted such behavior as evidence of the higher standards of living you become accustomed to once in America. Such heightened consciousness could be difficult for the people living at the camp, as one woman became aware of how horrible the drainage smell was surrounding her home when a woman living in the United States asked her how she could manage with that awful smell all the time.

As many of these practices came from individuals visiting temporarily at the camp, the nature of this visit in and of itself reinforced ideas about the opportunity available in America. Some resettled refugees returned to the camp to start export businesses, such as clothing or food products. One woman I interviewed explained how she used to be able to make a little bit of money cutting and packaging potato greens into small plastics for a woman who would take them to America to sell. More commonly, individuals passed through the camp on their way to Liberia where they would buy land and build homes. “Some of the people who left from refugee life that went on that side, few of the people that are there [America] – [their] homes got broken [in Liberia] – some sending money back to rebuild. They are doing that, a lot.” The wealth associated with

America and the subsequent building of homes is attached to substantial power, as one man explained:

> Yes, people that up there [in America]… still helping the people that left from here [to return to Liberia]….You will be there [Liberia] if they want to develop, they can use you to do something. Because if you here, you will not be able to do anything. But when you on the ground somebody can say "oh, at the end of every month I will send you this amount, you can find a piece of land. I will send you the plans, you can put this structure up, you can do this."…If you not even working, your family can still go on, once somebody's up there working. They can pass it down to you.

Above and beyond the visibility of lifestyle change among refugees resettled to America and other countries, financial remittances sent to people at the camp heavily influenced ideas of the Liberian-American dream.

Beyond providing support for those who are living at Buduburam, financial remittances have also impacted social organization at the camp and among Liberians in the homeland and various diaspora locations. For example, the perceived value of remittances was influenced by communication between people at the camp and overseas. Lucy explained that her sister used to send her money every month, US$100-$200. When her sister called to give her the Western Union control number, she would describe the money as "chicken change." Similarly Robertson's brother sent him US$200 every Christmas, telling Robertson that it was "not anything much." By diminishing what could be rather substantial sums of money for resettled refugees working below living wage jobs in America, the idea of America became further wedded to wealth. The invisible nature of transnational communication has also enabled resettled refugees the opportunity to cover up financial difficulties in the United States. While hiding the realities of

financial hardship helped to protect individual social status and face, it has also contributed to prevailing ideas of the Liberian-American dream. Later in this chapter, I explore transnational communication and its impact, particularly in terms of power. Within the immediate social worlds of refugees at Buduburam, the opportunity for the Liberian-American dream was linked to Christianity and whiteness. I address each of these structural forces in detail below.

Christianity and the "Grace of God"

The "grace of God" played a prominent and enabling role in social lives of many refugees at Buduburam. Even before the arrival of the ACS in Liberia, Christian missionaries had already landed on the shores of West Africa and opened schools, particularly on the eastern coast of Liberia. For many contemporary Liberians, Christianity has featured prominently in the domains of education and spirituality. As demonstrated in chapter 4, various denominations of Christian churches occupied an important social role at Buduburam, providing interim humanitarian aid in many instances. At a very basic level, research participants often explained that they "manage" and are able to eat through the grace of God.

On the ground, the grace of God worked through an individual's social network, as exemplified by food sharing practices. Among the 148 households included in the survey, participants reported a total of 510 food assistance relationships, either as a

receiver, giver or both. A total of 219 (43%) were reciprocal food assisting relationships, reflecting a certain degree of social responsibility manifested in the grace of God.

Beyond daily food provisions, research participants also spoke of the grace of God in relation to broader social support and opportunity. For example, one young woman explained that she was praying to God so that money would come and she could buy her own materials to start a business at the camp. In turn, money – remittances, either from abroad or internally distributed – circulated through the grace of God. Elizabeth, a young mother who survived through occasional support from family and friends who received regular remittances at the camp, perceived her social world and opportunity as dependent on God: "because when I am sitting I don't have money. But maybe somebody can be touched and come and be a blessing to me." Similarly, after I offered a large bar of washing soap to Caroline, a mother of four, after our two hour interview, she immediately began praising God for bringing me to her. She had woken up that morning wondering how she was going to get money to wash the looming pile of dirty clothes. She explained my presence and gift of soap as guided by God.

Seeking to understand how the grace of God works, I asked a neighbor to describe her understanding of the idea. She responded with a story about a man in Liberia. The man was sitting at home, very hungry but he did not have any rice to cook. He set a pot of water to boil on the fire outside. People in the neighborhood passed by and after awhile someone wondered why the empty pot of water was boiling and threw some rice into it. The hungry man could now eat. After telling the story, my neighbor explained that with patience, the grace of God will be realized.

At the camp, the grace of God resulted in targeted practices pertaining to resettlement opportunity. Most frequently, individual pastors and churches led sermons and prayers for resettlement. In fact some churches or pastors gained notoriety through sermons that testified to the impending arrival of resettlement. In this regard, the Liberian-American dream could become available to all, or at least those who believed in a Christian God.

Whiteness and the Liberian-American Dream

The example of Caroline above, where the opportunity to wash clothes came through my small token of soap, is emblematic of widespread ideas about whiteness at the camp and around the world. As the LRWC Chairman once explained to me, "They think you are from where Jesus came from. In fact they think beyond that. They think you have all the opportunities." Throughout my fieldwork, I encountered various associations between whiteness and wealth. During one focus group, women explained that the children of "money people" have brighter skin, "their skin shines." They also described "mulatto babies" as wealthy. Colloquially, "white" was a marker for privilege and wealth, as evidenced in the terms "Chinese white man" and "white Korean family." When I asked for an explanation of these terms by individuals using them, one woman said that the "white Korean family" was white because they prepared separate food for their dog. While "white" often marked wealth, the inverse was also used. The phrase "disappointed white man" was used by some to describe a light-skinned person who was poor.

These ethnographic instances exemplify theoretical concepts that have proposed "whiteness" as having an inherent cash value (Lipsitz 1998:vii) where "whiteness stands for the relative privilege, profit and power of those occupying the structural social positions of whites in a hierarchically ordered racial society, racist states and states of whiteness" (Goldberg 2002:248). Moreover, "properties of whiteness" were linked directly to class and place such that working class English in England did not possess the property of whiteness; however, once working class British were within the context of a (post) colony, they obtained the "property" and privilege of whiteness (Goldberg 2002: 172). Theoretically anyone can achieve standards of whiteness. In the context of the American "racial state," "working and immigrant classes might be devalued from or promoted into the relative privileges, powers, and properties associated with normative middle-class whiteness according to the political, economic and cultural demands and interests of place and time" (Goldberg 2002:173). At Buduburam, "whiteness" became a part of the social worlds of refugees in ways that were structurally linked to opportunities to travel.

Various research participants described the impact of being near or associated with whiteness. For example, when I interviewed Johnson he described the tension between perceptions of whiteness and ideas of the Liberian-American dream.

> For example if you realize, if you saw you and I entering dis house, of course I am not a prestigious person, but I am respected maybe in de community due to the level of education dat I have….Of course I don't have the wealth, but I have sort of respect. So when you see me coming wif you and even like de see de color white. The minute de see de color of de white person they just know that yes. So I think you understand what I am trying to say.

> M: Can you explain?
>
> J: It does not contribute to someone's status [to walk with a white person]. But what I'm trying to say, apart from the status, it is not all about status. It is also how you portray your life. Dat makes some to have respect for you. Sometimes, you know that Africans have that perception, whether a white person is poor or is rich, dey always conclude with dat person coming from de west, he just a good person. What I am saying is that if you are in Africa, there are some people who don't have wealth, but due to their hard work, due to the hard work, they are able to manifest that support of respect within the community. We Africans, when you are somebody in de community, dat maybe you are free wif maybe somebody who is a foreign person or from de west, they just conclude, due to your relation with that person or you are what? You are also a wealthy person. And dat is not de case.

In this case, Johnson deconstructed the associations between whiteness and access to opportunity. However, as he explained, his analysis worked in counterbalance to widespread perceptions about proximity to whiteness.

During my fieldwork in Liberia, while speaking with a young woman, she answered a phone call from her friend, a prominent government official with whom I was supposed to conduct an interview. She told the man on the phone that she had one white friend with her who was supposed to interview him. In response, he told the young woman that she should now see that he is a good person because good, "white" people know him. The value of "knowing" or being in relation to whiteness was also present at the camp, as explained by a man, Amos, who occasionally worked with foreign researchers. Amos' friends chided him: "'Oh my man, don't forget about us. Try to give us small ting.' So at the end of the day when you finish [work] you have to give them. Seriously they will look at you as being up. 'Oh Dat man not small man oh, white man know Dat man.' They have a saying, 'if white man know you, know your friend black

man.'" Amos explained the taunts of his friends to mean that once you rise up, don't forget those you have left behind. In his particular case, Amos' friends wanted him to give them a little bit of money because they believed he now had money due to his contact with white people at the camp. Whether or not financial gains or other opportunities were achieved through proximity to whiteness, the idea of "knowing" whiteness was connected to acquiring wealth for many.

In terms of practices at the camp, I identify three ways in which whiteness was connected to the prospect of opportunity: financial sponsorship, travel support and labor relations. The most common, and perhaps most pursued of these three connections was financial sponsorship. Foreign volunteers and researchers have been working at the camp for years. During my summer of preliminary fieldwork in 2005, more than 30 young foreign volunteers circulated through the camp for periods as short as two weeks to a few months. In addition to paying a volunteer fee to the sponsoring non-profit organization, many of these volunteers also provided additional financial support once they were at the camp. Some chose to support particular projects, while others provided financial support to individuals. In the case of individual requests, the money was typically for social needs, such as school, healthcare or in the case of adults, microenterprise projects. Aware of development discourse, refugees situated their requests within the ideological frameworks of benevolence and individual self-sufficiency such that requests for financial assistance were geared towards self-improvement or a particular social issue, such as women's development, tuberculosis outreach, youth education etc. Requests for assistance and sponsorship sought to reallocate the power and privilege of whiteness.

Connections between whiteness and sponsorship also occurred within the realm of opportunity for resettlement travel. This can best be exemplified by my experience one afternoon, as I walked into a neighborhood, looking to buy a few provisions. A woman sat washing clothes under a small tree. I approached her, asking if anyone sold sour milk. Her neighbors started in. "Ohhh, dis is really IT for yooouu." "Resettlement has come oh!" One man went on about how the woman would soon be seeing skyscrapers. By then my cheeks were flushed as pink as the compound walls and accompanying sunset. The woman ushered me into her house. As she pulled sour milk from a giant freezer, I glanced around the sitting room filled with nice, upholstered furniture while little kids in underwear jumped around, shyly smiling at me. When I stepped out of the house, the neighbors were still cackling about resettlement. With all the dignity that I could muster, I attempted to set the story straight. "I'm just a student. I can't resettle anyone. I just wanted some sour milk." In this example, the underlying power of whiteness is revealed. A similar relation existed between refugees and UNHCR workers, as refugees feared being interviewed by the white UNHCR workers, who were presumed to have more power to make a negative decision on their case to travel. Whiteness became something of a gatekeeper to the Liberian-American dream; however, later in this chapter I explore the limits to this relation.

The third way of "knowing" or connecting to whiteness was through labor relations, such as working with a foreign volunteer or researcher. Buduburam is a highly researched location and regularly host to organizational researchers (with the UNCHR, WFP) and independent researchers, most frequently students from the University of

Ghana and foreign researchers, such as myself. In almost every study, the researchers work with refugees as research assistants. In response to this on-going need for labor, a group of about thirty Liberians have become recognized as fieldworkers based on their education and experience working with both local health surveys and foreign research projects. This labor relation is fraught with much more tension and power than the preceding relations of sponsorship. One fieldworker who occasionally assisted foreign researchers explained that some people at the camp have told her that she is being used by white people. Likewise, one woman declined to participate in my survey because she said she had to write her own thesis rather than help me with mine. She further chided my Liberian research assistant for agreeing to help me with my work, saying that the he needed to write his own thesis. In these cases, whiteness stands as exploitation and a component of the system that structurally limits opportunities to very few.

Similarly, key research participants were advised not to teach me how to cook. When discussing this reaction to my interest in learning how to cook, one man in the neighborhood said: "Since Genesis white people have been taking advantage of black people." Following Goldberg, "blackness, in contrast to whiteness, is a valueless form of surplus labor" (Goldberg 2002:231). In part, teaching me how to work was uncompensated labor, but also provided me with the opportunity to exploit the local labor market because if I knew how to cook, I would no longer need to buy food from the cookshop. Furthermore, once I knew how to cook Liberian food, I would be able to make business from it, as many Liberians do at the camp and even once they are resettled. In

these examples of labor relations, the relationship shifted from one of benevolent support to a hierarchy with clear exploitative potential.

These two extremes of benevolent and exploitative relations with whiteness reflect broader ambivalence towards America and in this way power becomes negotiated through proximity to whiteness rather than becoming white. Whiteness – as privilege and power – exists outside of the social worlds of refugees. By engaging with whiteness, refugees worked to shift the structural relations of power that govern opportunity at the camp and within their broader transnational social worlds.

Power and the Pursuit of the Liberian-American Dream

This section discusses how interpersonal power works within the transnational social worlds of refugees, with particular attention on how these relations impact access to opportunity and migratory decisions relating to the UNHCR solutions. Analysis focuses on social relations between Liberians in Ghana, Liberia and the far diaspora, primarily America. Analytically, interpersonal power relations – between and within family and friend relations – are linked to broader forms of structural power in ways that obscure the actual details of both types of power. The discussion is framed in terms of two key relational domains: migratory decisions and remittances. Within these domains I identify the economic and social bases of power, seeking to understand how interpersonal relations frame opportunity within the UNHCR's three durable solutions and ultimately shape the broader decision to stay at or leave the camp.

Migratory Decisions

Despite the concept of "forced migration" the actual decision to migrate, especially away from exile, is a complex process. On the surface it may appear that the UNHCR has significant power in determining the migratory paths of refugees through offering or not offering certain programs or resources. However, the actual decisions to migrate take place on various transnational levels of relationship. In the first instance, refugees must negotiate and evaluate their migratory options (staying at the camp; repatriating; working towards resettlement; or some combination thereof, such as transnationalism) with their potential sponsors in the U.S. Secondly, refugees exhibited significant degrees of continued engagement with family and friends in Liberia that also contributed to migratory decision-making processes. In this section, I fully explore the transnational dynamics of power in these two domains.

Resettlement Decisions

Robertson traveled to Buduburam in 2001 with the intent of joining his mother and brother in America through a resettlement program. But after nearly eight years of waiting without results, Robertson began to talk with his mother about returning to Liberia. While he pursued a little bit of teaching at the camp, Robertson felt that he was starting to waste time by not being in school, especially in contrast to his younger cousin who had just graduated from the University of Liberia. While Robertson had decided that he would return to Liberia to get more education, his decision was mediated primarily through his mother, who needed to save money to support his return. His lack of

economic power contributed to a decision-making process guided by his relative overseas who had the financial means to support the decision to repatriate. However, migratory decisions were not solely influenced by economic power. Rather, social status within family structures influenced opportunity, most commonly through the parent-child relation when the parent has already been resettled.

Decontee had been taking care of her fiancée's son for a couple of years at Buduburam and was looking for a way to reunite the son with his father in America. Decontee was approached by someone whose resettlement case was going to travel, but needed another boy the same age as the son originally listed on the resettlement application. Decontee called the boy's father in America and asked if he would buy the space for his son. Dismissing the case as fraudulent, the father did not agree to send the money for his son to travel. Eventually, when the family resettled, it became clear that the case was not "fraudulent." Retrospectively, Decontee described her frustration with her fiancée's unwillingness to support his son, even though she had encouraged the opportunity.

Caroline explained how her family overseas actually prevented her from traveling. While she was in Liberia, her family overseas contacted her saying that they had been informed that her resettlement case had been called for an interview in Guinea and that she should travel there immediately. Once she arrived in Guinea, Caroline learned that her case had not been called for an interview in Guinea. Instead, her case had been filed in Ghana, Caroline was in the wrong country, and missed her opportunity to

travel. Caroline placed her experience within a broader narrative about the power relations between family overseas and those who live at the camp:

> Some people got family and family don't want for dey and dem to be on the same level so dey suppress dem – in de sense dat dey always for de person to be a beggar. And de person don't want to help to pull dem up in de sense of making a way for dem to come over to dem [in America] and struggle on dat side….just want to suppress dem. Always want dat person to be beneaf dem.

A young woman similarly described a family member in America: "Like my aunt, she just been wicked to us. When you call her, the phone can be ringing, but she doesn't answer. When she was going, she filed for us. They called us [for the interview] and she said she wasn't ready."

In addition to the interpersonal relations of power between family and friends, larger structural features of resettlement also helped to shape the location of power. For example, in the initial years of Buduburam, Liberians were able to resettle to the United States via the P-1 program, which did not require family sponsorship from the U.S. However, once the U.S. resettlement program began resettling fewer Liberians through the P-1 program, the P-3 family reunification program became the primary resettlement option.

Since it relies on the family to sponsor relatives remaining in exile, this programmatic change to P-3 resettlement also stimulated a shift in the locus of power from a benevolent, humanitarian entity to the intimate social worlds of refugees. Accompanying this shift, the ability and responsibility for resettlement involved the US government, UNHCR and an individual's family. As Voutira and Harrell-Bond (1995:212) explained, the last person on the chain of the humanitarian giving – the

person who tips the cup of grain into the hands of the recipient – actually possesses the most power. As I illustrated in chapter 2, historical practices of patronage in Liberia were premised upon opportunity for social advancement through the domestic sphere whereby an individual could gain status through working for and living with a "civilized" family. The contemporary structure of resettlement sponsorship reflected a similar social process whereby America and the Liberians who lived there possess greater social and economic power, lending credence to the ideology of the Liberian-American dream. Furthermore, with the P-3 resettlement program hinging upon the "benevolence" of family members in the U.S., these family members possessed substantial power within the broader resettlement system, in addition to their economic basis of power.

Voutira and Harrell-Bond's (1995) schematic levels of power in refugee camps did not include relations between refugees and members of the far diaspora. However, my ethnographic examples above have demonstrated that family members in the U.S. commonly have both the economic and social power necessary to enable or prevent the resettlement of people at Buduburam. However, the overarching reality of structural power ultimately shaped resettlement opportunities. Refugees learned this in a very unsettling way in December 2009, when nearly all of the 200 applications for P-3 resettlement were denied by the U.S. DHS. In chapter 6, I further discuss the implications of this policy shift upon the negotiation of power.

Repatriation Decisions

This section adds in the social and political space of the Liberian homeland to my questions regarding transnational power relations and the negotiation of migratory decisions. It begins with a brief set of historical memories that shape ideas of Liberia and then examines how communication and relationships between refugees at Buduburam and their family and friends in Liberia impact migratory decision-making processes.

During interviews and casual conversations, I spent a lot of time talking with people about Liberia. Often our conversations avoided the experiences of war and instead focused on the beauty of Liberia. Before going to Liberia, I had a vision of a lush and rich country. In conversation with one woman we made incomplete lists of eight different kinds of mangoes and three different kinds of bananas that grow in Liberia. In interview after interview, people insisted that even poor people in Liberia ate well – at least before the war. Even when you did not have anything, people explained that Liberians in Liberia were kind and would give you food in the market. Similar to memories and dreams of a distant home, the narratives of individuals also frequently mentioned special food available in Liberia: salt pork; salt fish; dried meats, including monkey; and real torborgi oil. Sustained contact and interaction with relatives who lived in Liberia afforded occasional access to these goods in Ghana. In some cases, individuals at the camp were able to import dried meat or torborgi oil from Liberia to sell at the camp. These goods usually sold out very quickly.

From data reported on the Household Food Economy Survey, 60 of 148 (41%) household heads reported that they communicated with family or friends in Liberia, in

many instances on a weekly basis. In some cases, this communication worked to maintain family and social hierarchies, as the example of a woman in her early 40s demonstrates. Aimee's family was spread out between Liberia, the camp and the US. Even though Aimee occupied a position of limited economic power by living at the camp, she was still consulted when funeral arrangements were being made for a family member in Liberia – thus exhibiting a certain degree of transnational social power. In a similar way, Lucy was included in important family decisions, even though she had not been able to contribute much financially to important family events, such as for the funeral of her father. A number of other individuals also reported inclusion in important social events in Liberia, mostly surrounding funeral ceremonies and in one case a family reunion.

These intricate ties between refugees at the camp and family or friends in Liberia have created social worlds involving the negotiation and contestation of social and economic power. These power dynamics weigh heavily upon migratory decisions. During interviews and conversations at the camp, refugees frequently voiced fear about the prospect of "wasted years." Wasted years is a derogatory term that has become widespread in its attachment to people who have lived at the camp for a long time and then return to Liberia with nothing. As one young man described, "when you go and 2-3 months they see you are not doing anything [in Liberia] they say you wasted all your years in Ghana doing nothing. 'You went to Ghana for resettlement and you never went anywhere. Now you come back again.'" Concern about the stigma of "wasted years" varied according to the individual. Robertson expressed fear of becoming a "wasted years" because he had not been able to pursue university education in Ghana.

During my brief visit to Liberia in 2009, I took the opportunity to speak with some people who had repatriated from Buduburam about the stigma of "wasted years." A woman in her early 30s who had lived at the camp and then returned to Liberia was not able to manage, so she returned to Buduburam and attended vocational school before once again returning to Liberia. She now manages a successful cookshop where she is able to save money for her son. When I asked her about the reception she received in Liberia upon returning from Buduburam, she explained that she does not tell people that she was at Buduburam. She will not deny that she lived there, but she does not offer the information as a way of avoiding the social stigma attached to living at the camp. I really came to understand the power and substance of this stigma when I had the opportunity to speak with University of Liberia students. While these students had never been to Buduburam, they described the camp as a bad place where a bunch of people are just wasting time and living the high life, drinking alcohol at the expense of their family members that support them.

Facing such negative prospects of reception, refugees at Buduburam wanted nothing more than to avoid being wasted years. According to the individuals I interviewed, money and education were the two primary ways to return to Liberia with your social status intact or improved. When I asked Blessing – a single mother of three – about prospects for return, she responded: "if you go back to Liberia with money, your family will welcome you." Those who had been able to acquire some education while in Ghana, did not express concern about being labeled as "wasted years." For example, Therese thinks that she will have improved social status if she returns to Liberia because

she had earned a technical degree in Ghana. Likewise, Johnson explained that he will experience improved status upon return to Liberia because he left Liberia without a bachelor's degree and has since acquired one.

These examples of achievements stood in stark contrast to the contemporary job and educational opportunities in Liberia. For example, Therese described how the war destroyed the post-graduate education system in Liberia. Currently, she explained, professors in Liberia are not sufficiently paid, if they are paid at all. As a result, professors do not always show up for lectures and rely heavily on tipping – students paying for grades – as an extra form of income. While the Liberian government attempts to build the post-graduate education system, the University of Liberia is churning out too many graduates. This sentiment was held by refugees at the camp and also reinforced numerically at the Liberian Studies Conference held at University of Liberia in 2009, where Gray (2009) estimated a University of Liberia student body of approximately 28,000 students, many of whom would not be absorbed into the Liberian economy.

The lack of jobs in Liberia has heightened the tension surrounding managing, success and achievement. Facing such bleak job prospects in Liberia, refugees experienced high degrees of uncertainty about how they would manage once in Liberia. Many refugees explained that they were afraid to return to Liberia because their family overseas would likely stop sending them remittances. Furthermore, the cost of living in Monrovia appeared to be substantially higher than maintaining their lives at Buduburam. For example, US dollars go farther at the camp than in Liberia because people do not pay

such high rent (if they pay for rent at all) or transportation costs. School and hospital fees are also less expensive at Buduburam.[45]

Ideas about opportunity and success have become so prominent and contentious as to be read onto the death of a refugee returnee who had opened a successful business in Liberia. The man's death was explained as a result of poisoning. When I inquired about the reason behind the purported act of poisoning, refugees at the camp suggested that he had been poisoned due to jealousy of the successful business he started when he returned to Liberia.[46] While the cause of his death remains unknown, the interpretation alone remains informative for how refugees view, evaluate and wager migration in terms of status and social mobility.

There is a strong distinction between professional returnees and Liberians who have not traveled or lived within the far diaspora. This fundamental inequality has amplified the fears surrounding wasted years and subsequent decreases in social status that might accompany return migration. In many instances, the relations between refugees, the homeland, and the far diaspora acted as a deterrent of return for many refugees. In turn, these social deterrents, couched within the Liberian-American dream, have contributed to an evaluation of migratory options within a transnational space of power relations.

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[45] For example, rent for a one bedroom apartment of comparable quality might cost US$25/month in Monrovia versus US$11/month at the camp. In greater contrast, one month of electricity in Monrovia cost US$80, whereas one month of electricity at the camp cost US$5-6. At the time of my fieldwork, rice prices were comparable between the two countries.

[46] When I had spoken with this man during my 2005 fieldwork, he was one of the few refugees who was adamant about not traveling to America via a resettlement program. Rather, he wanted to travel by means of greater social status, such as a student visa.

Remittances

As demonstrated in chapter 4, remittances contributed to the livelihoods of many refugees living at Buduburam. In this section, I explore how remittances impacted economic and social power among refugees at the camp. This section also considers the power relations between the remittance sender and receiver, asking how these relations frame migratory desires and decisions.

At the camp, the economic and social power derived from receiving remittances frequently took visible shape. For example, one woman spoke with disgust of a woman who regularly tried to show off her Western Union remittance slip so that others would know how much money she received. Institutionally Western Union reinforced the visibility of remittances by offering monthly prizes to top receivers. Lower end prizes included t-shirts, mugs and hats while larger prizes of electronics were also given away. On multiple occasions I heard about the woman who won a freezer from Western Union. Another woman explained how her name had been selected for a television, but she had not noticed her name on the winner's board at Western Union and had been unable to claim her prize. While these prizes offered a visible means of access to potential wealth, they also increased Western Union profits because refugees started to solicit remittances. As one woman explained, she would call her relatives and ask them all to send money within the same month so that she could win one of the prizes.

Remittances from internet sponsors take an entirely different form of visibility at the camp, partially because recipients could receive well into the US$1,000s. For example, a group of young men regularly drove throughout the camp in an old teal

volkswagon with yellow letters reading, "Yahooz Boyz'." Men with internet sponsors were seen as powerful due to the large amount of money they received. Their power was described in predatory terms, such that they had the ability to lock anyone up. As Robertson explained, one must be careful not to get in a fight with someone who receives heavy remittances because they can just lock you up in jail, even if you are not at fault. Individuals who received regular remittances were similarly perceived to have power, as Robertson presented a potential argument between someone who receives remittances and an individual who does not: "Oh man move from here. You, you nothing. You fact gotta sell water before you eat. Me, I can't sell water. Soon I take telephone one time, my money will come just now I can even feeeed." Robertson's example illustrates economic power at a very basic level, such that the person who received remittances had access to food and potentially even some control over that resource.

As I introduced in chapter 1, scholars have debated whether remittances spread out in a community or exacerbate inequality. Lacking strong empirical data, scholars have taken stands on both sides of the argument. To get a better sense of the relationship between remittances and inequality, I have analyzed data from the Household Food Economy Survey to explore the extent to which those who receive remittances spread this wealth out among those living at the camp who do not receive remittances.

Of the 111 household heads who reported receiving overseas remittances of any frequency, 69 (62%) gave money to other people at the camp. These 69 people gave to a total of 122 people at the camp. Eighty-two (67%) of these relationships were financially reciprocal. Of the 82 reciprocal relations, I obtained data on the amount of the last

financial exchanges for 33 (40%) of these relations. In 14 (42%) instances, the person who reported income from overseas remittances gave more than they received and 17 (52%) received more than they gave to others at the camp. In 2 (6%) relations, the last financial exchange was equal. Figure 16 illustrates the extent to which these households gave and received within their reciprocal financial relations at the camp.

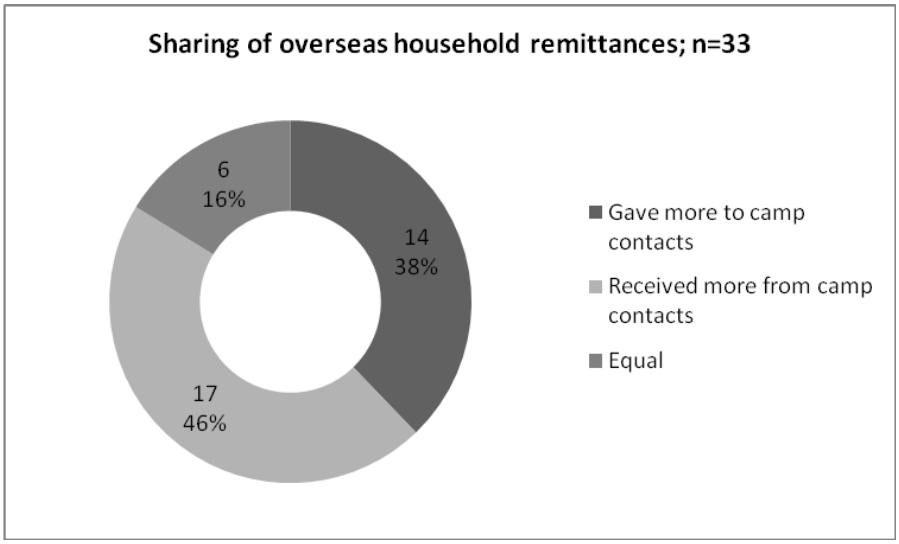

Figure 16 Sharing Remittances with Other Households at the Camp

As illustrated, most people receiving overseas remittances either received more money from other people at the camp or shared equally with others at the camp. Thus, fewer remittance receivers shared their remittance wealth with people at the camp of lesser means. As such, remittances did not seem to spread out vastly among camp residents, nor did they create greater economic equality.

Of the 31 people who reported receiving monthly remittances, 26 (84%) also reported that they provided financial support to others living at the camp; a figure slightly higher than the aggregate of all households receiving remittances. The 26 people providing financial support reached the hands of 51 people. Of these 51 relations of financial support, 27 (53%) were financially reciprocal.

Of the 27 financially reciprocal relations, I had data on the amount of the last financial exchanges for 11 (41%) of these relations. In 3 (27%) relations, the person receiving overseas remittance income gave more than they received and 6 (55%) received more than they gave to others at the camp. In 2 (18%) instances, the last financial exchange was equal. Figure 17 suggests that the majority of people receiving remittances actually gave less than what they received from other people at the camp.

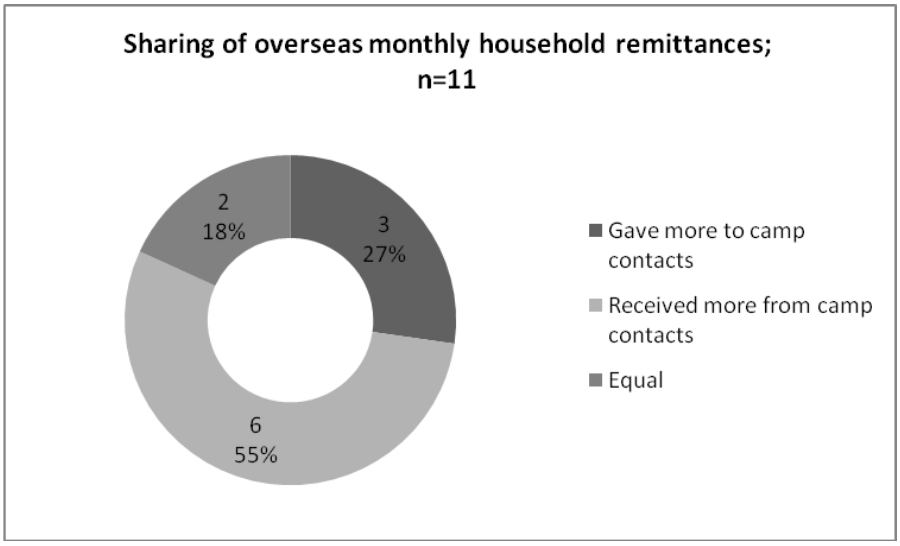

Figure 17 Sharing Remittances with Other Households at the Camp, Households with Monthly Remittance Income

While people who received monthly remittances had a greater rate of sharing or giving financial resources to others at the camp (84% versus 69%), the data still illustrate that remittance receivers tend to share resources with others of similar means. Unlike the group of households with remittance income of any frequency, the monthly remittance households with reciprocal financial exchanges at the camp actually gave less money to others at the camp than they received from other camp residents (27% vs. 55%, respectively).

In some cases, the distribution of remittances at the camp created struggles for power. One common site of struggle was within households comprised of a caretaker and potential traveler. Lucy was taking care of the teenage son of a friend who lived in America and occasionally received remittances from the boy's family overseas. However, authority over the use of the remittances was unclear. For example, the boy's grandmother called Lucy and gave her the information to pick up the money and explained that she should use it to take care of her grandson. At the same time, the grandmother called her grandson and told him that she was sending him money. When the money actually arrived, there would be regular confrontations, where the boy insisted that the money was for him to spend on a new phone, for example. In contrast, Lucy needed the money to pay his school fees, buy school uniforms and supplies and as general food money. This case exemplifies many other such instances at the camp where the authority over the use of remittances was contested. In such cases, the person sending remittances from the diaspora seemed to take little role in mediating the confusion over the money and it was left to domestic dispute.

Remittances also influenced family hierarchies. In several interviews, research participants pointed out that a younger sibling sent money to support them. While generally appreciative of the support, some research participants nonetheless noted the practice as outside of typical social codes of behavior. For example, Mary made a joke – that her younger sister has become her "ma" – when she said that her younger sister had been supporting her for the past thirteen years. The joke has a double entendre, as "ma" was a colloquial term for money. Reorganization among family members also spans to Liberia, where a woman explained how when her husband's younger brother traveled to Switzerland and got a well-paying job, his older sister in Liberia started calling him "papa." As these ethnographic examples from the transnational social worlds of Liberian refugees confirm, the ideas and practices of the Liberian-American dream are constructed and contested within interpersonal relations of power. Wolf explained, interpersonal power is influenced by structural power which "not only operates within settings and domains but also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves, and that specifies the direction and distribution of energy flows" (Wolf 1999:5). The structural inequalities that contribute to poverty in both Ghana and Liberia become manifested in personal relations between peoples in these different places. In turn, these structural and lived differences in socio-economic power between the camp and the far diaspora heavily shape migratory ideas, practices and pursuits. In the next section below I explore the interactions between interpersonal and structural power dynamics.

Transnational Terrain of Power

In addition to the power negotiations surrounding the distribution of remittances at the camp, I also consider the power vested in the transnational relationships between remitter or remittee. Following Fields' (2008) "dark-side" critique of social capital, I consider the ways in which remittance relations have the capacity to decrease the power of the person who benefits financially in the exchange. My analysis of power begins with a brief exploration of relations between people at the camp and family in Liberia. Following this, I examine the relations between refugees at the camp and people in the far diaspora. My analysis here centers upon four themes found in the data: avoidance, liability, dignity and reciprocity.

At the camp an informal money transfer business was created to channel money between Liberia and Buduburam. Unlike Western Union, Liberians in Ghana could receive U.S. dollars through this informal network. In some cases the U.S. dollars were worth more in exchange; however this was not always the case. A woman asked if I would give her cedis for her US$20 because the bill was worn and dirty and the Ghanaian money exchangers would not accept the bill.

Refugees typically exhibited less financial power than people in Liberia; twenty refugees (14%) reported that they occasionally received financial assistance from family or friends living in Liberia. However, a few households from the Household Food Economy Survey demonstrated evidence of greater economic power than family living in Liberia. Six household heads (4%) sent money to family or friends living in Liberia. One medium-sized business owner sent approximately US$75 every two to three months to

his child in Liberia. In another case, a young woman sent money to her family in Liberia regularly, which she was able to do because she received remittances from her fiancé in America. Other individuals reported that they were able to send clothes to family in Liberia. The majority of exchange between refugees at the camp and people in Liberia was communication and keeping in touch.

In contrast to the maintenance of a social connection with people in Liberia, refugees frequently described instances of communication between themselves and their family or friends in the far diaspora on less benevolent terms, such as a relation of avoidance. While completing a netmap, Beatrice described her relatives overseas as not calling her: "years they are not calling. They are in America of course." Samuel described a similar situation: "If I will be sick or I have problem and I will keep asking, asking calling calling calling calling calling [tapping the table for emphasis]. 'I'm not working, I'm not this. I'm not that.'" Emilie explained that even when she was able to get someone on the phone, they insisted that it was not the right person. She was afraid to call her daughter in America because she yells at her.

This unavailability contrasts with the on-call status of the people living at the camp who needed the remittances. During an interview with a woman in her early 40s, she explained her financial situation with a rare degree of moderate security, such that she had a large family network overseas that she could rely on. If her immediate family was unable to send her money, she could reach out to her aunts and uncles. However, this sense of security was extremely relative. As we talked, her cell phone began ringing. She could not locate her phone and started running around the house, looking for her phone as

she shouted "I looking for money from America." While she kept a sense of humor about not being able to find her phone, she explained the urgency in needing to take an international call should it come.

Refugees frequently described their communication with family overseas as centering upon issues of liability and dependency. When I asked Mabel about her situation at the camp, she responded: "I mean, [we] just a liability. You not doing anyting. No not working, jus depending on somebody. So it's still miserable.… When you broke, you call dem on dat side too much, dey get vexed wit you." Emilie also elaborated on people getting vexed when calling them for money. Her sister regularly sent school fee money for the children at the camp. Emilie's experience of the conversations was that her sister was "bold to talk" and yelled at Emilie that she cannot be dependent and "what *is* she doing at the camp?" Emilie has tried several businesses at the camp, including selling small snacks, a provision shop, exporting goods to Liberia, but she still needs remittances. As one research participant explained, "people with jobs still need Western Union."

Even for those who received regular remittances, some described the transnational relation as problematic. In Helena's case, her fiancé overseas wanted her to become independent, so he set up an on-line Western Union account that he expected her to check regularly so that she could retrieve the collection information on her own. While she attempted to access the remittance money on-line, the internet system in Ghana was inconsistently able to access the Western Union website. Helena sometimes spent multiple hours trying to log into the site, without avail. In one instance when Helena

could not get onto the Western Union site after trying several times, the children called their father and begged him to send the control number for the money he sent. Eventually he sent the number, and she got the money several weeks after he had actually sent it. In the meantime, Helena had been stretching thin resources and crediting for food.

Less commonly, research participants favorably described their transnational relations. In one case, a young woman completing a netmap said she will not lie, she will "give flowers to her mother while she is alive." Her mother sent monthly remittances, sometimes up to US$500 per month. While not to this extent, other research participants experienced relative certainty of monthly remittances. Of the 31 people receiving monthly remittances, 23 (74%) did not have to ask for the money to be sent, whereas 8 people (26%) reported that they still had to ask for the money each month. As reported in chapter 4 in the Household survey, 101 people (68%) reported that they had to beg for food or money for food. Fourteen (14%) of those begging targeted their requests to family or friends overseas. When begging was met with the response that things in America are hard, Beatrice asserted: "They should come [to the camp] and we go. They complain the place is hard but they won't come. Since the place is hard, come so we can go. At least they get to work with their own hands and not just be sitting." These differences in economic and social power have fostered a sense of resentment among some that further enhanced desires to achieve the Liberian-American dream.

While most transnational relations were financially unequal, with the flow of remittances coming from overseas to the camp, a few individuals reported limited capacity to reciprocate. Throughout all of my interviews, surveys and conversations I

encountered two examples in which individuals at the camp were able to invest their own money in an exchange with a person overseas.

In the first instance, Rosaline decided to "just close her eyes" and send a gift to her mom in America. She explained that her mom had been providing most of her support, but was now on the verge of losing her house in America. Rosaline wanted to send her a token of appreciation for what she has done for her. However, Rosaline also explained that she was able to make the "decision to close her eyes" and spend money in the first place because she can appeal to her extended family in America for financial support. Rosaline admitted that it was very difficult to try to do something nice for family overseas because the relation was so laden with financial pressure and inequality. Sometimes she liked to just call them or send them a message to see how they are doing, but the outreach was most often interpreted as a veiled request for money.[47]

In the second instance, Mary was able to send gifts to a friend in Australia. She described her ability to do this as a result of her confidence in the relationship. For example, through her hard work to protect her friend's land and house in Ghana, Mary and her friend share great confidence, such that Mary knows that she could ask her friend for US$1,000 if she needed it and she would receive it. This certainty combined with a regular business income and larger social network – most importantly, an employed husband – contributed to the financial security that enabled Mary to expend financial resources overseas. As such, the ability to engage in reciprocal relations with family

[47] Lindley (2007a:21) noted this relation among Sudanese refugees.

members overseas mediated both the experience of being overpowered, and also the potential returns gained.

Having outlined several themes of power relationships (availability, liability, dignity, reciprocity), how these relationships are understood and interpreted must be explored. To accomplish this, I look at the specific practice of decreased remittances, which was a common source of contention. The topic of decreased remittances appeared regularly throughout my interviews and conversations at Buduburam. While research participants repeated the explanations for decreased remittances that they heard from people overseas – the economy is hard, we lost our job, etc. – individual interpretations of the lack of remittances centered upon the concept of meanness.

One afternoon I sat in the air-conditioned Western Union office, waiting for my name to be called. I was always uncomfortable receiving money at Western Union, but also learned substantially from the practice and was the easiest way for me to receive money. A young man came into the office, standing extremely close to me. The man asked me for my pen as I was writing. When I did not immediately hand over my pen, he blurted: "Americans are so mean!" His comment sparked immediate conversation and debate in the office. Attempting to calm the situation, the man to my left leaned over to say that most people here at the camp have someone in America, who may or may not be sending the money. The reason whether or not someone sent money often drew upon individuals character traits such as being "nice" or "mean" as a causal influence.

> They will even pray for you to go. People will pray for you to send money. People will name three persons, like John, Peter and Paul. 'Whom you like to go to America? Peter. Peter. Why? Because Peter is free-handed.' That is, Peter can

> give more than Paul and John. People in a family will sit around and talk like this: 'I prefer, even Mary should have gone to America because that other Esther that in America, she meaaan. She too mean. That me was supposed to go America, you all coming to enjoy.'"

The explanation of remittance behavior as an individual character trait reflects ideas of the Liberian-American dream: people in America have money, therefore if they are not sending remittances it is not because a lack of financial capacity, but due to a character trait, such as meanness. Similar to the relationship of the shadow colony and the American colonizer, transnational family members have come to regard one another with ambivalence. In this process, inequality is situated firmly within the dynamics of the family circle, rather than as a result of larger structural forces.

The Liberian-American Dream: A Myth?

I have elected to use the term Liberian-American dream rather than American dream to reflect the element of social responsibility that accompanies ideas about travel to America. Research participants frequently imagined the lives of fellow Liberians living in America. As I have previously laid out the traits of these imagined lives, people at the camp also shifted a critical gaze upon these opulent lifestyles, as one resident explained: "People go out from Liberia and stay out – they do not come back home and invest. You have plenty of people with high positions in Liberia, but do not own a home there." I received some confirmation of this practice while in Liberia, where I met a high government official who told me that he is from a particular state in America. He owned a home and had a family in America and rents an apartment in Monrovia where he works.

As he teased his neighbor for keeping an apartment nearly empty in Monrovia while plenty of people were looking for a place to sleep, the man was simultaneously aware and unconcerned about his approach to renting an apartment in the capital of the country where he was a civil servant. While the Liberian-American dream adheres to tenets of the American dream: hard work, individual responsibility and equal opportunity, the Liberian-American dream also includes a larger *social* responsibility for the care of family that remain in Liberia as well as the overall development of the country.

Within the idealized visions of the Liberian-American dream, research participants also engaged with the limits or impossibility of the dream. In a focus group conversation, a man and woman debated the importance of hard work in getting ahead. One argued that laziness will beget laziness in America: "checker players at the camp will be checker players in America." The only difference, another focus group participant added: "except they will eat hamburgers." In this case, small changes in quality of life occurred due to resources available and purchasing power, but without hard work one's character or social status will not change in America. Instances of laziness or wasting opportunity in America were acknowledged – hearing that so-and-so is sleeping in his car – but dismissed as examples of "rotten apples." In this regard, failure to achieve the Liberian-American dream results from individual responsibility.

The significance and limit of individual responsibility was exemplified in a conversation that I had with Sarah, a young mother of six. She explained that in America, Liberians are lazy and don't want to work, but in Europe, Liberians work hard and do well. I responded by asking why Liberians are lazy in America but not in European

countries. Sarah thought for a moment and then said that Liberians are doing better in European countries because they get better services there, including one year of housing, education and a refugee stipend. Sarah's analysis of the differences between these two broad locations – America and Europe – focused on what was available in Europe rather than what was not available in America and she struggled to describe the "failures" of Liberians in American as a result of systemic inequality. Instead she preferred to describe them as "lazy" and in doing so, supported her own idea of the Liberian-American dream where success could be achieved through hard work.

On a warm afternoon in June, in my seventh month at the camp, I encountered a starkly critical perspective of the U.S. resettlement system. Soloman, a young man in the neighborhood, had brought over a book about Liberian history one afternoon. I lay with my back against the cold tiles of the floor, trying to catch a breeze through the chicken-wired door as I read and questioned the book out loud. "President Cheeseman, what a name!" "Did you know that Americo-Liberian is different from Congo?" "Not really," was the general response from the people who moved in and out of the house as I read outloud. "Where is Richard?" called Lucy, his mother, "let him come sing the national anthem for Auntie Micah." Straggled notes … In joy and gladness, // With our hearts united, // We'll shout the freedom, // Of a race benighted. // Long live Liberia, happy land! … I proclaimed that I wanted a copy of the book. Lucy sauntered to the door wearing her red and green lappa, "Solo. Solo. Solo!" "Yea, Sis Lucy?" "Where you get dis book?" "I bought it from da one man – he know allll da history. Da old papi," said Solo as entered the house and sat down in a chair.

Our conversation continued to meander about through Liberian history, eventually coming to the present and resettlement. "Resettlement is modern slavery," proclaimed Solo. I sat bolt upright from my lounging position on the floor: "what do you mean?!" This was my opportunity to hear some critical insight into the favored travel route. Solo explained that resettlement was like slavery because they [presumably the UNHCR or U.S. government] take people from here and they get bad or low jobs in America. He said it's like slavery because "you go to America and all you do is work in some low-paying job." I nodded my head, filing Solo's ideas into my head next to Jacob's complaints – a young man in his 20s who had been resettled to America a couple of years ago – that all he does is work in America. According to Jacob, it can be so lonely; in fact, you work to be around your friends, so that you not sitting alone in your house.

Solo elaborated on his statement, telling the story of a well-known lawyer who had been resettled to America, where he worked in a restaurant washing dishes. His supervisor at the restaurant was a young girl without a college education. This was a significant loss in social status and pride for the lawyer. Similarly, a man who used to be the commissioner of his town was now working in a grocery store in America, packing people's groceries. When another Liberian approached the former mayor at the store, saying he looked familiar, he told the person to move from there, nobody needed to know him. In both cases, the significant loss of social status is, at least for Solo, not unlike the massive decrease in status, pride and dignity experienced by people who were enslaved during the transatlantic slave trade. Despite the link between resettlement and subsequent loss in social status in America, Liberians still want to travel to America. As the LRWC

chairman explained, Liberians are in awe of America and suffer from an "inferiority complex." To unpack what the chairman calls an "inferiority complex," I return to the concept of whiteness. Lipsitz (1998:vii) described the "investment in whiteness" as a social process through which individuals invest in protecting and creating white supremacy. The hope to travel and idea of the Liberian-American dream – as linked to whiteness and place – reaffirms white supremacy while the outcome for a refugee who travels remains debatable.

While Solo recognized resettlement as slavery, he still invested in the dream and pursuit of it. This ambivalence is reflective of the simultaneous push and pull from the colonial experience. Outside the pull of the Liberian-American dream, some refugees imagine a different kind of future. A young woman of in her late teens explained that she wanted to return to Liberia where she believed she would make something of herself and her country. This perspective was more reflective of republican ideals of individualism and the founding of a social entity, in this case the creation of a new Liberia.

Responding to Structural Limitations

The rejection of nearly 200 applications for resettlement to the United States in December 2008 left an undeniable mark on the people at the Buduburam seeking opportunity to travel to America. In the words of one woman, "America only wants a few refugees now." Refugees responded to this reality in various ways; however a general shift in focus spread about the camp. Conversations began to focus on the arrival of a

new resettlement program to Australia. Discussions and hopes for travel were encouraged when several people traveled to Australia in May 2009. By June, Australian resettlement forms started to circulate via a church. The intensity of conversations and plans to travel to Australia increased when the UNHCR verification exercise was closed for a day. Refugees insisted that the UNHCR had to stop for a day because officials from Australia had come to discuss a resettlement program and had brought Liberians from Australia to translate for them.

Just as I had heard countless imaginings of life in America, people were now talking about Australia. As one woman explained, America is hard, people there are losing their jobs and are not able to send money like they used to. These hardships were subsequently filled with new opportunities in Australia where you could get a job picking grapes and apples. Refugees noted other benefits in Australia, including a refugee stipend and a furnished house. Furthermore, it took less time to file an application for your relatives to travel to Australia. These new ideas and dreams about Australia took hold quickly. During a focus group session, Patricia – a young mother of six – described how her three year old son had been drawing in the sandy yard with a stick. As he sketched he said, “Mama, here’s your house in Australia.” Through conversation and planning, Liberians began to construct a new social world outside of America. Nonetheless, America still lurked in the shadows. One afternoon I spoke with a young man and woman. The woman explained that she was eager to travel to Australia. In response, the man said, “For me, I still waiting for America.” America is not just a final migratory destination, but part of a larger migratory route between Ghana, the U.S. and Liberia

whereby the financial and social opportunity in America is wedded to prospects of upward social mobility in Liberia. Hence, the social worlds of Liberian refugees are a living process whereby resettlement is constructed not as a final destination, but the another step in the process of being Liberian.

On the level of individuals, success can be obtained by working hard and living a comfortable lifestyle in America. However success in the broader social sense also necessarily includes contributing to others within their transnational social worlds, most notably to people in Liberia as well as to the general development of the Liberian nation. Liberians are invested in returning home, but through a travel route that first includes travel to America. In this regard, resettlement to America becomes a migratory *route* rather than destination.

As I have illustrated in this chapter, individual ideas about migration are mediated by access to financial resources but also by a more complex terrain of transnational social relations of power. In the next chapter, I draw out the linkages between these interpersonal power relations and larger forces of structural power and examine the limits of the Liberian-American dream. In doing so, I examine instances of ideological struggle and the contestation of power surrounding the UNHCR durable solutions.

CHAPTER 6

SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES: IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE BETWEEN LIBERIANS AND THE REFUGEE AID SYSTEM

On Friday December 19, 2008 nearly 200 applicants to the U.S. P-3 family reunification resettlement program piled onto buses before the sun had even risen. They were travelling to the OPE office in Accra to receive their letters of decision. The night before I had listened to eager applicants discuss what they would do when they travelled. Long after the buses had returned to the camp, I walked into the yard of one family that had been working towards resettlement for a long time. The mother of the household, Lucy, immediately handed me a letter without explanation. I couldn't read her expression at the time, but had felt my heart pounding as I realized the impact of what I was about to read.

> Dear M _____:[48]
>
> This letter refers to your Registration for Classification as a Refugee (Form 1-90) and your recent interview with an officer of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).…
>
> For the reasons indicated below, we have determined that you are not eligible for resettlement to the United States.
>
> □ **PERSECUTION.** You did not establish that you have suffered past persecution or that you have a well-founded fear of future persecution.

[48] Excerpt from a U.S. DHS resettlement decision letter.

> There is no appeal for a denial of an application for refugee status. USCIS may exercise its discretion to review a case upon timely receipt of a request for a review from the principal applicant….
>
> Sincerely,
> Field Officer
> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, USCIS Accra Sub office

After reading the letter in full, I sat in a state of confusion, my thoughts matching the tirade of questions that flew my way. How can someone who was two years old at the time of the war prove persecution? Where is a child supposed to go if her father lives in America? How did this happen? How had hopes risen so high? Had all of these refugees now holding rejection letters misunderstood their prospects in the bureaucratic system of UNHCR solutions?

This chapter looks at the relationship between the Liberian-American dream and structural power to understand the potential limits to the pursuit of the Liberian-American dream. This discussion is framed and analyzed in terms of the power relations within and between refugees, the larger aid system and nation-states. In particular, this chapter considers how ideas and ideology become locked in a struggle for power and is divided into two sections. The first section outlines the different ideas or commonsense notions held by refugees and the refugee aid system. As identified in chapter 4, key entities of the refugee aid system in this research include the UNHCR, UNHCR implementing partners (primarily WFP), and the Ghana Refugee Board (including the Camp Manager), OPE and DHS immigration interviewers and various national governments (Liberia, Ghana, USA). My presentation focuses explicitly on ideas of the future and migratory "solutions." This first section outlines the tensions and power dynamics between the various entities and

then, the second section analyzes two events or instances of ideological struggle – a women's demonstration and a UNHCR data collection exercise. Analysis draws upon Wolf's distinctions between tactical or organizational power and structural power to illuminate how certain ideas fail to or become an ideology or hegemonic force.

The data in this chapter comes from my own interviews with refugees at Buduburam and members of the refugee aid system. In the process of interviewing refugees and members of the refugee aid system, I encountered a polarized relationship between refugees and the aid system and regularly felt pressure to take sides. My choice to live at the camp aligned me with refugees, giving me access to the experiences of daily life at the camp and the complexity of the reasons for which refugees remain in exile. In contrast, my access to the refugee aid system remained quite limited as I did not share or occupy the spaces inhabited by staff members from the various international and national agencies governing the camp. Nonetheless, as a potentially neutral party between the two sides, I collected a substantial amount of data reflecting the polarization and mutual skepticism between the two groups. Participant-observation data and media archives also substantially inform my analysis

The Context for Struggle – Interactions between Refugees and the Bureaucracy

As one of seven potential relations of power between "patrons and clients" in a camp setting, the dynamics between refugees and the aid system represent one of the most common sites of power contestation (Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995:212). This

section begins by briefly outlining the types of power relations that govern relations between people and institutions and then traces the commonsense notions of both refugees and the aid system. Next, it looks at how these commonsense ideas play out and conflict within one another in the provision of asylum services and the implementation of the UNHCR durable solutions: resettlement, repatriation and local integration.

Competing for Commonsense

Under the umbrella of the refugee aid system, organizations and their staff members possess varying degrees of power that frame relations between refugees and the aid system. Wolf has proposed "tactical" or organizational power as the "power that controls the contexts in which people exhibit their capabilities and interact with others" or the ways in which "individuals or groups direct or circumscribe the actions of others within determinate settings" (Wolf 1999:5). As I explained in chapter 4, the UNHCR took primary fiscal responsibility for camp aid, but worked with implementing partners who delivered services on the ground. As direct service providers, these implementing partners (National Catholic Secretariat, WFP) had to follow the guidelines of their fiscal agents, but also had the power to make choices about who received what kind of aid. The only direct services provided by UNHCR were protection related – refugee status determination interviews, voluntary repatriation enrollment and resettlement screening interviews. As a multi-lateral, donor-funded aid agency, the UNHCR pursues a mission of protection that is actually driven by donors, who also have specific protection interests.

Key donors include powerful nations, such as the United States, Germany, Canada, many of which offer resettlement options for refugees.

Wolf proposed structural power as "power that structures the political economy" to investigate "why and how some sectors, regions, or nations are able to constrain the options of others and what coalitions and conflicts occur in the course of this interplay" (Wolf 2001:384-385). Although the UNHCR theoretically occupies the status of neutral, multi-lateral agency, by locking its budget to the economies and agendas of powerful nation-states, the UNHCR's power remains limited by this structural relation.

During my interviews with members of the refugee bureaucracy, I encountered a divide between the aid system and refugees. When I asked questions about opportunities within the durable solutions framework, aid staff often suggested that I should not trust everything that refugees tell me about the function of the refugee aid system. Staff from UNHCR, OPE and WFP all stated, verbatim that "no matter what you tell them" refugees will believe what they want about the availability and implementation of UNCHR durable solutions, particularly resettlement. By the time of my research, 18 years into the life of Buduburam, "no matter what you tell them" had morphed into an informal policy of communicating less and less with refugees, based upon the belief that even when the UNHCR explained its policies and practices, the refugees would interpret the system as they liked. For example, as a part of their withdrawal strategy, OPE staff no longer travelled to the camp and had also stopped posting communication notices to refugees. Communication with refugees only occurred through the UNHCR or GRB. As iterated throughout the previous chapters and as the literature has confirmed (Hammond 1999),

the UNHCR works from the commonsense notion of a nation-state world order and has invested into the solution of voluntary repatriation as the "best solution."

In chapter 5, I proposed the Liberian-American dream as a concept that represents refugees' ideas about the future, livelihoods, social mobility and migration. Constructed through "historical traces," the Liberian-American dream functions as an ideology whereby people have become invested in the pursuit of increased social status, material gains, especially those evidenced in lifestyle characteristics associated with being "civilized," through a particular migratory route. As a commonsense notion, the Liberian-American dream frames interactions between refugees and the UNHCR. Many refugees described the UN workers as people who did not like to work or help them. For example, Blessing explained to me that the UNHCR is slow to help refugees because once all of the refugees are gone, the UN workers will not have a job anymore. Refugees often felt contempt for the UN workers, but also recognized the structural circumstances of the relationship. The presence of refugees ensured that the individual workers who did or did not help them were reliant upon the continuation of the system for their continued livelihoods. In the following sections, I consider the interactions and conflict between refugees and the aid system by looking at how these two commonsense ideas about the future – the opportunity of resettlement versus the "natural order" of repatriation – carry over into the implementation of the durable solutions.

Resettlement and Proving Refugee Status

The UNHCR established the category of refugee as a political designation based on persecution. To acquire refugee status one must establish persecution "based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (UNHCR 2011a). Even though Liberian refugees in Ghana automatically received refugee group status and did not have to individually demonstrate fear of persecution, in the process of applying for resettlement Liberians had to prove their individual refugee status by telling their story of persecution. As scholars have explored at great length, the system of "proving" refugee status has created significant dynamics of trust and mistrust between refugees and the bureaucracy (see Knudsen and Daniel 1995).

On the ground in multiple refugee camp settings, a system or market of creating "real" refugee stories of persecution has emerged. Refugees seeking resettlement to the United States must develop a story that they can "market" directly to the OPE interviewer and indirectly to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.[49] As mentioned in chapter 4, each year the U.S. president makes a determination on the number of refugees that will be permitted entry to the U.S. for the following year. Typically, the determination allows 20,000 refugees from the African continent. This figure is then allocated based upon emergency needs, as was exemplified by the higher number of Liberian arrivals to the United States in 2004-2005, following the outbreak of the second civil war. In practice the processing of refugees is also determined and limited by bureaucratic processing

[49] Refugees applying for resettlement to other countries, such as Australia and Canada, must also tell and prove a fear of persecution. However, I specify the United States, as my data on resettlement processing primarily pertains to U.S. resettlement programming.

capabilities on the ground. For example, the U.S. processing for refugee arrivals also depends on how quickly the UNHCR can screen and process refugee asylum applications. Hence, many Liberians arrived to the U.S. in the couple of years following the war.

While refugees were often hesitant to talk with me about how they worked within the system of resettlement, a few took great care to explain it to me. Despite hesitancies to share this information, I have chosen to include the "underground" details of refugee status determination for three reasons. First, scholars have written about the struggles and underground world of asylum claims (Dick 2002b:31; see also MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000). Second, the refugee processing bureaucracy knows about the purportedly "illicit" activities surrounding resettlement applications and interviews. As one CWS-OPE interviewer in Accra explained, she became quite accustomed to common examples of persecution and described a typical narrative phrase that would come up in resettlement interviews with Liberians: "and then he called me a Krahn dog." In 2008, the U.S. Department of State investigated the processing of P-3 applications on the African continent and found widespread instances of "fraud," evidenced for the agency by unmatched DNA among proclaimed family members. Following DNA test results, DHS stopped receiving P-3 applications for resettlement from Liberians, among other national populations, including Burundian refugees. Thirdly, in presenting and analyzing how refugees actually work within refugee status and resettlement procedures, I attempt to shift the focus away from interests in blaming or holding refugees responsible for

"fraudulent" actions to create an understanding of the broader structural and political forces that enable and require such approaches to gaining refugee protection.

At Buduburam, refugees who could afford it invested quite heavily in creating "real" cases of persecution to prove refugee status worthy of resettlement. When a case was called for an interview, if all of the members of the case were not in Ghana, the primary applicant could sell the remaining spaces, which retailed for as much as US$1,000, sometimes more.[50] The sale of resettlement spaces made access to resettlement highly dependent on financial resources and over time has shifted the allegedly neutral process of humanitarian assistance to one with highly stratified access points. To increase chances for success with resettlement applications, families might hire a tutor to come work with all of the members on a resettlement case once they have been called for an interview. Resettlement tutors, Liberians who acquired detailed knowledge of resettlement processes, filled a hungry market and could earn decent money, anywhere from US$50-$100 per case.

The Collins family shared their resettlement tutoring experience with me. In the week prior to the first interview, the resettlement tutor came to the Collins' house every evening. Their first order of business was to negotiate the details of the resettlement case. The application included a space for a young girl, but the Collins' daughter was about to enter 11th grade. To make the case more realistic, the daughter begrudgingly agreed to take on a younger age and school grade, such that she would start 9th grade when she was

[50] Holtzman (2000:25) wrote of a similar process of replacing and exchanging places on applications for resettlement among Sudanese refugees.

resettled to America. After the details of the case had been solidified, the resettlement tutor trained and tested the family on all of the details, including biographic information, educational history and the detailed persecution story. While resettlement tutors provided opportunities for refugees to gain some degree of power within a system that did not always produce the desired outcomes for refugees, this new system was not without problems. In the development of the resettlement tutoring system, the purportedly neutral humanitarian procedures for resettlement shifted to a system governed by access to financial resources.

The ideas and practices surrounding resettlement programming at the camp remained heavily embroiled in controversy over the active or inactive status of the programs. Officially, according to UNHCR-Accra representatives, "there are no active resettlement programs" at Buduburam. However, during my fieldwork the resettlement travel of refugees to the United States belied a different reality to camp residents. The proclamation of "no active resettlement" remained technically accurate as OPE no longer accepted new applications for resettlement and refugees travelling to the U.S. were from a backlog of cases that had been filed years ago and had taken a long time to process. However, the ability of refugees to purchase open spaces on these applications created active resettlement opportunities on the ground that were entirely off the grid from official UNHCR programming. Although the UNHCR was not actively making P-1 *prima facie* referrals for Liberians, a UNHCR officer explained that they were always able to make P-1 referrals as long as Liberians were recognized as refugees. These circumstances created a latent, rather than an inactive, system.

The flexible implementation of resettlement policies on the ground also provided further opportunity for refugees to capitalize on opportunities for resettlement. The category of medical vulnerability became a means through which refugees could possibly access resettlement such that people with certain medical vulnerabilities, such as heart disease and cancer, were given preference for resettlement. As a medical aid worker explained to me, refugees frequently presented themselves with medical conditions that did not physically manifest themselves with the intent of gaining fast-track access to resettlement. During fieldwork in 2005, I met a family that attempted to leverage the poor health condition of a new baby to access resettlement. The baby had an abnormal growth that was threatening a vital organ. The medical procedures required were available in Ghana, but the family delayed treatment, hoping that the medical staff at the camp would refer them for resettlement due to the dire condition of the baby. The family did not gain prioritized access resettlement through medical vulnerability. This is one example of how refugees attempted to fit their personal circumstances within the governing ideology of humanitarian vulnerability. In some cases the agentive crafting of stories and circumstances gained UNHCR protection in the form of access to durable solutions. Yet in other instances, as the example above demonstrates, refugees did not gain access to resettlement and the power and resources that are presumed to come along with it.

The necessity of fitting into categories consistent with humanitarian ideology created an active scene of debate and opportunity surrounding resettlement programming at the camp. Refugees talked about resettlement prospects on a regular basis. There were several information hubs and sites of activity around the camp, but people throughout the

camp regularly discussed potential opportunities to travel. These discussions were situated between ideas and practice – talk about potential upcoming programs and the actual circulation and collection of resettlement application forms – to create an active sense of resettlement.

In contrast, Caroline, a Liberian who worked in the refugee aid system, suggested that the conversations about prospects for the future were rumors intended to get refugees to stay at the camp. She explained that more educated refugees created and circulated rumors about upcoming migration prospects so that people would not repatriate. In turn, with large numbers of refugees remaining at the camp, these educated people believed that the UNHCR would be forced to find solutions other than repatriation for the remaining refugees. Caroline's analysis of rumors articulates a process of attempting to shift ideas into collective action and disguises a specific power relation between the two entities.

The refugee aid system approached these rumors as yet another example of "no matter what you tell them," refugees will believe what they want about resettlement prospects. For Caroline, her frustration with refugees and their rumors was rooted in the belief that refugees did not want to be responsible for their own livelihoods. For refugees, the "rumors" emerged as opportunity through the cracks of flexible and imperfect UNHCR practices and policies, as I will continue to detail throughout this chapter.

Marketing the Nation for Repatriation

From the auditorium stage at the University of Liberia, President Johnson-Sirleaf addressed the members of the Liberian Studies Association, many of whom were Liberians living in the United States. She called for a return of the far diaspora: "Liberia is indeed back and open for business….Explore the possibilities of coming home. Go beyond just checking it out, to actually feeling it…and come home" (Johnson-Sirleaf 2009).[51] In the post-war period, the Liberian nation has turned to its people in the diaspora to invest in the rebuilding of the war-torn country. However, the politics of return for Liberians in the near diaspora were quite different. When the presence of Liberians in Ghana came to a confrontational fore in the spring of 2008 (an event that I discuss in the second half of this chapter), chief spokesman for the Liberian government, Dr. Laurence Bropleh stated:

> The government is not in the position to receive 30,000 or even 10,000 or 5,000 [refugees] tomorrow. We have to put the mechanism in place…. We will look at all of the best options in order to receive our citizens. But our intervention with the Ghanaian government is please put a stay order on sending an exodus of Liberians to Liberia right now….Please give the government a chance because an influx of Liberians when the government is not capable of handling them at the same time also has regional peace and stability implications in West Africa. [News Service Reports 2008]

The message from the Liberian government was clear. It was not ready to for the return of Liberian refugees, who were considered an economic burden and liability compared to the economic opportunity attributed to their fellow Liberians in the far diaspora.

[51] I transcribed direct quotes from the President's speech.

Despite the preferences and policies of the Liberian national government, the refugee aid system has long since attempted to induce the return migration of Liberian refugees, citing it as the "best" solution. In practice the solution of voluntary repatriation for Liberians included complimentary return air travel and a US$100 stipend per adult and US$50 stipend per child. A program officer at the UNHCR identified repatriation as the best solution based on a process of elimination, such that resettlement programs were closed and local integration within the various regions of Ghana seemed infeasible due to language differences. A representative from the GRB also described repatriation as the best option due to reduced international donor assistance to Liberian refugees, which he suggested was influenced by international interests in providing funds for the re-building of Liberia rather than the maintenance of a refugee population. From the perspective of the Ghanaian government, when the UNHCR is unable to garner sufficient funds to maintain the refugee camp population, the burden falls upon the host country. Over-riding specific preferences for repatriation, the commonsense order of the nation-state system ensures that repatriation programming has received privileged attention for quite some time. It is against this backdrop of differing nation-state agendas that refugees must make calculated migratory decisions.

Old notices advertising the projected June 30, 2007 closure of the repatriation program still hung on the walls of the LRWC in 2009, but the 2007 closure date had arrived and passed, leaving thousands of refugees still at the camp. All UNHCR programs, including repatriation, must be planned and time-bound with target projections for expected participants. However, when the expected number of departures has not

been reached within a particular project period, the UNHCR and the GRB must return to the drawing board and decide if additional programming is feasible. As the UNHCR repatriation officer explained, after the newly proposed March 31, 2009 closure of the camp, the UNHCR would still continue to register refugees for repatriation. Not privy to this information, refugees were intimidated by the notice announcing the closure of the camp and subsequent dispersal of refugees from the camp to other regions in Ghana.

Understandings of the relationships between the announced camp closure, the end of repatriation and actual repatriation decisions varied by individuals. In my household survey I included a question regarding changes in household size over the past year (February 2008 - March 2009), but elected not to ask pointed questions about plans for the future. Such sensitive questions could only be posed within the context of more established relationships. Of the 148 Liberian households, fifty-one (51) households (34%) had a member who had repatriated within the last year. To get a sense of how frequent repatriations occurred at the time of fieldwork, I have compared migration data from 28 households who provided data during intensive interviews from December 2008 through January 2009 and again in March 2009 through the Household Food Economy survey in March 2009. By March 2009, three of these twenty-eight (11%) households had repatriated to Liberia within this brief period.

In the three cases of repatriation from my intensive interviews with 28 research participants, the decisions to repatriate were encouraged by the proposed camp closure, but each individual had other reasons for return. For example, a young man in his 20s traveled on the supposedly last repatriation trip on March 28, 2009. His decision to return

was influenced by his desire to spend time with his ill mother in Liberia and potential job or school opportunities available to him there. Leaving the camp on March 28 enabled him to travel for free. Similarly, a woman in her 50s had been planning to return to Liberia and decided to leave the camp in March to take advantage of the UNHCR travel assistance. These two examples of repatriation reflect broader practices of migration strategizing that often included multiple options and contingency plans based upon resources and programs available.

Mabel, a young woman in her late 20s, lived at the camp with her mother, two siblings and two of her own children. While living at Buduburam, Mabel and her family managed future prospects in Liberia and the United States. They owned a family home in Liberia and Mabel's sister and aunt lived in the United States. While Mabel's aunt filed immigration papers for them a long time ago (but is not ready to sponsor them), I do not know whether her sister had filed a P-3 application for any or all members of the family at Buduburam. When the rights to their home in Liberia were challenged, Mabel's mother traveled from the camp to Liberia to appear in court to fight for the rights to their property. In doing so, Mabel and her family protected options at home, while simultaneously pursuing the Liberian-American dream. By the end of my fieldwork, the mother had not yet returned from Liberia and the aunt had not moved forward on the family's immigration application.

Attempting to intervene in what were quite personal, unique and complex decision-making processes, a Ghanaian program officer with one of the UNHCR's implementing partners at the camp argued that repatriation counselors needed to be more

persuasive in leading refugees to enroll in the repatriation program. He suggested that showing a video of Liberia at the camp would help refugees to evaluate the decision to go to Liberia. His idea became a reality in 2010, when the new Ghanaian camp manager traveled to Liberia to make a video about repatriation. In the video, the camp manager traveled outside of Monrovia to Grand Gedeh and other areas to interview refugees who have returned to Liberia from the camp. The people in the video explained that they have been able to build new lives for themselves. The video was first shown at the Liberian Refugee Welfare Council office and was later projected to the public on a larger screen at a Catholic church at the camp. Liberians were furious with the camp manager for making such a "stupid" video that so overtly promoted repatriation. The video presentation of Liberia as a place of opportunity conflicted with existing ideas of the Liberian-American dream. As an attempt to promote the "national order" of repatriation in a post-war period, the video failed because it did not address the commonsense notion held by many refugees that socio-economic opportunities are available in America, nor did it acknowledge the structural inequalities in Liberia that actually informed and shaped ideas about the opportunity in America. The "stupid" video of canned messages from people who have repatriated did little to address the individual concerns and questions to ultimately make a migratory decision. As data in the dissertation demonstrate, the consideration and planning of migratory options reflects a complex process of decision-making that is typically already well-informed about the potential options, opportunities and problems involved in returning to Liberia.

Local Integration

While refugees and the aid system negotiated the parameters of repatriation and resettlement programs and policies, the third UNHCR solution of local integration remained nebulous. In practice, policies of local integration fall upon the shoulders of host governments and refugees and remain open to interpretation. The UNHCR does not have formal local integration programs, nor does it propose a measure of local integration. However, the UNHCR began implementing "development through local integration" programs that seek to encourage local integration through the development of infrastructure and resources available in host countries. In this section I explore the competing ideas of local integration from the perspectives of refugees, the UNHCR and the Ghanaian government.

Over time the camp has grown and merged with Ghanaian villages. More recently, Ghanaians have migrated to the camp, where affordable housing can be found. On a daily basis, Liberians practiced local integration by interacting with Ghanaians in businesses, schools, and church settings. Close proximity to the nearby market town of Kasoa and the capital Accra has provided some Liberians with business opportunities, as outlined in chapter 4. Even though some Liberians have been fortunate to establish viable businesses, others have experienced employment discrimination. Sarah used to work for a school in Ghana, but after the school closed she applied for another job in Accra. "They received my resume and they told me the job was mine. But when I went and they found out that, you know because they didn't ask me my nationality, they assumed that I was

Ghanaian. When I got there and they realized I was a Liberian they told me I could get the job, but they cut the salary."

Some Liberians have integrated – and had less interest in the other durable solutions of repatriation or resettlement – by marrying Ghanaians. Tita, a young woman in her late 20s, had a daughter with a Ghanaian man and lived with him at camp where they ran a small provisions and beverage shop. Tita was one the few research participants that stated she did not want to travel to America. Similarly, Gloria had married a Ghanaian man in Liberia before the war. Once war broke out they sought exile in Ghana with their young sons. Three of Gloria's four sons as well as her husband lived and worked or attended school outside of the camp in Ghana. He lived in Accra to earn money, while Gloria lived at the camp because she had built her home and life there. Also, during the time of my research she still received food rations at the camp and maintained access to resettlement opportunities for her family. Gloria's fourth son lived at the camp with her; she also had a daughter in America and one in England. One afternoon Gloria and her friend chatted about returning to Liberia via the UNHCR repatriation program. Gloria's friend chided her that she would never be able to return to Liberia since she was married to a Ghanaian man. Gloria conceded that her friend was right, but asserted that she hoped at least one of her sons would be fortunate to travel to U.S., after which he would be better equipped to take care of her.

As individuals organized their understandings and engagement with UNHCR solutions in relation to one another in various ways, contests for power and privilege emerged. The idea of local integration has become evaluated and defined in relation to

other UNHCR solutions. In the face of undefined policies of local integration, some refugees identified the ability to speak Twi as de facto evidence of local integration, which on an individual level had little impact; however, when groups of Liberians learned to speak Twi, the signs of local integration become public – a problem for some who pitted resettlement against local integration.

Even though English is one of the official languages of Ghana, most people in the areas surrounding the camp spoke Twi, a language which some Liberians have learned. In early 2008, a Liberian CBO at the camp began to offer Twi language classes, which were especially helpful for older Liberians who wanted to be able to communicate with Ghanaian doctors in the nearby town. The public offering of Twi classes, a demonstrative pursuit of local integration, did not sit well with one well-known social club at the camp because, to them, learning the local language weakened refugees' arguments for the need of resettlement. In January 2008, male representatives of the social club entered the classroom, demanding the Ghanaian instructor stop teaching and that the Twi classes be discontinued. The director of the CBO saw that many people wanted to take the Twi classes and was not dissuaded to end the classes entirely. The controversy was carried to the LRWC, where UNHCR officials also became involved in the dispute. Eventually in the face of significant social pressure, a prominent women's leader at the camp persuaded the director of the CBO to stop offering the classes.

In April 2008, a few months after the classes ended, the CBO director returned home to the camp after spending the day at a conference in Accra. She was confronted with the devastating news that her house had burned down. The local fire department did

not find a natural cause to the fire; it appeared to be arson. Feeling uncomfortable and unsafe at the camp with her children, the director moved to a nearby Ghanaian town, commuting to the camp each day to run her CBO, though she no longer offered Twi classes. Counter to the intent of the social club, which had attempted to use the supposed "impossibility" of local integration as a way to assert the need for resettlement, the aid system interpreted the opposition to language instruction and local integration as further evidence that repatriation was the "best" solution, as explained by a UNHCR program officer.

In the wake of controversy surrounding the meaning and intent of local integration, the GRB announced the March 31 closure of the camp. A notice posted at the camp stated that after March 31, those refugees who wished to remain in Ghana would be sent to and integrated within various regions throughout the country. The newly proposed policy and practice of local integration sparked dialogue at the camp. As Blessing helped me to wash clothes one afternoon, she asked if I had heard how the Ghanaian government was going to send them away. Blessing lived in fear of what the Ghanaian government might do following March 31 and was afraid of being sent to a distant region where she would not be able to speak the language.

A documentary about the camp and its future aired on a local television station, raising the profile and prospect of local integration. A successful Liberian business woman recounted the gist of the documentary to me – a discussion of repatriation and local integration prospects that included interviews with refugees – while she also criticized the Ghanaian government's new policy of "reintegration into Ghanaian

families" as a form of forced repatriation. She argued that no Liberian refugee would want to go live in a far off region of Ghana and would therefore be forced to return to Liberia.

By this time, refugees had attached several different ideas to local integration – language capacity, movement to remote regions of Ghana – that all resulted in the end of refugee status and resettlement. The connections between local integration and the end of resettlement were ideas shared by the Ghanaian government and UNHCR, yet how local integration was to be achieved remained unknown. In face of the mounting fear and tension surrounding local integration, yet another set of ideas about local integration emerged.

One afternoon following the posted March 31 closure of the camp, as I worked in the yard on a batik fabric, a man nearby proclaimed: "They are going to give us $2,500 – U.S. – each for local integration." Almost overnight the fear surrounding local integration had been transformed into hope for a very bright future. When I asked UNHCR Accra if they could confirm or comment on plans to provide financial assistance for local integration, the program officer stated she had not heard of any such plans and dismissed this particular idea as a strategic rumor. The officer explained that just like resettlement rumors, the idea of receiving US$2,500 for local integration was probably fabricated and circulated by more educated refugees as a means of keeping people at the camp.

The circulation of these ideas and fears about local integration were constructed with reference to history and interpreted through newly emerging political circumstances. Toward the end of 2008, Ghanaian national elections were on the horizon. After the first

of the year, a new Ghanaian political party, the National Democratic Party, had been elected into office. The change in government meant many things to refugees and refugee policy. The GRB was dismantled and would be reconstituted according to the determination of the new president. During my interview with the Program Manager of the GRB, he stated that everything was on hold while the GRB waited to see if the new government would define local integration in the same way that the previous government had or if the president would establish a new policy. The GRB manager also attributed the lack of decision-making surrounding the closure of the camp to a lack of political will. However, as long as decisions about the future of the camp were at a standstill the UNHCR's approach to local integration through development of the host country benefitted Ghanaian infrastructure. This UNHCR policy responded to criticism that the UNHCR provides resources for refugees, but does nothing to help the often resource-poor host countries. In the case of the Buduburam-Gomoa region of Ghana, the UNHCR funded the construction of a new police and fire station at the camp to serve refugees and the surrounding Ghanaian populations. UNHCR policies to assist both refugees and local populations combined with the temporary lull in national politics in Ghana presented an opportunity to refugees.

During the early 1990s, when Liberians were resettled to the US with ease, Jerry Rawlings of the NDC party was the Ghanaian president. In 2009 Liberians at Buduburam believed that because the new NDC president belonged to the same political party, Prof. John Atta Mills would resume a similar policy of open resettlement. As I enjoyed a delicious lunch of palava sauce at a cookshop on the "18," I noticed a calendar on the

wall with a picture of Barack Obama with his arm slung around the newly elected John Atta Mills. When I asked about the picture, the cookshop owner chuckled and admitted that the picture had been doctored on the computer. As a visual display of the perceived links between politics, place and travel, refugees had ordered the prevailing features of the structure and bureaucracy around them in way that coincides with their vision of the future. In the period following the NDC inauguration, spirits for resettlement remained high. As long as local integration remained undefined and the bureaucratic wheels of the Ghanaian government remained firmly locked, refugees saw the opportunity to reach the Liberian-American dream. In the next section I look at two instances in which refugees pursued opportunities for the Liberian-American dream.

Public Displays - Refugee Rights and Hope

This section explores the strategic interplay between ideology and counter-ideology surrounding the UNHCR solutions through an analysis of two key events – a refugee women's demonstration and a UNHCR verification exercise. In both cases the examples explore ideological struggle and the conflicts that emerge from different notions of commonsense regarding the activity or inactivity of UNHCR programs, as illustrated in the first half of the chapter. This analysis considers the intersections between the various types of relational power – interpersonal, tactical and structural. Specifically, this section looks at how refugees are caught between the organizational power of the refugee aid system and the structural power of nation-states.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony places common sense at the root of ideology. "Common sense is not something rigid and immobile, but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life" (Gramsci 1971:326). Furthermore, "there is not just one common sense, for that too is a product of history and a part of the historical process" (Gramsci 1971:325-326). In this regard, common sense does not create a seamless ideology, but sets a stage for the contestation of ideas and power. As Hall has noted: "'Common sense' became one of the stakes over which ideological struggle is conducted" (Hall 1986:42). In my discussion of the demonstration and verification, I consider the extent to which various common sense ideas were able to challenge existing hegemonic forces of the nation-state order.

A Demonstration to Travel

On February 19, 2008 a group of Liberian women began a peaceful demonstration at the Buduburam camp. Over the course of the nearly month long demonstration, the group amassed up to about 2,000 women and children who wanted to claim the rights to their futures (Butty 2008b). Situated along the international road that stretches from Côte D'Ivoire to Togo, the demonstration was ideally situated to garner media attention. In my discussion of the demonstration, I rely primarily on Holzer's (2010) ethnographic account and analysis of the demonstration, a letter written by the leaders of the demonstration, on international and local media reports, and refugees' descriptions and analysis of the

demonstration that emerged in my interviews at the camp in 2008-2009. Nonetheless, information on the actual events of the demonstration conflicts greatly, depending upon source. In all instances, I cite source information and present some of the conflicting accounts.

While the actual sit-in demonstration occurred in February 2008, the women organizers had collectively approached the UNCHR in November 2007 with requests for changes in migration policies.[52] After they received an insufficient response from the camp manager, the women – calling themselves Liberian Refugee Women with Refugee Concerns (LRWWRC) – wrote a four page letter, outlining their complaints and recommendations (see Appendix D for the full letter). Addressing UNHCR officials, the letter was organized around a discussion of the three durable solutions, voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and local integration.

To begin, the letter clearly stated: "Liberia is home and we need no indicator to point us to this fact." In doing so, the women framed their argument largely in terms of resources for repatriation and identified several problems with the existing repatriation process. First, refugees were unwilling to settle in Liberia due to a lack of land and housing. This was a particular problem for refugees who had lived in Ghana for longer periods of time. Secondly, they argued that the presence of former warlords in powerful government positions created a fear of return, especially for women.[53] Based on these

[52] See Holzer (2010: 46-48) for a detailed account and analysis of the beginning stages of civil action at Buduburam.

[53] The letter did not identify specific individuals, though most notably, Prince Johnson has a senatorial seat.

hesitations to return, LRWWRC requested that the UNHCR extend the repatriation program for an additional two years and increase financial assistance to those who choose to repatriate.

Initially, the UNHCR repatriation program sponsored international travel to Liberia and an additional small stipend based on the refugee's final destination within Liberia. With most refugees choosing to stay in Monrovia, refugees usually received US$5 for local travel. In December 2007 the UNHCR increased the local travel stipend to US$100 for each adult and US$50 per child, regardless of the final destination within Liberia. In their letter, the LRWWRC explained that this level of support was still insufficient: "[T]aking into consideration the number of year [sic] refugees have spent in this country – seventeen, ten, five – it is very dishearten [sic] to see ourselves going back home with 1 bucket, 1 pot, 1 blanket, 1 tarpaulin, half a sack of wheat and around US[$]5 for transportation." The letter proposed that each returning adult and child each receive US$1,000 so that a family of three would be able to build a house, calculated at a cost of US$2,275.

I learned during my interviews that many refugees believed that the UNHCR had additional money available for Liberian refugees, but refused to give it to them. The belief that funds were being withheld supposedly emerged from internet research that showed that other refugee populations have received US$1,000 to repatriate. The use of this knowledge coincides with Gramsci's (1971:330-331) "philosophy of praxis," whereby organic intellectuals critically interrogate the history of knowledge. In this case refugees attempted to reframe the contemporary circumstances of Liberian refugees

within the broader history of UNHCR service provision. I was unable to verify the website containing this knowledge or the researcher who had uncovered it, though many people said the information had been provided by an international human rights volunteer worker who had been staying at the camp in the months prior to and during the demonstration. Holzer (2010:51) has suggested that the US$1,000 request was set for bargaining and rhetorical purposes.

On the "ground," as the UNHCR area at the front of the camp was referred to by refugees, the short working hours and opulence of UNHCR workers (well-dressed business clothing; manicured hair and hands; consumption of canned soft drinks; air-conditioned SUVs) provided fuel to the belief that the UNHCR was withholding money. While aid workers may have the tactical power to organize which refugees received an interview or the quality and depth of the interview, the aid workers did not have control over the structural dimensions of the UNHCR's distribution of resources – including repatriation stipends – to various country programs. While the LRWWRC's argument for a re-evaluation and adjustment in UNHCR services was based on newly identified knowledge regarding repatriation services, the actual content or request of the letter also reflected refugees' continued interests in resettlement.

The letter's discussion of resettlement acknowledged fraud within the resettlement program: "In February 2007, an UNHCR-sponsored verification process revealed cases of people, who had been listed as 'resettled,' but were still on the refugee camp," and requested that "Resettlement programs continue to screen Liberian refugees with non-fraudulent cases until the existing caseload has been fully processed." "We full

[sic] understand that the family reunion (P-3) was under the United States government and has been closed down. But we believe that the UNHCR resettlement (P-1) needs to be reviewed." While the letter recognized "fraud," the LRWWRC did not elaborate on its causes. In my research, practices on the ground shed additional light on the connections between "fraud" and UNHCR data systems. For example, an international aid worker explained to me how she had been recruited by the U.S. embassy to refer resettlement cases directly to the U.S. embassy rather than going through the UNHCR system. In this instance, resettling directly through the U.S. embassy would not remove refugee names from the UNHCR roster, potentially accounting for the data errors explained as resettlement fraud.

Having acknowledged fraud, the LRWWRC proposed a program review of resettlement to include a "proper accounting of the resettlement programs that served Liberian refugees in Ghana from 1991-2007." The "proper accounting" was to include reviews of 1) unexplained case closures; 2) the unexplained end of the "women-at-risk" category of resettlement; and 3) the practice of non-Liberians resettling as Liberians. The letter limited criticism of resettlement to a minimum, as it was a resource that many demonstrating women wanted to obtain.

The letter overtly opposed the third UNHCR solution of local integration: "As recent public meetings have shown, most Liberians strongly oppose local integration. We fear that once UNHCR leaves, we will lose our strongest advocate and our position will become much worse." To support their argument against an as yet, undefined policy of local integration, the letter cited several incidents of intimidation and violence perpetrated

by Ghanaians, including: threats from a military leader who came to the camp with troops in 2002, missing children, a series of stabbings, abuse and threats by Ghanaian landlords, and sexual abuse. In addition to fear and violence, LRWWRC stated that economic "underempowerment" and refusals to do business with Liberians would also lead to very destitute conditions. Concluding their discussion of the three solutions, the letter strategically pit the durable solutions against one another. "The women of Buduburam Refugee camp are hereby emphatically saying We, Liberian refugees, do not want to be locally integrated. We either be [sic] resettle to a third country of asylum or be repatriated in a problem [sic, program] that meets the following guidelines." The letter continued to list eight criteria, including a US$1,000/person stipend. When LRWWRC did not receive a satisfactory response to their letter, they staged a demonstration.

The demonstration took place on the large football field near the front of the camp where women holding protest signs were visible from the international road. Sitting underneath the hot sun day after day, the women organized themselves around their visions of the future. Many of the people participating in the demonstration were driven by the belief that the UNHCR was working with the organizers of the demonstration and would come to help all who participated. On the demonstration field, the women created camps based on travel desires, whereby each participant chose to sit in the camp for Canada, Norway, Australia, America, Philadelphia, Minnesota, or New York, among others. Only America was subdivided into state or city locations, as people were not as familiar with the geography of other countries. If a woman did not know where she wanted to end up, she could sit in the general area of the demonstration field. This

pervasive desire for resettlement that lurked beneath the carefully crafted letter was voiced in an outright call for help by a male spokesman, Madison Gwion, as quoted in a Voice of America article: "We feel that countries are out there, by the grace of God, in this Liberian context, that will see reason to open their corridors for resettlement" (Colombant 2008). This statement reflects the common sense ideas linking the opportunity for resettlement to a commitment to God that I presented in chapter 5.

The Ghanaian government responded angrily to the demands of the letter and the thousands of women and children who protested daily, interpreting the refugees' resentment of local integration as ungrateful. In the words of Ghanaian Minister of the Interior, Kwamena Bartels: "Ghana was good enough for them when there was war in Liberia but Ghana is not good enough for them now. This shows their crass ingratitude to a country that has protected them, fed them and given their children free education" (Mobile GhanaWeb 2008). Bartels also threatened to invoke the cessation clause, which would remove the refugee status of Liberians in Ghana, stating "When we reach the point you shall know." Bartels sounded a final warning to the protestors in early March:

> Today, these people have forfeited the goodwill of Ghanaians and their government. I'm sounding a final warning to all refugees living in this country to obey the laws of the land and we shall ensure that they do. Let me repeat that the demonstration at Buduburam is illegal and is a breach of the Public Order Act 1994. [Cephas 2008a]

A few days later in the early morning hours of March 17th Ghanaian police forces arrived at the camp and arrested refugees – 200 according to Voice of America, 600 by the count of the Vision newspaper at Buduburam, and 650 people according to Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, an international organization at the camp (Butty

2008a; Cephas 2008b; Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative 2008). The police arrested refugees on the grounds that they did not have permission to hold a protest. As the women and children were carried from the camp, they chanted "we want to go, we want to go" (Cephas 2008b). One news article interpreted these words as a symbol of commitment to their struggle. However, during my interviews at the camp, refugees described the women's response to the arrival of police vans as reflective of the belief that the vehicles were sent by the UNHCR and were going to carry them to be resettled. "We want to go. We want to go" was in reference to America.

The armored police vehicles certainly did not take the women to a third country for resettlement, but to the Kodeabe Voluntary Training Center in the eastern part of Ghana, where they were held without formal charges (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative 2008). After more than 48 hours – the maximum time period a person can be detained without charges – the UNHCR encouraged the Ghanaian government to press formal charges against the refugees or release them from detention (The Vision 2008). A few days after the initial arrests, armed police arrived at the camp once again, this time for unknown reasons, and arrested a group of young non-protesting men who were playing basketball near the front of the camp (Agence France-Presse 2008). Nana Obiri Boahene, a Ghanaian Minister of State in the Department of the Interior stated: "We have just invoked the cessation clause and we are making the necessary arrangements to send them back to Liberia" (Agence France-Presse 2008).

The unexplained arrests and continued detention of hundreds of refugees at Kodeabe scared people. This fear increased when the Ghanaian government announced

plans to deport 45 people. The first group of people to be deported included nine women and twenty-one men; however only sixteen people were deported because the others had "legitimate" claims to refugee status (Associated Press 2008). Thirteen of the sixteen deported Liberians had official refugee status. Defending the protection inherent in refugee status, UNHCR representative Jennifer Pagonis stated: "We regret the deportation of this group of refugees and hope that our ongoing negotiations with the Ghanaian authorities will help resolve the situation of the refugees still in detention" (News Service Reports 2008).

The growing problem of the demonstration in Ghana sparked political interest in Liberia. In a radio address, President Johnson-Sirleaf said, "I called President Kufuor and apologized to him on behalf of those Liberians who acted out the order." A presidential spokesperson further stated in print: "…the Government of Liberia in brotherly exchanges and by other means condemns the unlawful demands and actions of some Liberians at the Buduburam camp" (All Africa 2008). Demonstrating support for those in Ghana, opposing Liberian presidential candidate George Weah criticized the President for doing little to help Liberians in Ghana and called for a fact-finding mission (Butty 2008a). Not necessarily in response to Weah, the government of Liberia sent a delegation of four Liberians, led by Foreign Minister Olubanke King-Akirele, to resolve the issue with the Ghanaian government. As cited earlier in this chapter, chief spokesman for the government, Dr. Laurence Bropleh stated that Liberia was not prepared for the widespread return of Liberians from Ghana. "We have to put the mechanism in place. We have to have a place to receive them and packages to help them to resettle themselves.

We're working with UNHCR…. But our intervention with the Ghanaian government is please put a stay order on sending an exodus of Liberians to Liberia right now" (News Service Reports 2008). The Liberian nation-state negotiated with the Ghanaian government to allow Liberian refugees to have continued refuge in Ghana. Despite the best efforts of LRWWC to influence the setting in which they worked out options for the future, the women were firmly entrenched within a battle dominated by the structural power of nation-states. While the demonstration did not successfully alter the asylum system, it left a significant mark on the internal dynamics of camp life and the pursuit of the Liberian-American dream. My discussion of internal camp dynamics following the demonstration draws upon interviews and conversations with refugees from 2008-2009.

In relation to the refugee aid system and the international media, participation in the demonstration involved a strategic reinvention of "uncivilized" status that many believed would present an image of "real" refugees that coincided with media images of downtrodden humanitarian subjects (Malkki 1996). On evenings before the arrival of international visitors, refugees were told – over a public address system – to wear a lappa (two-yards of fabric, tied around the waist) and trousers and to tie their hair back with another lappa. Typically described as "uncivilized" or "country," the tying of a lappa was used to project an image of destitution. In this way refugees appropriated the reigning humanitarian ideology for their own purposes.

On the actual demonstration field, the relationships between refugees – those who participated in the demonstration and potential participants – were highly regulated by social codes and ideas of social status, travel and the Liberian-American dream.

Participation in the demonstration came to stand as a sign of national-belonging such that by participating, an individual worked towards the cause of Liberian refugees. Those who did not participate were accused of not supporting Liberians. Participation in the demonstration was visibly apparent and thus able to be managed and regulated by everyone at the camp. Women showed their support for the cause by holding one of the banners at the front of the field. For every one to two hours that a woman held a banner, she had one of her fingernails painted. Each time she held a banner, another finger would be painted in a different color. Thus, as she went about her life at the camp, others easily identified her as a strong supporter of the Liberian refugee cause.

Women who did not sit on the demonstration field described immense social pressure to participate. Within the small, confined population of the camp, everyone knew if you did not sit on the field. Explanations for those who did not participate drew upon ideas of status and travel. One woman explained how her friends and neighbors said that she was not sitting on the field because she was already living in America and did not need to travel. Others said that non-demonstrators were inactive because they were better off and had people overseas who could send for them to travel. Still others argued that people who did not participate were in agreement with the Ghanaian government or were working for the UNHCR and were already getting benefits from the money that they believed the UNHCR was keeping from Liberian refugees. Holzer (2010:50) has suggested that some refugee "elites," such as members of the LRWC and leaders of other Liberian organizations at the camp, did not participate in the demonstration because they

did not agree with the particular tactics of the demonstrators, though they did agree with the specific demands of the women.

Non-participants explained that they had attempted to mediate their outsider-ness by taking sacks of drinking water to the women and children sitting on the field in the hot sun. Several women explained doing this as a way to maintain their respected status without compromising their own ideas about the demonstration. Some women also described how they walked out of their way, sometimes an extra mile, to avoid walking past the demonstration site.

In speaking with several women who did not participate in the demonstration, the women explained that they did not believe that the UNHCR was going to come help the protestors. In one particular case, a woman explained that the neither the camp manager, LRWC Chairman nor the UNHCR were responsible for the long-term refugee situation for Liberians. Instead, she suggested that refugees were not able to be resettled because countries were not interested in having refugees. However, this statement was made a year after the demonstration and had the benefit of hindsight and she had explained that during the time of the demonstration, she was much less certain about her decision not to participate and had often wondered if she might be missing out on an opportunity.

While reasons for not participating in the demonstration varied, there was certainly something behind the accusations that those people did not need travel or were better off. For example, of the non-participating women I spoke with, several worked with various NGOs at the camp and others had strong family connections in the United States and Liberia that might offer other opportunities for travel or at the very least could

afford a comfortable lifestyle in Liberia. Holzer (2010:50) explained the divide between participants and non-participants and elite and non-elite perspectives as one of "movement tactics;" the beliefs that elites had more access and did not need assistance in the same way that non-elites did was rooted in the realities of many refugees.

Pressure to demonstrate also entered into the arenas of food aid, education and worship. Tensions especially escalated during the distribution of food rations. According to one WFP official, supporters of the demonstration went to the various food kitchens, pressuring people not to collect food rations, and took note of the people who did take their rations. The distribution of food rations was shut down for two months during the demonstration. The pressure to participate also extended to schools as one mother, who did not participate in the demonstration, explained that her young son was flogged for trying to go to school during the demonstration.

On the demonstration field, women began saying "dangerous prayers" against the people who were not demonstrating. The dangerous prayers called for their death of non-participants or prayed that they should not be successful, that they should not receive opportunity to travel. In particular dangerous prayers were directed at the chairman of the LRWC, who many women believed was ruining the demonstration through his alliance with the UNHCR and Ghanaian government, from which they believed the chairman had already secured his own travel opportunity. The Chairman explained that he received harassing phone calls during the demonstration, changed his phone number several times and moved out of the camp to the nearby town of Kasoa. Holzer (2010:50-52) has challenged the claims of threatened security as a reason for leaving the camp, particularly

in the case of refugee elites such as LRWC members and the UNHCR, and has suggested that threats in security were used as a reason to not engage with the situation at hand. I conducted several interviews with the Chairman during which he shifted his presentation of the demonstration to succumb to the different agendas of participants and non-participants. In the first interview he spoke with me in the presence of a woman who had not participated in the demonstration. During this conversation he spoke critically of the event. In the second interview, the chairman changed his opinion of the demonstration to one of support for the Liberian refugee cause as he spoke with me in front of fellow LRWC members.

The pressures surrounding the demonstration and social status shifted once the women were detained at Kodeabe and it became very clear that resettlement was not a likely outcome of the demonstration. One woman in her 30s explained how she called her friends detained at Kodeabe, teasing them about not being resettled: "Oh you in Australia now. Send me [US]$300. I need help."

While the LRWWRC demonstration was women-based – only women and children sat on the demonstration field – many refugees at the camp explained that a group of men orchestrated the demonstration from behind the scenes. Initially, male "refugee elites" were opposed to the women's tactics and did not take part in the organization; however, once many of the refugee elites from the LRWC left the camp, other male community leaders, calling themselves the "Stakeholders," wrote a letter of support for the women, which eventually got them a meeting with the Interior Minister of Ghana (Holzer 2010:52-53).

The UNHCR-Ghana Country Director Mariam Aida-Haile stated that the "UNHCR believes that many have been coerced, manipulated, threatened and intimidated to join the sit-in protest" (Cephas 2008a). Holzer (2010) has countered such claims, suggesting that the UNHCR's insistence upon intimidation as an organizing feature of the demonstration is a reflection of the UNHCR's diminishment and disregard for the voice and efforts of the protesting women. During a research visit to Liberia, I met Jefferson, a man who had said he had helped to support the women and demonstration, at the café of an expensive hotel in Mamba Point. Jefferson had not lived at the camp, but in nearby Kasoa and was involved in the demonstration "to help the women." He described the women's demands as wanting a case-by-case consideration, such that some refugees still could not return home and needed resettlement. While Jefferson was able to return to Liberia with the help of strong family connections and resources – initially he stayed at the expensive hotel in Mamba Point and later started his own business – the majority of the women who participated in the demonstration remain at the camp with few options. The contrast between Jefferson and the women illustrates one of the very real differences in migratory options available. For example, Jefferson had not directly participated in the demonstration and clearly had access to resources that afforded his own return to Liberia and creation of a business there. In contrast, women who participated in the demonstration generally did not have the opportunity to return to Liberia in such a way. The female participants I spoke with had been motivated by a desire for a better future. However, following the demonstration, future prospects for many of the people remaining at the camp were limited as the requests of LRWWRC were not heeded:

repatriation stipends were not increased; resettlement policy was not reviewed; and P-1 processing was not actively resumed.

The question of accountability remained uncertain. The LRWWRC had worked extensively to create detailed and specific arguments and recommendations in their letter of appeal to the UNHCR, their humanitarian benefactor in exile. Yet, the UNHCR had failed to protect the protesting women. Describing the UNHCR position as one of "compassionate authoritarinism," Holzer (2010:66) has argued that refugees at Buduburam view the UNHCR as a benevolent caregiver that aims to alleviate their suffering. At the same time, the UNHCR is authoritarian because refugees did not have grievance procedures (Holzer 2010:67).

As a strong opponent to the demonstration, Ghanaian Minister of the Interior Bartels suggested the demonstration targeted the wrong entity for change, as reported by the Ghana News Agency:

> He [Minister Bartels] said neither Government nor UNHCR determined resettlement, adding that, it depended on the willingness of the recipient country. Mr. Bartels noted that USA which was the largest recipient of Liberian refugees had indicated that it was no longer willing to process new cases of Liberian settlement and that those who wanted to do so were to request to countries they wished to resettle in, rather than using innocent children as tools to achieve their goals. [Mobile GhanaWeb 2008]

In making this statement, Bartels failed to acknowledge the structural power of the Ghanaian government that Holzer (2010) subsequently revealed.[54] Indeed the role of

[54] Holzer (2010:56-57) explained that refugees understand the involvement of the Ghanaian government as politically motivated to distract from the political scandals of the Interior Minister at the time. However, the attribution of the Ghanaian government's involvement as personally and politically motivated was made possible, Holzer (2010:57) argued, because of the general down-playing of the role that the host country government plays in any given refugee situation.

the Ghanaian government remained concealed such that the protestors were surprised once the Ghanaian government became involved in the demonstration (Holzer 2010:56). The UNHCR generally acted as a front for the Ghanaian government, for example the invitation for the "Stakeholders" to meet with the Interior Minister had come from the UNHCR (Holzer 2010:56), and refugees did not have a clear understanding of the role of the host government in their own position in the country. Within the context of this dissertation, the veiled role of nation-state policies bears particular relevance in relation to potential resettlement countries. Why, as Minister Bartels may have suggested, didn't the LRWWRC appeal to the U.S. government?

In part, the LRWWRC letter appealed to the UNHCR for reasons of "compassionate authoritarianism" as Holzer (2010) argued. However, I suggest that a similar premise extended to the relationship between Liberians and the U.S. government that led to a lack of dialogue between Liberian refugees and the U.S. government. Guided by ideas of the shadow colony – the benevolence of the United States and simultaneously contradictory politics of the United States, such as refusal to get involved in the civil war – Liberian refugees ultimately believed that the United States would help them if they could. For example, in the letter the LRWWRC acknowledged the decision of the U.S. government to no longer accept refugees through the P-3 family reunification program due to fraud, but asked for a reconsideration of resettlement cases with urgent needs. While quite understanding of U.S. policies and the constraints it imposed on themselves, Liberians could not approach the U.S. government directly, because there was no grievance procedure available to them. Resettlement decisions did not allow for an

appeal, though refugees could make an inquiry. However, a CWS-OPE employee explained to me that in most cases that requested an inquiry, initial decisions were not overturned.

Given the failure of the demonstration and lack of recourse for individual cases, what impact did the demonstration have on the migratory desires and prospects of refugees? How did refugees understand their position in Ghana and their migratory options? The next section considers the UNHCR verification exercise – which took place a year after the demonstration – as another instance of struggle to gain access to migratory channels and opportunities. In particular, this analysis explores how, in the aftermath of the failed demonstration, refugees perceived and pursued migratory options, especially resettlement to the United States.

Verifying Hope

In the months following the demonstration, life returned to "normal" – food rations resumed, children went to school, remittances started trickling back into the camp and once again refugees and the refugee aid system existed in relative isolation from one another. Eventually the posting of the March 31 closure of the camp appeared, and alongside it a new definition of local integration. As previously discussed, these new policies created significant fear among camp residents. This section explores the impact of a routine UNHCR verification exercise on refugees' ideas about and strategies for the

future. In particular, it considers the limits of the Liberian-American dream as a guiding ideology.

Following the March 31 deadline, the UNHCR embarked on a verification exercise to determine the number of refugees remaining in Ghana. The UNHCR and other bureaucratic entities explained that the procedure was necessary because the UNHCR and Ghanaian government needed to know how many people were still at the camp before they decided what to do regarding its closure. In addition to population statistics, the exercise also collected information about the livelihood circumstances and future plans of the refugees who remained in Ghana.[55] Once the UNHCR and the Ghanaian government had this information, they claimed they would be able to develop a policy for the future of the refugees who remained in Ghana. Planned for just the month of April, the verification exercise continued through April to June.

During the process, the UNHCR closed the repatriation program due to lack of staff capacity. However, the decision to temporarily close the repatriation program had quite another impact among refugees who evaluated UNHCR solutions in relation to one another. For many refugees, the temporary closure or end of the repatriation program symbolized the resurgence of another UNHCR solution and fueled existing beliefs that the verification was not an exercise, but an event that would bring about new resettlement programming. Providing fodder for this belief, a group of refugees traveled to the United States on March 27, just a few days before the beginning of the verification. The fact that

[55] This was not detailed data; it usually meant the asking of single questions: do you run a business? Do you receive remittances? Are you willing to return to Liberia?

those traveling were backlog cases that had been filed years prior to 2008 meant little; the actual act of traveling was an opportunity.

By May, tensions and desires for America were high. Over a bowl of beans and rice at a cookshop, the owner explained to me that she was ready to travel anywhere they will send her, but preferred America: "Norway – ok. Canada – ok. America – good. Australia – ok." Almost two weeks later, sitting in a breezy apartment just off Broad Street in Monrovia, Liberia, a middle-aged man explained to me how plenty of his friends were leaving Liberia to go to the camp "to verify" themselves as refugees in Ghana. When I returned to the camp a couple of weeks later, the belief in an upcoming opportunity for resettlement travel had only increased. I spoke with a young man that I knew from my first period of fieldwork at Buduburam in 2005. The man had returned to Liberia in the interim, but in 2009, left Liberia at the end of his semester at Cuttington University without finishing all of his final exams. He paid US$110 to travel by road back to Buduburam "to verify." One afternoon, as I learned to bake a range of pastries – rice bread, cassava bread, plum pies – I also learned about the transnational depth of the verification. My baking teacher had received a call earlier in the week from a man who had been resettled in the US in the early 1990s. He called her to learn "what really" the verification was about. The following morning, the topic of the verification followed me as I sat on my front porch, washing dishes. My neighbor sat nearby and explained: "we are waiting to see what really this verification is about." In both instances "what really" stood for the active hope that the verification would result in the opening of a resettlement program. As I was nearing the end of my fieldwork, I also started to make

plans for a return trip to the camp during the winter. When I presented my plans to a couple of my key research participants, they scoffed and said that I could certainly come back then, but I would be met with an empty camp because they were going to be resettled.

The influx of people returning to the camp was overwhelming – Tuesday nights at the bars and clubs on the "18" suddenly felt like the celebratory Sunday evenings, bringing vibrant business with them. On the negative side, the influx of people created housing problems. As I sat in Gloria's yard sifting ration corn with her, she explained that the corn would not last when her sons and husband came back to the camp to verify. As I described in chapter 5, Blessing and her three children had to leave her one-room apartment, the rent for which had been paid one year in advance, because the family of the boy who owned the apartment would be returning to the camp for the verification and needed a place to stay. Fortunately for Blessing, the home owner understood the problem he had caused and helped her to find a new place to stay. Reeling in naïve surprise at the repopulation of the camp, I was alarmed to receive a text message informing me that the owner of the home where I was living planned to return to the camp the following day to verify and needed his house.[56] In the days of the verification, people walked about the camp, asking for available rooms and moved wheelbarrows full of household belongings to and fro.

[56] Unlike Blessing, I had sufficient financial resources to book a room at the hotel at the camp and only really "paid" for the move in the decreased respectability I experienced for staying in the hotel, where only privileged people stayed.

Daily lives were occupied with strategizing on how to respond to the questions of the verification exercise. People who had already verified wrote down the questions that the interviewers asked. As reported by refugees who had verified, questions included: Where are you located in Ghana? Do you speak any Ghanaian languages? Have you registered with the Ghana national insurance scheme? What do you do for a living? Do you receive overseas support? Do you have a Liberian passport? Did you ever go back to Liberia? Do you want to go back home? Have you ever sat (been interviewed) for a resettlement program? Additionally, one refugee explained that the verification interviewer explained that the exercise was not a resettlement program. However the UNHCR had said before that there would be no more resettlement programming and yet, resettlement programming was opened. The UNHCR does not have the power to predict the future policies of nation-states and can only present information on the current situation. These circumstances have created the structural conditions for hope.

Responding to questions about family demographics in the 2007 UNHCR verification, refugees had generally answered that they had relatives in America, believing this would enable resettlement. However, during the 2009 verification the prevailing strategy was to say that you did not know the whereabouts of your family. As explained to me by a couple of refugees, this alternative strategy was premised on the belief that reporting unknown family status would renew claims for refugee status and the need for resettlement. Regarding questions about local integration, some people argued that if you told the UNHCR that you would locally integrate, you would not be resettled.

However, others argued that if you were not interested in local integration, you would be seen as ungrateful and therefore, you should express interest in local integration.

Similar to the strategy adopted during the demonstration, many refugees also believed in the need to present an "uncivilized" image of refugees to the UNHCR. This initially appeared during the first days of the verification when camp refugees were upset at the arrival of "town" refugees, who were generally better-off than Liberians living at the camp. Some refugees believed that the quality of life of the town refugees would hurt claims for continued assistance for Liberian refugees as a whole. Such status presentations and divisions also emerged between refugees at the camp.

One morning in early June, I was sitting on a wooden bench in the camp hospital, pressed between others waiting to see the doctor. With my eyes glazed over, loosely shifting between a loud television monitor and the man who slowly took the blood pressure of each incoming patient, I had almost missed the arrival of Lucy. I was surprised to see her because it was her turn to participate in the verification that day. She motioned me to follow her outside, where she explained that she had already gone to the UNHCR trailers at the front of the camp, but the Liberian volunteers who reviewed and confirmed the identification of each refugee prior to the verification interview had sent her away. Lucy went to the grounds with her bank card as identification because her UNHCR ID card had recently been stolen from her house. The guards were furious, and with the help of a small crowd had pushed her off the grounds, insisting she needed to bring another form of idea that did not betray the refugee cause. The guards and crowd believed that presenting a bank card to UNHCR staff would provide evidence that

refugees are well-off and no longer in need of assistance or the resettlement programming they thought was coming their way. Thus, Lucy had ended up at the hospital to get a hospital ID card so that she could verify her refugee status. While she was able to get a hospital ID, it was dated for that day and she was concerned that the UNHCR would not accept the ID. The UNHCR was aware of refugees getting less reliable forms of ID in order to verify and were concerned about the prospect of fraud. Eventually Lucy went back to the UNHCR grounds where she showed her hospital ID to the Liberian guards, but once in the interview tent had presented her bank card as identification to the UNHCR official.

Many of the conversations around the camp debated the intent and outcome of the exercise. Similar to explanations for non-participation in the demonstration, refugees who did not believe that the verification would result in resettlement programming were accused of "not needing a program" or "being better off." Speaking with Liberians who did not have much interest in the verification gave weight to these socio-economic explanations for varied opinions about the verification exercise. For example, when I asked Albert, a man in his late 30s, what he thought about the verification, he explained that verification exercise or not, you still need to do something for yourself. He had an active business selling used cars in the West African region and did not particularly care about resettlement. Albert's subdued interest in the verification exercise and prospects for resettlement stood in stark contrast to the scene of rejection from the US resettlement program that I presented at the beginning of this chapter. As these few instances demonstrate, the dynamics between refugees fully invested in the Liberian-American

dream, those partially invested and those not invested at all do reflect differences in social status. Individuals with few opportunities in the West African region ultimately sought opportunities outside to improve their situation. The investment in the Liberian-American dream was not an idle hope, but a carefully constructed evaluation of the global political economy and the internal social structuring of Liberian society. However, the structural forces that hinder access to the Liberian-American dream quickly become the responsibility of individuals, who may or may not have the power to access travel to America.

Conclusion

In the days following the distribution of the nearly 200 rejection letters for the U.S. P-3 resettlement program, stories of suicide attempts lurked throughout the camp. Hope was replaced with frustration, anger and accusations. After I read the letter outside of Lucy's house, we had moved inside where the initial questions about what Lucy's family would do now that their application for resettlement had been rejected were followed by an almost play-by-play analysis of the interview process. Sarah, Lucy's daughter, proclaimed that she wanted to go back to Liberia, finish high school and go to college. She was done with this travel business. She could do good things, if not better things in Liberia. Tensions climbed inside the house as more people filtered in and out, all exclaiming their frustration. Jacob, a young man in his early 20s, came inside looking for food and announced that his case had also been rejected. He blamed the interviewers

and their lack of knowledge. They described an OPE interviewer they had heard about who said she had never heard of the Americo-Liberian "tribe" before. This example reinforced the anger of the refugees who had been rejected that day as they wondered how someone who knew so little about their country and situation could make such a powerful decision. Throughout the conversation, the people in the house shifted in their ideas about America; at once America was a friend that could offer many opportunities, but it was also the foe that could withhold their riches. Jacob and others who had been rejected felt tricked by the interviewers, who had been so nice during the interview, but had then rejected their cases. Jacob exclaimed that he could not establish his history of persecution because he had not really been given much of a chance to talk and the interviewer did not really ask him any questions. In his explanation, Jacob placed power in the hands of the interviewer, who did have to power to record the details of the case and determine the extent to which she asked questions. However, the prevailing structural power of US resettlement policy speaks louder and has determined that the Liberian war is over; it is time to develop and re-build.

During this post-rejection analysis, I had sat off to the side, in a blue plastic chair, listening. I felt befuddled about a system that could reject an application from a father for his child. As I gazed into space, the words in the room dripping over me, I had been jarred awake as Lucy closed her hands loosely around my neck, gently shaking me, "I goin to choke you." "It is not a good day for me to be American here," I said. As I later stood in the yard, enjoying the warmth of the setting sun from beneath the shelter of a coconut tree, I uselessly apologized on behalf of my government. Regardless of my lack

of power to influence resettlement policy, I stood in as a dream-breaker that day. As I was about to head home Lucy's friend appeared in the yard. As I stepped across the drainage ditch, pulling a coconut tree frond with me onto the road, the friend wistfully proclaimed that if only America would understand that resettlement helps all refugees at the camp through the sharing of remittances, then, America would resettle them.

This personification of America as a caring benefactor that comes from Liberia's shadow colony history reflects little of contemporary U.S. policy. As part of a larger strategy to address six protracted refugee situations, the U.S. State Department website has stated an anticipatory policy towards Liberian refugees:

> It is expected that UNHCR will declare in 2011 that the 65,000 Liberians no longer merit *prima facie* status as refugees, a change that will likely compel many to take advantage of local integration or repatriation. All of these factors present *an opportunity for U.S. engagement to ensure that remaining refugees avail themselves, primarily, of two of the three durable solutions -- return to Liberia or local integration* -- no later than 2011. [Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration 2011, my emphasis]

Disconnected from the needs of Liberian refugees, the US government couches its policy behind a veil of UNHCR policy and power, when in reality the US government closed P-3 resettlement for Liberians prior to any UNHCR decisions to invoke a cessation clause for Liberian refugees in Ghana. In doing so, the U.S. government attempts to remove its hands from the structural power that has guided the unfolding of resettlement opportunities – or lack thereof – for Liberians in Ghana. In the next and final chapter, I briefly present the current terrain of struggle at the camp as a way of reviewing the key

points of my argument and presentation of recommendations for future research and strategies for working with long-term refugee situations.

CHAPTER 7

THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

Rioting for Resettlement

On February 13, 2011 armed Ghanaian Police entered the Buduburam Liberian refugee camp.[57] A group of Liberian refugees had intended to install a new leadership structure at the camp to replace the Chairman of the Liberian Refugee Welfare Council, the entity responsible for the interface between Liberian refugees, the UNHCR, and Ghanaian government at the camp, whom they had pushed out of office two months prior. The camp erupted into a riot, which the Ghanaian Police tried to quell with tear gas and gun shots into the air. One woman, a Ghanaian who lived at the camp, was accidentally killed and more than sixty Liberians were arrested and taken to jail.

The group of protesting refugees claimed that the previous Chairman did not represent the interests of Liberian refugees. Many refugees believed the Chairman was in cahoots with the UNHCR and their agenda for repatriation, a sentiment that many refugees had also voiced during fieldwork in 2009-2009. In the words of one woman, the Chairman was "telling [international] visitors all kind of lies," that all refugees received services, when really just a few refugees receive assistance. Another refugee described

[57] Information regarding the February 2011 riot comes from my phone conversations with two refugees at Buduburam in the week following the riot.

the complaints such that the Chairman was "against money for refugees." Further elaborating on the ideas behind the opposition, this man explained that refugees were "fighting for their rights. They want resettlement. They want a durable solution and that is to go to America."

Prior to the riot, some of the refugees who were attempting to install new leadership at the camp had a spiritual revelation about traveling. In the revelation, the refugees proclaimed that Canada, Australia, and Norway needed people to come resettle in their countries. However, the Ghanaian government was allowing Ghanaians to travel on these resettlement program slots. To support their efforts in pursuing resettlement programming, they held a four day fast and were able to raise over US$1,000 (1,700 cedis). In the week following the riot, some participating refugees who had not been arrested by the Ghanaian Police continued to mobilize others. They walked around the camp knocking on doors, encouraging people to march with them to the UNHCR office in Accra.

Similar to other sites of political struggle and protest around the globe at this time, the riot at Buduburam became a visible site of power contestation and ideological struggle. The riot highlighted several dimensions of power at the camp. The riot emerged from the conflicting ideas of refugee representation that different refugees held, most notably working for or against resettlement travel. As in past oppositional struggle, for example the 2008 demonstration discussed in chapter 6, the February riot similarly did not address nation state policies. As a key point of access to resettlement travel, protest of

specific nation-states resettlement policies remained notably absent from the debate. In the final section of this chapter, I will speak to this issue as a point for future research.

In response to the riot, the Liberian government agreed to send a delegation to Ghana to investigate the situation. In part this delegation was encouraged by a group of university students in Liberia, who met with President Johnson-Sirleaf regarding the rights and protection of refugees in Ghana (Executive Mansion 2011). Similar to her response following the 2008 demonstration at the camp, Johnson-Sirleaf announced her interests in maintaining strong diplomatic relations with Ghana so that Liberians could continue to live in Ghana until it was time for them to return to Liberia. Following the diplomatic meetings, the Ghana government once again raised the possibility of closing the camp.

These recent events demonstrate that the issues that existed during my fieldwork and even prior – the threat of a camp closure, reduced services, and an uncertain future – continue to plague people living at Buduburam. In the face of these circumstances, refugees have envisioned and acted upon prospects for a better future. The key findings and scholarly contributions from my research are reviewed in the following section.

An Inventory of Ideas, Ideology, and Power

This dissertation began with a common question in refugee studies: what is the solution to long-term refugee populations, particularly those living in a camp environment? As I suggested in chapter 1, this question cannot be answered without first

understanding why people stay in camps. The focus of this research has been to understand how Liberians have become invested in staying at Buduburam. In particular, this research explored how relations of power – interpersonal, tactical, and structural – shape the contemporary migration circumstances of Liberian refugees. Research questions included: 1) how is power created and utilized within the near diaspora setting of a long-term refugee camp? What power relations govern lives within the camp? How is power construed between refugees in the near diaspora and the far diaspora? Between refugees and the homeland? 2) What is the impact of the (post)colonial state of Liberia on contemporary transnational relations? How do these relations frame migratory options and decisions? 3) What are the economic and social dynamics surrounding the decisions to live in a refugee camp? How do these structural conditions interface with concepts and ideas rooted in individuals, such as hope? In answering these questions, this dissertation has focused on how the people living at the Buduburam Liberian refugee camp in Ghana navigate their position within a social hierarchy that is negotiated on a global terrain.

Research questions were framed in terms of larger debates or gaps in existing literature surrounding the study of refugees and long-term camp situations. Early studies of power in refugee camps (see Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1995) considered the dynamics of power between the different individuals and organizations involved in camp management and life. However, my research has demonstrated the necessity of looking at the interpersonal, transnational relations of refugees as a site of power negotiation in protracted camp settings. Facing drastically reduced humanitarian aid, a common practice in many protracted camps, refugees at Buduburam relied heavily on their social networks,

especially transnational relations for support. In many instances, as data from chapter 5 suggested, refugees accessed financial remittances through family and friends who have been resettled to other, wealthier countries. Alongside these financial relations, refugees also negotiated the terms of power between themselves and those "overseas." While some refugees spoke of these transnational family relations as unchanged by the accompanying socio-economic shifts of migration, in many cases refugees at Buduburam felt they were at the whim of the family member who had been resettled.

Refugees often reported that they survived only through the goodwill of family and friends who sent them remittances and struggled to sustain themselves – especially in a dignified way. While access to international remittances offered the potential for increased power and status at the camp, dependence on remittances created varying degrees of uncertainty among most refugees who received them. Even when someone received remittances regularly or from multiple sources, they were still aware of the tenuousness of this support. This ethnographic insight on uncertainty fits into broader debates about the impact of remittances on camp environments. Scholars have debated whether remittances spread out and enhance the quality of life of all residents (Horst 2006) or if remittances concentrate wealth in the hands of a few and further inequalities (Van Hear 2002). My data set on social network transactions of refugees has demonstrated that among the 148 households surveyed, remittances tended to concentrate wealth among those who had access to such resources, rather than a spreading out of remittances. For those who did find opportunity at the camp, this was tempered by the

liminal existence of the camp – the fact that refugees did not own land, were not citizens and could be asked to leave at any moment.

The transnational relations of refugees at Buduburam also involved power dynamics with family and friends living in Liberia. These power relations were more varied than those with relatives who had been resettled. In some instances, refugees had gained prestige through their activities in exile and were able to send financial remittances to family in Liberia. This particular research finding that illustrates the power and influence of refugees in a camp setting contrasts starkly with existing literature that has pointed to a purported lack of power in near diaspora communities (see Van Hear 2006). At the same time that some refugees at Buduburam contributed to family in Liberia, many refugees' migratory decisions were heavily influenced by the threat of the social stigma of "wasted years" should they return to Liberia without first being resettled. These potentially harmful or shameful circumstances of repatriation have led to a reason for staying that some scholars have labeled as hope for resettlement.

While some literature has reduced analysis of reasons for staying to explanations of hope for resettlement or as a way of gaining access to resources, as refugees at Buduburam have demonstrated, the actual choices and migratory decisions reflect a complex social system. My research probed further into analysis of access to resources and hope, ultimately illustrating the connection between long-term refugee camps and the structural necessity of hope. As a way of exploring and understanding the social systems and global hierarchies that inform the lives of contemporary Liberian refugees living in a

protracted camp, I used two related key concepts: the shadow colony and the Liberian-American dream.

In this dissertation I presented the concept of the shadow colony as a reference to the power relations and ideological struggles attached to the histories and contemporary experiences of colonization in Liberia. I derived this concept from the presence of each of McClintock's (1992) three types of colonization: colonization, internal colonization, and imperial colonization, in Liberia. While these three types and processes of colonization and resulting power constructs emerged historically in the processes of the settlement and expansion of the Monrovian colony, colonial hierarchies continue to exist in various forms throughout contemporary Liberian society. Nonetheless, Liberian history is often constructed through the ideology of an independent nation, with the United States situated as a benevolent caretaker and motherland of Liberia. The concept of the shadow colony not only references the power dynamics resulting from an ambiguous colonial history and present, but it also refers to the on-going fluctuation and struggle of ideas surrounding these power dynamics. At the camp, the shadow colony emerged in the shape of conflicting ideas about resettlement to America. On the one hand, most refugees dreamed, planned and worked for resettlement to America. Yet, these plans were tempered by the structural realities – such as the closure of the P-3 Family Reunification resettlement program – as well as ideas that resettlement was not all that one imagined. As one young man described, "resettlement is slavery." This statement invoked a long history of hierarchical relations between blacks and whites, settlers and Africans, refugees and citizens. To understand how these dynamics influenced the contemporary

migration decisions of Liberian refugees, I developed an analytic concept of the Liberian-American dream.

In the context of Buduburam, I used the concept of the Liberian-American dream to explore how the interplay between ideas and practices of power – particularly those rooted in historic structures of hierarchy – framed transnational relations and the evaluation of migratory options. Ideas and practices of America, as mental creations influenced by history and reinforced by contemporary practices of power rooted in connection to America, shaped an ideology of the Liberian-American dream. As an analytic term the Liberian-American dream connoted a specific social trajectory whereby refugees resettle to America, gain social status and wealth that will ultimately be invested in re-building their own lives and the lives of others in Liberia. In this way, resettlement became a migratory route, rather than destination.

The Liberian-American dream also had the capacity to limit the power and pursuit of individuals. As a collective pursuit, those who did not actively stand for resettlement programming were excluded or chastised as against the Liberian cause. Likewise, individuals who had greater access to resources, be it money or networks in America, were criticized for getting ahead. My discussion of this ideological regulation was situated with the broader context of struggle at the camp between refugees, the Ghanaian government, the UNHCR, the Liberian government, and the US government. The relationship between refugees and the UNHCR was guided by competing notions of common sense. On the one hand the UNHCR believed in the “natural” resolution of the refugee crisis through voluntary repatriation and that “no matter what they told” refugees

about UNCHR policy and practices, refugees would believe what they wanted, particularly about the possibility of resettlement. However, refugees experienced resettlement policy and the pursuit of that reality as an active process that was not limited by static UNHCR or resettlement country rules, but was also guided by interpersonal transnational relations and global structural inequalities. For example, refugees considered various factors, including educational opportunities in Ghana, a lack of educational opportunities in Liberia, the potential for social stigma of "wasted years" in Liberia when returning from the camp without achieving resettlement, and growing inequality and unemployment rates in Liberia. These factors all contributed to the structural necessity of staying at the camp to pursue resettlement and the hope required to stay.

Refugees acted within these structural forces to pursue their own migratory paths. In particular refugees worked with the undefined solution of local integration as a strategy to further their own agendas for the future. While local integration potentially stood as an impediment to resettlement, such that once locally integrated Liberians would no longer be refugees, refugees took advantage of undefined local integration policies as a way of maintaining refugee status in Ghana. As long as the Ghanaian government did not provide a clear definition and means of obtaining the solution of local integration, yet nonetheless promoted local integration, the government would not invoke a cessation clause that would result in the end of refugee status for Liberians in Ghana.

In several instances, refugees' responses to migratory policies were mediated by shadow colony ideas, as I illustrated in the women's demonstration in 2008 and the

UNHCR verification exercise in 2009. In both instances refugee responses to the UNHCR were motivated and shaped by ideas of obtaining the Liberian-American dream. In attempting to mobilize a counter-ideology of refugee protection that would end the push for voluntary repatriation as the natural solution to the refugee crisis, refugees confronted the larger structural forces of material and political power – primarily the limits of American goodwill. Ultimately, if U.S. government policy stipulated that Liberians were no longer a resettlement priority, Liberians were forced to pursue other avenues of travel to America, such as immigrant visas and the U.S. diversity lottery. This reality stood in stark contrast to the Liberian-American dream. In the next section, I explore the contemporary conditions of Liberia and continuing influences of the shadow colony.

Reconstruction and the Challenge of Inequality

During the spring of 2009 I had the opportunity to travel to Liberia to be a part of the 41st annual meeting of the Liberian Studies Association (LSA). After forty years, this was the first LSA meeting held on Liberian soil. The Liberian Executive Mansion subsidized the conference – Researching Liberia: Past, Present and Future – and "presented to the LSA 100 copies of Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy, otherwise known as 'Lift Liberia,' urging the LSA to use it as a guide for people-centered development research." President Johnson-Sirleaf intended the conference to "crystallize the establishment of sister-partner relationships with Liberian universities and

universities abroad" (Executive Mansion 2009). As I described in the previous chapter, the President's call to the diasporan scholars was clear: "Liberia is indeed back and open for business….Explore the possibilities of coming home. Go beyond just checking it out, to actually feeling it…and come home" (Johnson-Sirleaf 2009). While opportunity was rife for far diaspora returnees, the question remained: what would be the fate of near diaspora returnees?

During my fieldwork in Ghana, concerns about land and home were a part of many refugees' discussions about repatriation. Many refugees explained that they had lost homes during the war or in the post-war period or struggled to maintain land rights on the property where their homes had stood or continued to stand. Land rights were also of great concern at the LSA meeting, yet despite the link between these concerns of potentially repatriating refugees, the conference proceedings primarily focused on Liberia's reconstruction and involvement with the far diaspora, though two papers discussed the near diaspora (Yacob-Haliso 2009; Trapp 2009). The right to private ownership of land in Liberia is contentious, owing to a long historical trajectory that has been further complicated by periods of civil war and warlord seizures of territory. Land rights have also been complicated by the war because much of the paperwork – land deeds, etc. – was destroyed during the war. At the conference, land rights were discussed in terms of distribution, eminent domain, investor concessions, monopolies and traditional land tenure systems. Outside of conference discussions on the political aspects of rebuilding Liberia, my conversations with individuals who had returned from Buduburam revealed a different day-to-day reality: how to survive.

While in Liberia I spoke with several refugees who had returned from the Buduburam camp to see what issues arose during the process of repatriation. In one case, a young woman in her twenties, Caroline, had arrived at Buduburam in 1998 and lived there with her boyfriend, surviving mostly through remittances that his mother in the United States sent to them every month. Eventually, Caroline had returned to Liberia with her young son. After struggling to survive in Liberia for awhile, she returned to the camp with the agreement that her mother-in-law would support her to attend vocational school so that Caroline could eventually return to Liberia and support herself and her son.

In 2007, Caroline returned to Liberia once again and opened a small beauty salon. Her mother-in-law no longer sent financial support and Caroline found a way to make a small living so that she could afford a small one bedroom apartment in Monrovia with a shared bathroom. She was even able to save for her son's future. Nonetheless, Caroline struggled and continues to struggle: "When I came it was very difficult. … It was difficult for almost a year. I started to work. I started to know people. People started to call me. I go to their house and work." Beyond material constraints, Caroline also had to overcome the social status stigma attached to living at Buduburam.

> Especially, like in my yard. People always told me like when . . . I drinking liquor – alcoholic beverages . . . it will be like "why you pretend like you don't drink when you guys on the camp are very . . . loose. Yes. You people think we don't know that people on the camp have a very bad way of life. You people do all kind a bad things." When you return they don't take you seriously. They think maybe you have been using your life, doing all sort of bad thing.

While Caroline still does not tell people she used to live at the camp and struggles financially, she prefers Liberia to the limitations of living at Budburuam. "Someone in

America will always call you. Somebody will always call you and tell you what to do with your life. . . . Should that be your life? . . . So being home is like a . . . privilege." In walking around Monrovia with Caroline, I caught a glimpse of the dynamics of privilege in Liberia.

After the conference proceedings one afternoon I had planned to meet Caroline at her salon. When I arrived in the small shop, the smell of chemicals blasted me in the face so I chose a seat near the open doorway, but was still close enough to participate in the salon banter. The room was sparsely furnished, a few table and chairs with various beauty supplies, polishes in all sorts of color. I debated with Caroline and her customer about the beauty and health impacts of pedicures before the conversation shifted to the question of marriage and monogamy. The women in the shop chatted about their latest romances, noting the particular luxuries or power that "big men," especially those in the government, afforded them.

As we left the salon, Caroline explained that she charged for her services in Liberian dollars, a manicure cost about LD$250 or about US$3.75.[58] Providing several manicures or pedicures a day for a few days of the week would make it difficult to afford US$25 monthly rent in Monrovia in addition to all other living expenses, including soaring food costs, water, electricity and education. As we continued our walk through the crowded streets of Monrovia at the end of the work day, a man called out to Caroline, asking if she would make a house call to give him a pedicure later that night. She agreed and insisted that she would bring me along. As we walked away, Caroline explained that

[58] During fieldwork US$1 = LD$65

the man was a big man. He was a part of Johnson-Sirleaf's security detail and traveled back and forth between his home in America and his rental apartment in Monrovia.

Later that night I sat on the balcony of this man's third floor apartment in Monrovia, watching the sun set over the harbor while sipping cold mango juice that had been pulled, with an array of soft drinks, from his well-stocked refrigerator. We chatted about my research, America, and the problems with housing in Monrovia. After an hour or two Caroline finished her pedicure and packed up her supplies. As we walked in the dark streets, Caroline explained that the work was well-worth her time: she charged anywhere from US$25 to US$50 for doing house calls for these "big men" who live in America and Liberia. Her profit during this hour or two was greater than for services provided at her salon. It was as if there were two linked, yet distinct economies operating in Liberia.

Liberian scholars have raised concern about economic inequality at the 2010 Liberian Studies Association annual meeting in Philadelphia. At this forum, a few individuals raised concerns about the inequality in compensation for government employees. Liberian government employees from the American diaspora tended to occupy higher level federal positions, earning upwards of US$200,000 annually. In contrast, civil servants employed domestically in unskilled labor positions might earn only US$1,000 annually.[59] Inequality in compensation for civil servants was also exposed as biased toward education in the United States. Government employees who obtained a

[59] These are not official figures, but were brought up during a discussion period following a panel at the 42nd Annual Liberian Studies Association meeting in Philadelphia, PA.

bachelor's degree in the United States received as much as US$10,000 whereas counterparts who held a master's degree from a Liberian university only earned up to US$5,000 (Kolleh and Binda 2010). Press articles such as this highlight public concern and ambiguity about the seemingly increased power derived from connection to the United States. One the one hand, Liberians benefit from U.S. education, jobs, social networks, hierarchies and resources; yet, these same resources and social structures have demonstrated the capacity to further socio-economic divisions and inequality.

While the Executive Mansion has held town hall meetings throughout Liberia to restore relations among the citizens of Liberia and foster mutual respect among all Liberians, these meetings appear to address cultural and ethnic issues rather than the growing inequality between Liberians and diasporan returnees. Holsoe (2011:129) has described one of the meetings about Liberian culture in terms of difference. Liberians of various ethnic background attended the meeting and at the outset thought they were alike one another in terms of social institutions. However, over the course of the meeting the participants came to see that they had different institutions and understandings of the world and Liberia. While Holsoe's findings highlight the importance of understanding ethnic and cultural difference, it remains crucial to understand how difference becomes wedded to power. For example, to echo the concerns of Pailey (2008) regarding a "returnee hegemony," to what extent does difference in refugee returnee status – returning from the near versus far diaspora – influence one's position and opportunity in Liberian society? As this question is just one of many potential questions for future

research, in the next section I discuss ideas for future research and consider the practical implications of key research findings.

Refugees and the Future: Research and Policy

I have identified two key areas, transnational remittances and resettlement, for continued research, both of which derive from and carry policy implications. As I introduced in chapter 1 of this dissertation, Van Hear (2006) has proposed transnationalism as an enduring "solution" for refugee populations. While Van Hear identified potential limits to this solution – as practiced, it would not provide legal rights to refugees – he has also raised the question of whether remittances enhance or diminish inequality. My research has demonstrated that transnational remittances at Buduburam tend to concentrate wealth within the hands of a few. Certainly remittances are shared amongst people at the camp, but data on sharing practices indicates that these exchanges are more often of equal weight, rather than a wealthier person giving substantially more to someone who is less well off. Nonetheless, some refugees reported that they distribute their burden among multiple people at the camp, so that they are not relying solely upon one or two people. In most instances this was possible, though a smaller set of survey participants had only one or two people at the camp to help them. Practiced as a solution to protracted refugee situations, transnationalism does have the potential to exacerbate inequality among refugee recipients and non-recipients as power tends to be concentrated in the hands of those who receive remittances. Furthermore, my research has shown that

transnationalism – particularly as practiced in the transfer of remittances – as a solution runs the risk of concentrating power in the hands of people in the far diaspora.

Multi-sited research needs to explore how power works in the far diaspora. To what extent is the social responsibility element of the Liberian-American dream realized once a refugee has resettled in North America, Europe or Australia? As a follow-up question: how does the near diaspora approach social responsibility towards Liberia? In chapter 6, I closed with an account of a man who runs a successful international business across the West African region. He did not have much interest in the Liberian-American dream. Future research might look to explore the lives and livelihoods of refugees who are not invested in the Liberian-American dream. Can we consider regional trade networks and relations as a form on enduring transnationalism for refugees? Furthermore, emerging research agendas (see Sharma 2011) are now focusing on "leveraging" remittances for development. With my findings of the interpersonal power dynamics in transnational networks, it remains critical that future research considers the potential "dark side" of using and relying upon remittances for development. Additionally, practice-oriented research could examine the overall remittance process, particularly the corporate culture of the remittance system. Specifically, are there ways in which corporations could adjust remittance fees to encourage and promote development?

Throughout this dissertation I have explored the interplay of various types of power – interpersonal, tactical and structural – but like Wolf (1999) my conclusions reside in the overwhelming force of structural power. For refugees at Buduburam, structural power took shape in national resettlement policies, most notably U.S.

resettlement policy. The U.S. P-3 Family Reunification program was the primary avenue for resettlement travel among Liberian. However, once the U.S. government instituted DNA testing and discovered "fraud" in the program, the P-3 resettlement option has been closed for Liberians. Anthropological research has the potential to reveal the many problems with this particular resettlement policy.

Regardless of its intent, in practice the use of DNA-testing to screen for fraudulent family relations supports a policy of non-involvement. The terms of the debate over DNA-testing often rest upon ideas of kinship as a biological or social construction, with anthropologists often arguing for the consideration of the latter. However, fluid kinship relations are not only practiced in other parts of the world, but also in the United States. Thus, DNA-testing is not only about a lack of cultural relativity, but is also a practice that enables a scientific justification for social responsibility, or irresponsibility whereby the U.S. government is able to justify a position of non-involvement towards Liberian refugees. The reach of scientific reason is furthered through the criminalization of those "fraudulent" refugees who attempted to be resettled under false biological claims of relationship. By investing in a system where social relations and responsibility can be determined by a blood test, the actual historical relations, questions and dynamics of structural power remain obscured. Anthropological research on kin practices, social processes and the power behind DNA testing has the potential to inform new resettlement policies. As a starting point, the concerns voiced by women participating in the 2008 demonstration at Buduburam could be heeded: conduct a full review of U.S. resettlement programs, including consideration of individual cases that have been closed without

explanation as well as consideration and clarification of the program's overall objectives and priorities.

Third country resettlement is practiced as a "solution" for less than 1% of the world's refugee population. Of the 1% of the world refugee population that is resettled, in 2008, the United States resettled 74% of this group (UNHCR 2011d:2). Jacobsen (2005) has suggested that resettlement is an inefficient solution because it requires extensive financial resources for the comparatively few it helps. As I previously pointed out, Jacobsen does not provide substantive data about life outcomes for those resettled or the contributions they make to refugees in the near diaspora or to the homeland to back her claim. In my research I did not evaluate the efficiency of resettlement; rather I constructed an ethnographic account of the social meaning that refugees have attached to the solution of third country resettlement. Many refugees have invested in resettlement as the Liberian-American dream, through which they can gain prestige, wealth and contribute to the development of Liberia. Future longitudinal, ethnographic research could follow the resettlement of several Liberians to understand the impact and potential benefits of resettlement. To what extent do resettled refugees actually fulfill the dream of making a better life for themselves and family in Liberia through remittances and investments, particularly the construction of homes and businesses?

Furthermore, if future research should pursue resettlement as a question of efficiency, research needs to build from the insights of my research participants. In chapter 5, Caroline, a young mother of six and an "organic intellectual," explained that Liberians in America were lazy and failed in comparison to Liberians resettled in Europe.

Caroline followed her statement with the explanation that Liberians in Europe were more successful because they had better social services than in refugees resettled in America. In this regard, comparative study and analysis of national resettlement policy and services could help to create a more streamlined and socially supported system that would enhance the outcomes for refugees. Findings from research on resettled refugees in the United States might also be coupled with advocacy-related research focused on a critical assessment of U.S. resettlement policies and practices. In particular, what kind of contributions do refugees make to U.S. society? Rather than situating refugees as a liability, can U.S. resettlement policy be re-framed in terms of the contributions that refugees make to society and to the larger global world?

APPENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

SECTION ONE: Cooking and Eating

COOK AREA/PREPARATION

Can you describe (or show) me around your cooking area?
- -indoor/outdoor
- -coal/gas
- -What kind of cooking utensils do you have?

What kind of water do you use to prepare/cook your food?
- Where do you get your water?
  - -polytank, reservoir, well

What kind of oil do you cook with?
- -How do you decide to use different ones?

Do you season your soup with cube, MSG/saltpeter, A1, season salt and salt?
- -How often?

Do you often use fever seed/leaf to season your food?
- -What do you cook it with?

Do you store any foods at your house, such as rice, oil, salt, season, cube, pepper, onion, garlic?
- -How much can you store? For example, a half bag of rice?
- -What allows you to be able to store food?

Is your cooking/eating area different from the way it was at home in Liberia?
- -If yes, how?
- -Do you want to change anything about your cooking/eating area? What?

COOKING CHOICES

How many times a day do you cook?
- -Does anyone else help you to cook?
- -How long will a pot of soup last? Meals or days.

Do you vary what you cook and/or eat?
- -How do you decide?

EATING

If I came to visit in the morning at breakfast time, what would I see?
- -Who is eating?

-What do you eat/cook?
-Or, if food prepared elsewhere, where do you get? (E.g. send your children with 2,000 to eat coco in the morning)
-What time of day is meal?
-Same question for lunch and dinner, if applicable.

Does your HH eat together at the same time?
-If not, who eats first, second etc.?
-Are the portion sizes equal? Describe differences.
-Do you have some people who do not live with you, but come to eat here?
-Who are they?
-How often do they come?

FOOD FREQUENCY

How many meals a day does your family eat?
What is your staple food?
Do you eat rice (or staple from previous question) every day?
-How many times per day?
-What kind of rice do you eat? Why?
-If don't eat rice every day, what do you eat?
-How do you feel if you don't eat rice?
How many times per week do you eat meat?
-Fish? Chicken/turkey? Eggs? Vegetables? Fruit? Beans? Milk? Canned fish? Roasted fish/meat?
-Fufu? Banku? Kenkey? Bread? Spaghetti? GB? Dry rice?
-Jollof rice? Chock rice? Fried rice? Torborgi, palm butter?
-Does this change seasonally?
Do you eat banku and kenkey? How often?
-Do you ever eat banku or kenkey without sauce? How often?
-How do you feeling about eating these foods?
-How long have you been eating them?
-Why do you eat them?
What kind of Ghanaian sauces or other staples do you eat? (Or Liberian dishes, if a Ghanaian participant)
-Why do you eat these dishes?
Do you drink juice, soft drinks or herbal drinks (Ataaye, bissa)?
-How often?
-Do you drink alcoholic beverages?
-How often?
Do you chew kola/bitter kola nuts?
-How often?

FOOD PREFERENCES

Do you and other HH members have favorite foods, what are they?
-How often can you cook them?
Can you describe a rich meal to me?
Will/Did you eat something special for Christmas? What?
-How /did you prepare it?
-Do you share it with your neighbors?
-What makes it special?

EATING OUTSIDE THE HOUSE
Do you buy snacks on the street like groundnuts, bananas, roasted corn, donuts, roasted meat etc?
-How often? What?
-What about others in HH?
Do you go to cookshops or chopbar to eat?
-What do you eat there?
-What makes you to go to a cookshop?
-How often do you go?
Are there other places outside of your house that you eat? Please describe.

SECTION TWO: Food Source
Where do you get your food (buy from the market, farming or rations)?

MARKET
Did you go to the market this morning? If no, skip to next question.
-Tell me about your trip to the market.
-What did you do? Who did you talk to? What did you buy?
-Quantity? For how many people? E.g.: If you buy greens – how many bunches?
-Was this trip like most other trips to the market? Why or why not?
Who goes to the market?
-How often?
-Do you visit the same vendors?
-How much do you usually spend at the market each day/visit?
Do you know where the food comes from? Trace as far to origin as possible.

WATER
Where do you get your water?
-How much per day do you spend on water?

FARMING
Do you grow vegetables or roots?
-Do you have enough to sell?
-Where do you sell?
-How much do you make from it (weekly basis)?

Do you pick wild vegetables, like chicken greens?
-How often?
-How do you feel when you do this?
Do you have trees where you can pick fruit?
-Where are they? In your yard? Out in village?
-How often do you get fruit?
-Do you sell it? How much do you make from it?
Do you raise animals?
-How often do you slaughter and eat them?
-How long will the meat last?
- Do you sell them?
-How much do you make from it?
Do you fish or catch spring chicken?
-Where?
-How often?
-Can you sell it?
-How much do you make from it?

BARTER TRADE
Do you do barter trade?(fish for rice or maize for fish)
-How often?
-For what reason?

FOOD RATIONS
Do you or your children receive food rations?
-What do you receive?
-What do you do with it?
-Did you ever receive food rations in the past?
-What did you receive?
-For how long?

OTHER FOOD SOURCES
Do you ever shop for food in Kasoa? Accra?
-How does shopping in Kasoa or Accra compare to shopping at Buduburam?
Do you get food from any other place that you have not mentioned? Please describe.

SECTION THREE: Food Concerns and Meanings
Are certain foods healthier for you?
-What are they and what do they do for the body?
Are there some foods that are bad for your health?
-Why?
Please describe to me a nutritious/balanced diet.
-Where did you learn this?

-Do you think about nutritious meal when you are shopping for food?
-Why or why not?
-How often does your family eat a nutritious meal?
Do you have any cultural beliefs on certain foods?
Do you feel that the food you buy here is good to eat? If not, why?
Are you comfortable with the quality of the water for cooking?
-Drinking?
-Taking bath?
Do you feel some foods are affordable and some are not? Be specific, eg. Tomatoes affordable, but not onions.
-Are these foods always (un)affordable?
-Do you experience seasonal differences in affordability?
Are you pleased with the amount and variety of food available here?
-What is missing?
Are there certain foods that you would call "civilized"?
-What makes them civilized?
-What does it mean if you eat them?
-Do they taste good?
-How often do you eat them?

SECTION FOUR: Coping Strategies

IMMEDIATE STRATEGIES

Are your meals enough to satisfy you?
-If there is not enough food to satisfy everyone, what will you do?
-Will someone eat less?
-If yes, who?
When you are short of food or money for food, what do you do? Please describe.
-Eat fewer meals?
-Eat smaller meals?
-Visit a friend?
-Beg?
-Pick wild greens?
-Sell something?
-Borrow on credit?
-Call relative overseas for help?
-Which will you do first?
-What do you eat?
-How often do you eat it?

ASSISTANCE

Are there certain people here at the camp who help you if you do not have enough food or money for food?
-What is their relation to you?
-Where do they live?

-How do they help you?
-How often do they help you?
-Do you help them in any way?

Are there people you feel can help you but you are shy to ask from them?
-Who are they?
-Why can't you ask them?

Do you help your family or neighbors in any way?
-What do you do for them?
-What is their relation to you?
-Where are they?
-How often do you help?

LONGER-TERM STRATEGIES

What do you do to make sure that your HH will have food to eat in the future?

How certain are you that you will be able to get enough food for your HH tomorrow?
-For the rest of the week? Next week? Month?
-How does this make you to feel?

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Do you have family and/or close friends living in Liberia, elsewhere in Ghana, West Africa or overseas?
-What is their relationship to you?
-Where are there?
-Do you communicate with them?
-How often?
-Have they ever lived at Buduburam?
-For how long?
-Do they help you out? (send money, barrels, goods)
-How?
-How often?
-Do you help them out?
-How?
-How often?

REMITTANCES

-Do you have to ask for help (i.e. give a reason/expense) or do they do it regularly or automatically?
-How do you feel when you are asking family/friend overseas for help?
-For how many months/years have they been helping you?
-How much do they send you?
-How long can the money go before it is finished?
-Are you happy with the extent to which they help you?
-Why or why not?

-Have other family/friends sent you money in the past, but no longer do?
-Why did they stop?
-How did it impact your HH?

SECTION FIVE: Economy

GETTING BY

Do you do any small things to get by? Sell water? Petty market? Fry donuts?
-How long have you been doing this?
-Did you do something else before?
-How much money per day does this provide?
-How many days per week do you work?
- Do you feel these things provide you with enough money to feed your family?

Do you have a job?
-What do you do?
-How long?
-Can your salary sustain you? Your HH?

Does anyone else in your HH have a job?
-What do they do?
-Do they share their earnings with the HH?

BUDGETING

Do you use a HH budget?
-Can you explain it to me?
-How long will it last? Daily, weekly, monthly basis?
-How do you track it?
-Does it work?

ASSETS

Do you rent or own the house you are living in?
-How many rooms are in the house?
-Are you collecting rent on any other house, shop or booth? Amount?

Do you own any furniture, technological equipment, bike, refrigerator, tv, dvd deck, fan? Describe.

How many cell phones are used in the HH?
-How often do you add credits to yours?

If you attend church, are you able to pay offering and/or tithe regularly?

How often are you able to fix your hair?

Are you able to save money?

Did/do you own a house and/or land in Liberia?

PERCEPTIONS OF ECONOMY

Have the current food prices affected your HH in any way? How?

Have your means to survive changed over time at Buduburam?
-How?

SECTION SIX: Migration Experience

TRAVEL HISTORY

Have you traveled to, lived or worked in any other countries besides Ghana and Liberia?
-For what purpose?
-How long?
How did you come to live at Buduburam?
-Who did you come with?

CHANGE

Are there any foods that you eat here in Ghana but did not eat in Liberia?
-How did you come to eat these foods?
How has living at Buduburam changed your life?
Has Buduburam made life more equal for everyone here?
-How?
-Why or why not?
If go back to Liberia, do you have family or friends to live with?
-Will they be able to take you in?
-Would family overseas help you to get by in Liberia?
-Do you think they would give you regular help or just something to get started with?

GHANAIAN AND LIBERIAN INTERACTIONS

Please describe your daily interactions with Ghanaians/Liberians?
-Do you do business together?
-What kind of business?
-Share food?
-Attend church together?
-Intermarry?

SECTION SEVEN: Demographics

Sex
Age (number years, must be over 18)
Marital status
Nationality
Religion
Education
Languages spoken
Official Refugee Status
Zone

HH size (ages of HH members, relation to participant, HH members attending school – current/past)
Number of active HH members (those who can contribute money or labor)
Length of stay at Buduburam – including details for other people in the HH
Any health issues in your HH?

APPENDIX B

HOUSEHOLD FOOD ECONOMY SURVERY

SURVEY # **SURVEY DATE:** **ASSISTANT:** **DEBRIEF:**

INFORMED CONSENT: (1) Read INFORMED CONSENT GUIDE (2) ASK: *Do you agree to be interviewed?* (3) If yes, tick this box.

PART ONE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION - HOUSEHOLD CHART

	D1 NATIONALITY:					D2 HH SIZE:					
	RELATION	SEX	AGE	ARRIVAL YEAR	HIGHEST EDUCATION	SCHOOL	LANGUAGE / DIALECT	WORK/ SELLING	UN CARD	FOOD	LIVE HOME
1	Self	M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
2		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
3		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
4		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
5		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
6		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
7		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
8		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
9		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
10		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
11		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
12		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
13		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
14		M / F				Y / N			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION - Household Economy and Food

D3 HOUSE (*Circle one):* OWN / RENT / FREE RENT	D4 CURRENT Y / N
D5 OWN (*Circle all that apply):* CELLPHONE / FAN / ICEBOX / GAS STOVE / HEATER / IRON / TV / DVD / COMPUTER / CYCLE / MOTORBIKE / CAR / OTHER:_____	
D6 DO YOU SAVE MONEY? Y / N	D7 DO YOU OWE ANYONE MONEY? Y / N
D8 HAS YOUR HH SIZE CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR? Y / N (*If NO, skip to D10)*	
D9 WHAT CAUSED THE CHANGE IN HH SIZE? (*Circle all that apply)* (A) RETURNED TO LIBERIA (B) TRAVELED IN WEST AFRICA (C)TRAVELED OVERSEAS (D) MOVED TO A DIFFERENT HOUSE ON CAMP (E) OTHER:_____	
D10 (*If Ghanaian HH, skip & go to D11)* DO YOU HAVE HOUSE AND/OR LAND IN LIBERIA? Y / N	
D11 DO YOU (PEOPLE) COOK IN YOUR HOUSE EVERY DAY? Y / N (*If YES, go to D13)*	
D12 WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FOOD ON THE DAYS YOU DON'T COOK? (*circle all that apply)* (A) 2-DAY SOUP (B) COOKSHOP (C) EAT WITH FRIEND OR FAMILY (D) SOMEONE DIVIDES FOOD FOR ME REGULARLY (E) OTHER: _____	
D13 IN THE PAST WEEK, THAT IS FROM LAST ___ TILL NOW, WHAT STAPLE DID YOU EAT? (DAY 1) _____ (DAY 2) _____ (DAY 3) _____ (DAY 4) _____ (DAY 5) _____ (DAY 6) _____ (DAY 7) _____	
D14 FOR ANY HH PERSON WORKING OR SELLING, HOW MUCH DO YOU MAKE? HHM# __ makes _____ day/week/month (*circle)* HHM# __ makes _____ day/week/month HHM# __ makes _____ day/week/month HHM# __ makes _____ day/week/month	
D15 WHO CONTRIBUTES TO THE FOOD (MARKET) MONEY? HH MEMBER #: _____	
D16 WHEN DID YOU (OR HH) LAST GO TO THE MARKET? _____ days ago	
D17 HOW MUCH DID YOU SPEND WHEN YOU WENT? _____ GH cedis for_____days	
D18 WAS IT SAME / MORE / LESS AMOUNT COMPARED TO WHAT YOU ALWAYS SPEND?	

D19 IS ANY CHILD IN YOUR HH ON THE FEEDING PROGRAM? Y / N
D20 DOES ANYONE IN THE HH SUFFER FROM DIABETES OR HIGH PRESSURE? Y / N If YES, HHMember #(s): _____

PART TWO: FOOD INSECURITY MEASURE

This is another section I'm coming to. I will be asking you some questions about your food situation.
Each question will ask you about something you did in the past.
You'll answer yes or no or maybe choose an option that I read.

This first question is about the past year (since the women sat on the field).

F1 In the past year, that is last ____ till now (since the women sat on the field), you ever keep 1/2 or whole bag of rice (bucket of maize)? Y / N (*If NO, go to question F1.5)*

F1.1 Do you keep half or whole bag of rice? Half / Whole (*circle)*

F1.2 The last time you bought 1/2 (whole or bucket of maize) bag, how many weeks it last? __ weeks

F1.3 When the 1/2 (whole) bag (bucket) last finished, how long did it take to get another? Was it...?
(A) that same week (B) a few weeks time (C) more than a month (D) didn't buy another yet

F1.4 You keeping 1/2 (whole) bag (bucket) now? Y / N (*If YES, go to F2)*

F1.5 When you buy rice by cup, how much you spend per day? _____ GH cedis

F1.6 How many people eat from that rice? _____ people

The next three questions ask you about the past week, that is last _____ till now.

F2 In the past week (that is last _____ till now), was there a day that you (people) ate empty soup because you never had the hand? Y / N (*If NO, go to F3)*

F2.1 How many days did you eat empty soup in the past week? _____ days

F3 In the past week (that is last _____ till now), was there a day that you (people) ate dry rice without fish, egg or sausage because you never had the hand? Y / N (*If NO, go to F4)*

F3.1 How many days did you eat dry rice without fish in the past week? _____ days

For Ghanaian HH, replace "rice" with primary staple from section1.

F4 In the past week (that is last _____ till now), did you (people) sit from morning to the next day without eating rice (staple) because you never had the hand? Y / N (*If NO, go to F5)*

F4.1	Do you remember how many days you did that? _____ days (*refer to section 1 to check)*

The next questions ask about the past few months, that is since the New Year.

F5	Since the New Year, did you (people) ever reduce the cups of rice you cook? Y / N
	(*If NO, go to F6)*
F5.1	Do you remember how many times you reduce the cups of rice since the New Year? Was it...?
	(A) one one time (B) few times in a month (C) every week (D) every day
F6	Since the New Year, did you or any big person in the house wait until afternoon before finding anything at all to eat because you never had the hand? Y / N (*If NO, go to F7*)
F6.1	Do you remember how many times that happened since the New Year? Was it...?
	(A) one one time (B) few times in a week (C) every day
F7	Since the New Year, did you (people) beg for food or money to buy food? Y / N (*If NO, go to F8*)
F7.1	Do you remember how many times you did that since the New Year? Was it...?
	(A) once (B) one one time (C) almost every day
F7.2	Who did you beg from? (A) family (B) friend (C) neighbor (D) Other:_____
F8	Since the New Year, did you (people) ever sell any of your things, like old clothes, slippers, phone or anything of yours to get money to buy food? Y / N (*If NO, go to F9*)
F8.1	Do you remember how many times you did that since the New Year? Was it...?
	(A) once (B) one one time (C) few times in a month
F8.2	What did you sell? (A) clothes (B) footwear (C) phone (D) Other:_____
F9	Since the New Year, did any big person in your house sit from morning until the next day without finding anything at all to eat because you never had the hand? Y / N
F9.1	Do you remember how many times that happened since the New Year? Was it...?
	(A) once (B) one one time (C) few times in a month

IF NO CHILDREN IN THE HOUSEHOLD, STOP HERE.

IF THERE ARE CHILDREN (15 YEARS OR SMALLER) GO TO F10

Now I'm going to ask you some of the same questions for the child(ren), 15 years and smaller.

F10 Since the New Year, you ever reduce the cookspoons when you divide food for the child(ren)?

Y / N (*If NO go to F11*)

F10.1 Do you remember how many times you reduced the cookspoons for the child(ren) since the New Year? Was it... ? (A) one one time (B) few times in a month (C) every week (D) every day

F11 Since the New Year, did any child in the house wait until afternoon before finding anything at all to eat because you never had the hand? Y / N (*If NO, go to F12*)

F11.1 Do you remember how many times it happened? Was it... ?

(A) one one time (B) few times in a month (C) almost every day (D) every day

F12 Since the New Year, did any small person in your house sit from morning until the next day without finding anything at all to eat because you never had the hand? Y / N

F12.1 Do you remember how many times that happened since the New Year? Was it... ?

(A) once (B) one one time (C) few times in a month

END OF PART THREE.

PART FOUR: SOCIAL NETMAPPING - survey # to match netmap #

PART FIVE: FIELD NOTES

Record brief notes about the interview. This might include: what the house looked like, who was around, what was going on. How did the informant react to the interview? Attentive? Distracted? Annoyed? Do have any concerns about the data you gathered? Anything they did not understand?

FIELD NOTES:

APPENDIX C

LIBERIAN REFUGEE WOMEN WITH REFUGEE CONCERNS LETTER TO UNHCR

Liberian Refugee Women with Refugee Concerns
Buduburam Refugee Camp
Box 46 State House, Gomoa District
Accra – Ghana
Email: vwomen.refugee@yahoo.com

February 8, 2008

Dear Sir/Madam:

We the Liberian refugee women in Buduburam Refugee camp would like you to work with us in bringing a solution to end our exile. We are Liberian Refugee Women from various ethic backgrounds resident of the Buduburam Refugee camp in Ghana.b In the face of our stay on the shores of Ghana for the past seventeen years as refugee women, we had both challenges and successes. Thanks to our creator. The greatest success has been the time that Ghana and its people allowed us to stay and share the peace they enjoy. We express our gratitude to the people of Ghana.

We also express our gratitude to the United Nations and its agencies and governmental and non-governmental donors that have help us in our time of need. Having stayed in the Buduburam for the past five to seventeen years, we now at the point of midnight in this refugee crisis in our lifespan, we ask that you work with us to end one of the longest and most frustrating refugee situations of our time

We would like to acquaint you with the challenged we face, so that together we may find solutions and strengthen the implementation of those solutions that have already been pen down. We fear that past challenges that were never properly addressed will continue to undermine e fforts to end our exile. We ask for your aid to create and enforce policies that can avoid these previous fallings:

- Refoulement
- Resettlement injustices
- Overburdening of Ghana
- Employment discrimination
- Educational discrimination
- Violence against refugees

In this document, you will find specific recommendations for:

1. Reestablishing effective organized repatriation programs
2. Rectifying prior injustices in resettlement programs
3. Creating targeted resettlement programs
4. Increasing food and health security for vulnerable refugees

Recommendations for durable solutions

1. Reestablishing effective organized repatriation programs

UNHCR/Ghana has stated that organized voluntary resettlement programs have ended and that future programs will focus only on local integration. But we strongly believe that the UNHCR- sponsored repatriation fell far short of the expected numbers of returnees for several reasons that can be rectified in a new program. We think that the decision to end organized repatriation was made prematurely, without the acknowledgement of Liberian refugees; concerns without respect for the legitimate reservations head by refugees based on the refoulement that followed the first UNCHR sponsored repatriation.

In 1998, the decision also failed to take into consideration the housing concerns of refugees. According to a survey done by our group, up to eighty percent of refugees that live on the Buduburam refugee camp fled Liberia at a time when they had not acquired personal land nor built a house of their own. They were having either renting or living with some relative. For such people, having stayed in Ghana for five, ten, seventeen years with no employment, no saving no house to live back home going back home is not an easy decision to make. Where will a refugee with family of three to ten members who have stayed out of Liberia for five to seventeen years, sleep or live when he gets home? Is it in a displace camp or an abandoned building?

We ask that organized repartition be reinstituted and extended over a two year period (January 2008_ January 2010) to permit refugee to make judgments about their security in Liberia as the situation continues to become more stable. It is difficult for some people to see Liberia as safe while peacekeepers remain needed in Liberia and former perpetrators remain in position of authority. But an increasing number of people would likely be ready to return now, if our recommendation put forth in this document are accepted, and many more will likely be ready in the next two years.

We ask that the reinstituted organized repartition program be run in collaboration with post conflict reconstruction and development projects to provide financial support to returning refugees. Liberia for us is home and we need no indicator to point us to this fact. Nevertheless taking into consideration the number of year refugees have spent in this country - seventeen, ten , five - it is very dishearten to see ourselves going back home with 1 bucket,1pot,1blanket,1tarpaulin,half a sack of wheat and around US 5 for transportation. Some returnees are single mothers, widows, disabled - how can they make a living from this? Where do they get food, soap, and clothing for themselves and their children? Many of those who returned sent feedback that they can not fine a place to sleep, and sometimes end up in displace camps. The cost of living in Liberia is height's rent a single room in Monrovia is LD$1,200 (US$20) per month.

We ask that policymaker acknowledge the twofold loss of home assets that refugee in Buduburam face; the initial lost of home, possession and employment in war and the subsequent lost of assets acquired in seventeen year of refugee in Ghana. Because of space limitations in transportation services, returnees can only carry with them a very small amount of luggage (20 kilos). Not that over years of our stay in Ghana refugees struggled to build their own home due to the limited housing facilities. The structures provided by the NUHCR could not meet the needs of the refugee population of forty –two thousand plus at the time these structured will remain in Ghana we leave.

We are arguing that return constitutes a special hardship for refugee in Buduburam giving their length of stay here and their inability to carry or receive fair compensation for resources left in Buduburam. Also the training and experience that some Liberia refugee have been able to acquire despite the difficult condition here give them the potential for making exceptional contributions to the economic development and stability of post –war Liberia.

In light of the special hardship and potential of Liberian refugee in Ghana, we recommend that donors create programs targeted to returnees from Buduburam run with the collaboration of UNHCR, donors, development agencies, post-conflict reconstruction agencies and refugee representatives. In deciding how these programs should be implemented, policymakers note that research has shown that aid delivered as monetary payments to individual can be significantly more efficient that aid distributed in goods and services (see Gaim Kibreab, 1999, "The consequences of Non-participatory planning: Lessons from Livestock Provision Project to Returnees in Eritrea." Journal of Refugee studies 12:135-160). Monetary payments allow people to adapt to changing circumstances and new information gained upon return.

We recommend that each Refugee (per UNHCR Registration Number) receive monetary payments totaling one thousand united state dollars (US$1,000) as grants to rebuild their homes and to start their lives when they get back home. We also want to recommend that Liberian refugees be given compensation for homes built through their own efforts.

Item	Unit Price	Quantity	Total Price
Plot of land (1/4 acre)	**$800**	**1**	**$800**
Bundle of zinc (20 sheets)	**$150**	**3**	**$450**
Bag of cement	**$10**	**20**	**$200**
Blocks	**$0.35**	**1500**	**$525**
Miscellaneous (nails, timbers)			**$300**

Total	**$2,275**

We are recommending this amount taking in to consideration the cost of living and building a two- room house for a family of three. With the US$3,000 that a family of three would receive if the UNHCR accepts our proposal, this would leave approximately US$725 to start a livelihood.

We ask that the UNHCR also add the following to the repatriation package:

- A set of pots
- Two large tubs
- Five blankets
- Five mats
- Three lamps
- A set of eating utensils
- Feeding for six months
- Six sanitary pads for female (12- 45 yrs for 6 months), regular reintegration packages upon arrival

That an organized repatriation programs be created that recognize the distinct needs of rural and urban refugees. We also recommend that stakeholders create scholarship programs for junior and senior high school and tertiary level. Primary school is now free, but junior and senior high fees run as high as US$100 per year. The university charges US$5 per credit (normal credit load: up to 18 credits per term).

2. Rectifying prior injustices in resettlement programs

UNHCR has announced that resettlement programs have ended. But we believe that some things remain unfinished. We full understand that the family reunion (P-3) was under the United States government and has been closed down. But we believe that the UNHCR resettlement (P-1) needs to be reviewed.

We make two recommendations for resettlement:

- Policymakers make a proper accounting of the resettlement programs that served Liberian refugees in Ghana from 1991 up to 2007.

- Resettlement programs continue to screen Liberian refugees with non- fraudulent cases until the existing caseload has been fully processed.

Resettlement fraud

In February 2007, an UNHCR-sponsored verification process revealed cases of people, who had been listed as “resettled,” but were still on the refugee camp. Given that UNHCR has improved methods for evaluating resettlement cases that minimize the potential for malfeasance and address fraud through the taking of fingerprints, it is time for those excluded from resettlement through the fraud and corruption of others to have their cases for resettlement reevaluated.

Grievance procedures

We ask that UNHCR Geneva, UNHCR Ghana, and Foreign Missions refugee coordinators institute a review panel in Buduburam in February 2008 to permit refugees with legitimate grievances about resettlement processing to seek redress. The UNHCR had cases of verified people who were being interview. These cases were closed unceremoniously as in the cases Elizabeth Glay UNHCR registration no.2369301, Felecia Z. Dorbor UNHCR registration no. 1748101 and many more.

They were not given a letter of denial nor acceptance. There were cases of Liberian refugee women who were verified under the women-at-risk category in 1999 and up to date those category of women have not been called for interview, as in the cases of Florence T. Jackson UNHCR registration no. 2220701, Hawa Christiana Morris UNHCR registration no. 4521601. These names are just a few examples of affected persons.

3. Creating targeted resettlement programs for refugees

We ask that UNHCR Geneva/UNHCR Ghana continue to evaluate individuals for resettlement. Many Liberian refugees who remain in the Buduburam refugee camp cannot return to Liberia due to well-founded fear, but face harsh circumstances in Ghana. We recommend that one such group be women who have legitimate fear of perpetrators currently in high-ranking position of government. How can refugee women go back when the very perpetrators are holding high positions in government? Will a man who raped a woman be set over her as the master of the house?

We ask resettlement be established in consultation with refugee representatives in order to stop the menace of other nationals been resettled as Liberians whilst the rightful persons (Liberians) remain in Buduburam.

Public dissemination of information on resettlement/integration

We would greatly appreciate if the UNHCR Ghana would make the dissemination of information more effective by holding more public meetings before coming up with activities. This will avoid misinformation and help refugees to make proper judgments and decisions. Posting information on the bulletin boards and making consultations with small groups of refugees is not enough.

4. Increasing food security and health for vulnerable refugees

We ask that stakeholders work with the World Food Programme and the national Catholic Secretarial to strengthen the food and health programs offered in Buduburam while durable solutions are being considered.

Substitute rice for the maize currently distributed. Maize is the stable food of Ghanaians not Liberians. We do not have enough experience in the preparation of maize dishes to make effective use of the food, nor money to process the maize, and so most people resell their rations to Ghanaians at whatever rate they willing to pay to buy a small quantity of rice.

We recommend that UNHCR and its implementing partners revisit the payment plans at the St. Gregory Catholic clinic and the cost of drugs be reduced. The clinic has been turned in to a commercial facility charging exorbitant fees for services as evidence by registration, drugs and referrals receipts payments. We also ask that refugees who have chronic medical problems be assisted.

Opposition to local integration

As recent public meetings have shown, most Liberians strongly oppose local integration. We fear that once UNHCR leaves, we will lose our strongest advocate and our position in Ghana will become much worse. Our fear is based on past experiences:

Violence against Liberian in Ghana

In 2002, a Ghanaian military official General Darker seized the camp. He came with a helicopter and over two dozen military men. The helicopter flew over the camp for around twenty minutes, landed, and military men were deployed in the various zones of the camp ordering everybody out of their houses. All male 15 years and above were assembled on the football field along the ECOWAS highway. General Darkar stood at the entrance of the helicopter and began his speech with proverb. He said, “Once upon a time there was a hunter who decided to go and hunt.

While on his hunting expedition, he saw a bird flying above him chirping. There was also a turtle on the ground not too far from where the hunter stood. The hunter shot the bird and the bird fell dead near the turtle. The hunter took both the dead bird and the living turtle home where he and his family had a great fast!” this we refugees saw as a hint to us that if one refugee were to cause a problem, all us would be apprehended and will suffer the consequences for whatever problem was caused. This “One man do and everyone punished” principle, we see as a source of insecurity to us.

There have been cases of missing children only to be found with missing body parts. The stabling of refugees whilst sleeping at night –in this case, a suspect was caught with the weapon and run over to the police, only to be released, an event which led to riot in March 2001. Liberians tenants are vulnerable to the threats and brutal attacks from Ghanaian landlords. The sexual abuse and defilement of female refugees by school officials, taxi drivers and local residents has also been a serious problem in Buduburam. Attached are copies of reports of the murder and attacked victims.

Economic and Education Problems

Ghanaians face high rates of unemployment. Tens of thousands of underpowered refugees put additional heavy burdens on the labor market. We suffer from discrimination from potential Ghanaian employers, who prefer to hire their own people.

In the 1980s, Ghana deported Liberians with the argument that they were “Unproductive.” We fear that if a large underpowered population from Buduburam is integrated, the same will happen again after the UNHCR has pulled out. UNHCR/Ghana tried to ensure from the outset that assistance programs integrated strategies for self-reliance, thus avoiding overloading host government with unproductive refugees. One key strategy was to expand education.

Unfortunately, they didn't carry out the plan. A proportionate amount of the population was not empowered from primary to tertiary levels. Many Liberians refugees could not afford to get education because schools in Buduburam are expensive and offer low quality education resulting in high failure rates in the West African Examinations. Elsewhere in Ghana, schools are expensive and refugees are charged foreign fees. The only available tertiary scholarship had an age limitation that hindered many. With this large number of underpowered refugees, we believe that local integration will leave us totally vulnerable!

Conclusion

Liberian refugee women at the Buduburam Refugee camp are asking for an immediate redress to our plight. We ask that UNHCR and other stakeholders sand delegation to the Buduburam Refugee camp to work with us to develop the recommendations outlined in this document and bring a lasting solution to end our exile.

The women of Buduburam Refugee camp are hereby emphatically saying: We, Liberian refugees, do not want to be locally integrated. We either be resettle to a third country of asylum or be repatriated in a problem that meets the following guidelines:

- Organized repatriation be reinstituted and extended over a two year period January 2008-2010.
- Organized repatriation program be run in collaboration with post-conflict reconstruction and development projects to provide financial support to returning refugees.
- Each refugee (per UNHCR Registration Number) receive monetary payment totaling one thousand united stated dollars (US $1,000) as grants to rebuild their homes and start their lives when they get back home.
- Liberian refugees are given compensation for homes built through their own efforts.
- Organized repatriation programs be created that recognize the distinct needs of rural and urban refugees
- UNHCR add the following to the repatriation package: A set of pots, two large tubs five blankets, five mats, three lamps, a set of eating utensils,
- Feeding for six months, six sanitary pads for female 12 to 45 years (for six months), our regular reintegration packages upon arrival.
- Stakeholders create scholarship programs for junior and senior high school and tertiary lever.

We are also recommending the following:

- Policymakers make a proper accounting of the resettlement programs that served Liberian refugees in Ghana from 1991 up t 2007
- Resettlement programs continue to screen Liberian refugees with non-fraudulent case until the existing caseload has been fully processed
- UNHCR Geneva, UNHCR Ghana, and foreign Missions refugee coordinators
- Institute a review peal in Buduburam in February 2008 to permit refugees with legitimate grievances about resettlement processing to seek redress.

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