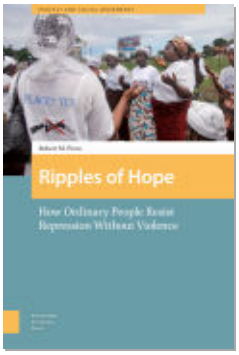
6. Peaceful Resistance during a Civil War



6 Peaceful Resistance during a Civil War

Following the murder of Liberian President Samuel Doe in 1990 and up to 2003 when President Charles Taylor (1997-2003) resigned, two nonviolent social movements emerged with roots of resistance from the 1980s, 1970s, and earlier. One movement sought to expose abuses by Taylor and eventually to force him out of power. The other, a peace movement led by women, aimed at bringing an end to the civil war began in 1994. In the final year of the conflict, 2003, women staged mass demonstrations to protest for peace.

Activists in these movements included, among many others: a reader of Gandhi, Thoreau, and Martin Luther King; a priest who demanded peace and justice; a journalist whose articles led to his detention in a flooded, underground cell; a lawyer tortured for demanding the rule of law; and mothers who flew to peace talks or stood in long vigils in rain and sun to press for an end to a brutal civil war. Some activists had survived the 1980s and were active again; many more were new to resistance.

After a decade of repression under Samuel Doe (1980-90), the civil war starting in December 1989 took more than two hundred thousand Liberian lives by 1997; it also pushed some six hundred thousand into other countries as refugees, and left some eight hundred thousand internally displaced out of a pre-war population of only 2.5 million. Many fled to Monrovia (Moran 2006, 120). The election of rebel leader Charles Taylor in 1997 finally brought temporary peace. But by 1999, civil war erupted again as another rebel group, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), based in Guinea, threatened to seize power.

Civil society was still fairly weak during Doe's years, and the resistance operated in abeyance, at low levels, held down by repression. The resistance movements of the 1990s had an important advantage: Amos Sawyer. Chosen as interim president from 1990-94, Sawyer, an academic with political ambition, was supportive of civil society. During his tenure as head of state, advocacy groups had a chance to establish themselves.[1] This period laid a foundation for the resistance that would later openly challenge President Taylor. Taylor was elected president in 1997 after a series of interim governments. Despite Taylor's repression, more selective than wholesale, a nonviolent social movement emerged to seek reform but later to seek his

1 Ruth Perry, appointed head of state in mid-1996, serving until Taylor took power, similarly provided an opportunity for civil society groups to grow. A coalition government including representatives of the main fighting forces was in power from 1994 to 1996.

removal. Taylor resigned in 2003 as rival rebels were approaching the city and as he faced an international indictment for crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone, which he had used as a resource base for his war in Liberia.[2] After an interim presidency led by Gyude Bryant, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected the first female president and took office in January 2006.

This chapter examines how these two movements managed to survive during a civil war and under a repressive ruler. It also examines something the social movement literature often fails to highlight: how movements start. The movements were quite different. One sought peace, using centralized organizations and a public leadership to pressure the regime nonviolently, primarily through lobbying, marches, and vigils. The other movement sought to expose Taylor's human rights abuses and to remove him from power. "We were trying to make sure he stepped down. So we said [to the international community]: Don't support the man."[3] Taylor could agree with the women about the need for peace; after all, peace would enable him to stay in power; he could blame other rebel leaders for the continuing war. Taylor could not agree with activists seeking to remove him from power. In his eyes, these activists were enemies and he responded with selective threats, detention, and torture. During Taylor's regime, the resistance planning against him generally took place in private. "Most of the meetings were secret, informal, or on the phone. We'd meet at social gatherings."[4] But as the abuses and war continued, the resistance, building on the experience of the early 1990s when the civilian interim governments were not repressive, activists began emerging more openly toward the later Taylor period.

There was an increasing use of alliances and formal organizations to coordinate public events. Though seemingly fragmented, the multiple sources of this resistance were linked through professional and/or social ties and could coordinate a mass demonstration on occasion. This nonviolent resistance ranged from legal challenges by individual lawyers, independent journalistic reporting, and statements by outspoken clergy. The resistance involved individual activists – a phenomenon practically ignored in the social movement literature, as well as organizational activism. Human rights lawyers, for example, often not supported by their national bar association

2 Dunn (2013) notes that Taylor was also under "intense pressure" to resign from US President George Bush.

3 Brown interview.

4 Hassan Bility, in a telephone interview with the author, June 22, 2008, in the United States.

as an organization, acted individually, though often collaborating with a few other attorneys to represent politically targeted detainees.

It is important to note that the activism that took place did so in an international spotlight. Various human rights groups and some diplomats were in regular contact with the activists in Liberia. When a prominent activist was detained, these organizations abroad and some embassies would quickly issue protests and demand their release. Liberians in the diaspora also played a role in the pressure on Taylor, publicizing abuses abroad, staying in touch with family and friends and activists in Liberia, encouraging them, and sometimes helping support them. It is beyond the scope of this study to focus on the details of what these international organizations and the diaspora did with regard to advancing Liberian human rights, democracy, and peace, as important as this was. Further, this study does not claim that domestic resistance alone led to the resignation of Taylor in 2003. The international indictment and approaching rebel force combined to force him out. This study does contend that without the domestic nonviolent resistance and the solidarity of activists in Monrovia, especially during the Taylor regime, stripping him of much of his legitimacy and his pretense at the rule of law, Taylor's demise likely would not have come when it did.

One Country, Two Presidents

A small hole in the thick window glass behind the desk of Liberia's interim president, Amos Sawyer, caught my attention during my interview with him as a journalist. I had started the interview in the cavernous office of the president sitting on the front row of chairs set up at some distance from Sawyer's desk. Because I was doing a radio interview, I pulled my chair around to his side of the desk so I could use my handheld microphone. It was then that I noticed the hole. Sawyer explained it was from a bullet fired from across the street by rebel forces led by Charles Taylor in 1990. Taylor had come that close to seizing power from President Samuel Doe before a West African military force intervened.

Sawyer's tenure as interim President of Liberia (1990-94) provided a rare opening for civil society. He demonstrated a "commitment to press freedom" which led to a proliferation of newspapers, as well as human rights and other NGOs. But some journalists who challenged the actions of the occupying West African troops ran into trouble. "There were instances where reporters were detained and news organs threatened for publishing articles that were considered to be anti-ECOMOG." When Taylor arrived in power as part of

a subsequent interim coalition government comprised of rebel leaders, he and other leaders tried to curb dissent. It was too late: the genie was out of the bottle. People were not ready to settle back and be compliant. "People in Monrovia were used to this kind of freedom of expression, freedom of movement," said Etweda Cooper, who became a key figure in the initial women's peace campaign in the early 1990s.[5]

After Taylor had nearly seized power in 1990, he withdrew his forces from Monrovia, the capital, but continued the civil war. His rebels took control of most of the Liberian countryside and Taylor claimed he was the legitimate president. Liberia was a divided country with Taylor in charge of everything but Monrovia. Monrovia became an isolated zone of relative peace crowded with internal "refugees" fleeing fighting in the civil war. It was in Monrovia that almost all of the nonviolent resistance to Taylor took place during his tenure as president. There would be times, however, when the war swept into the city, causing massive destruction and deaths. The war resumed in 1999 when LURD[6] began challenging Taylor. The fighting continued until Taylor resigned in 2003. At that time he was also under indictment from a Special Court set up by the United Nations and Sierra Leone for his role in aiding rebels in Sierra Leone in exchange for diamonds to pay for his own war.

Having interviewed one of the two men identifying himself as president of Liberia, Amos Sawyer, I wanted to meet the other man, Charles Taylor, who claimed to be "President of Greater Liberia," essentially everything outside of Monrovia. I contacted his spokesman, Thomas Woewiyu, who was also his minister of defense and in Monrovia at the time. We arranged to meet at a restaurant and he agreed to drive me to Gbarnga, several hours north of the capital. We took a taxi to the edge of the city and passed easily through a military checkpoint manned by West African troops. Once across we were in Greater Liberia which was under control of Taylor's rebels. Woewiyu was met by a driver of an SUV and we headed north.

In a civil war, roadblocks can be used by the controlling ethnic group to punish members of a targeted ethnic group on the other side of a conflict, as they were in Rwanda by Hutus killing minority Tutsi in 1994. We had to pass through a number of roadblocks manned by young men and boys who "wielded the power of life and death." They were often "dressed in bizarre

5 Etweda Cooper interview.

6 A split in LURD led to the formation of a separate rebel group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) which also attacked Taylor's forces.

costumes and wearing traditional war regalia" and sometimes used to stop and kill not only those from rival ethnic groups but civilians of the same ethnic group as those manning the roadblock who they suspected of supporting the enemy, or others in "settling of scores" (Ellis 1999, 116-7). In our case, Woewiyu first identified himself to the armed groups of young boys and men as the minister of defense for Taylor. When this had little effect, he distributed cigarettes to the fighters which, fortunately, was enough to get us through the barriers.

In a modest office building in Gbargna, Taylor, dressed in a full length traditional West African gown, stepped from behind a small table to greet me and thank me for "risking [my] life" to come to the appointment. After answering my questions, including allegations (which he denied) of training child soldiers, something my editors cautioned me not to ask him about, he sat back, smiled, and said: "George Washington had his chance." Clearly he thought it was his chance to be recognized as president of Liberia. Eventually, he was. He was elected despite his deserved reputation as a ruthless rebel commander whose forces no doubt had killed many relatives of the voters. The logic of why Liberians would elect such a man may be captured in a statement by someone who did vote for him but later realized his mistake after Taylor's violence in office became clear. "You know, we were just hoping that Taylor had been fighting for so long to be president, you know, that if we just gave it to him, he would be a good person. But we were wrong: elections can't make you a good person" (quoted in Moran 2006, 123).

Resisting a Tyrant, Peacefully

As President, Taylor became very repressive against his opponents. One piece of evidence of this repression came from an unexpected source, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The FBI announced that Charles Taylor's son, whom the elder Taylor had put in charge of internal security in Liberia, had been sentenced to ninety-seven years in prison for crimes of torture.

> Between 1999 and 2003, in his role as commander of that unit, [Taylor's son] and his associates committed numerous and varied forms of torture, including burning victims with molten plastic, lit cigarettes, scalding water, candle wax and an iron; severely beating victims with firearms; cutting and stabbing victims; and shocking victims with an electric device. (FBI 2009)

But against such repression, a nonviolent resistance movement took place. Hassan Bility, one of the independent journalists targeted by the Taylor regime for his reporting, called the resistance an example of "micro-social movements." At times the resistance took the form of mass protests, either organized or spontaneous. Bility, who survived detention in an underground, watery cell for his independent reporting, noted that only a small number of activists were "people who woke up in the morning [and said]: I want to be a human rights activist."[7] Many others were drawn into the nonviolent resistance by way of their roles as lawyers, clergy, journalists, mothers, and academics. Scholar Amos Sawyer and his professional colleague Conmany Wesseh, jointly ran a think tank while Taylor was president, producing reports contradicting some of the unsubstantiated claims by the Taylor regime. They were attacked in their office and nearly killed by thugs, undoubtedly hired by Taylor, who saw the two scholars as part of the resistance movement even though they did not fit the usual description of activists. "*People were not moving all the time with mass action, expecting bullets to hit their breast, but in various ways there was resistance every step of the way*," Sawyer said.[8]

Moral Basis for Resistance

In 1991, the Catholic Church in Monrovia, under the leadership of Archbishop Michael Kpakala Francis, started a nationwide monitoring system, the Justice and Peace Commission (JPC), to document abuses during the civil war. Father Francis based his opposition to the violence of both Doe and Taylor on a spiritual platform. He spoke out boldly to denounce their abuses. Father Francis saw a link between a strong civil society and respect for human rights on the one hand, and peace, democracy and the rule of law on the other. His condemnation of violence focused on the civil war that began in December 1989. During a packed service in his church in 1992, he spoke out forcefully against Operation Octopus, a rebel offensive in 1992 that was slamming Monrovia, eventually leaving some three thousand dead, including five American nuns, and eight thousand wounded by the time West African troops demanded a ceasefire on November 7 (Hubband 1998, 213):

7 Bility interview.

8 Sawyer interview; emphasis added.

> Archbishop Francis used a large straw fan to cool himself. He had wiped away the sweat. Then he wiped away the tears. "We are prisoners," he yelled. "They [the rebels] are destroyers, not builders. They have done nothing for their country. We prayed for these wicked people – liars, who kill us and murdered the sisters."

The Catholic Church monitoring system operated through dioceses in various parts of the country. Their sources included "[prison] escapees, market women – ordinary people," said Kofi Woods, former student president at the University of Liberia in 1987, winner of the Reebok Human Rights award, and the first director of the JPC. From 1991-95 the JPC was most active in information gathering in the Monrovia area; when the roads were reopened after Taylor's election in 1997, their network operated more easily countrywide. The central JPC office in Monrovia was located in a building with the Catholic charity CARITAS so it was easy for informants to come and go without drawing unnecessary attention to themselves. This initiative was the start of a social movement, "We had to build a movement," he said, referring to the need not only to work with local lawyers, journalists, and others, but to build ties to international human rights organizations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights. The strategy was a 3-D strategy: document abuses; disseminate the information; defend the victims of the regime:

> Somebody, somewhere has to start it [a resistance movement] … some group of people however few have to start it … So it is not the majority who comes on board immediately; it is the few who believe in it, who have a passion for it that starts [a movement]. [JPC helped create] a new wave of awareness in society … and those who were creating this new awareness were seen as a threat to the establishment, to the warlords, to the factions.[9]

The JPC became much more than a reporting initiative, it was an advocacy and defense initiative that stood boldly for human rights, focusing especially on abuses by the police and other security personnel and seeking to help the victims. The JPC developed a pact with the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) because the Taylor regime was arresting independent journalists. "We would

9 Kofi Woods, in an interview with the author, June 13, 2006, in Monrovia, Liberia. Woods later became a member of the cabinet in the administration of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in charge of labor.

mobilize a team of lawyers immediately," said Woods. As a result, along with international condemnation, the campaign against the journalists diminished, Woods claimed.[10] The JPC focused on abuses by police, among other issues:

> We [defended] people that were hunted for political reasons … We helped to free journalists that had been detained for reporting certain stories. We went to the aid of those who were brutalized. In some instances we assisted some of them to go to hospitals to treat their wounds. And we sought the release of political detainees and prisoners.[11]

In 1992, JPC launched its own radio station, Radio Veritas, which aired a program called *Front Line* that broadcast live testimonies from victims of the war and related atrocities. "In our own little way, we were trying to expose some of the excesses of government and trying to insure that the rights of people are expected," said Rennie Ledgerhood, station manager at the time. In 1996, in the midst of the civil war and before Taylor was elected, the station was burned down but the Catholic Church rebuilt it. Once in office, President Taylor was not happy with the broadcasts, including one interview with by then self-exiled senate leader Charles Brumskine. After the interview aired one morning on Radio Veritas, Taylor's minister of justice called in the station journalists and ordered them not to air it again. The station agreed not to rebroadcast the interview. "Every other day they [Taylor officials] were calling me, threatening me to shut the station down; threatening to revoke the license; threatening to issue fines," said Ledgerhood. The government was also unhappy with the JPC reports aired about abuses countrywide. But Taylor was not anxious to confront the Catholic Church and was still trying to gain international respect. "The church has a great force, both internationally and locally."[12] In 2000, the regime briefly shut the station down but reopened it after a barrage of domestic and international complaints. The station agreed to let go John Stewart, a human rights activists from the 1970s who was then broadcasting *Voices from the Front Line*, as well as a popular, non-JPC program *Topical Issues*.

Woods, who grew up poor with a single mother who was often ill, credits her for his own passion about how people are treated. He continued his own

10 Woods interview.

11 Frances Johnson-Morris, in an interview with the author, June 22, 2006, in Monrovia, Liberia. She was head of the JPC 2004-2005 and later minister of justice in the administration of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. In 1997 she was chief justice of the Supreme Court.

12 Rennie Ledgerhood, in an interview with the author, June 16, 2006, in Monrovia, Liberia.

activism with various organizations after his tenure as director of the JPC, helping organize what he calls "stay homes:" civil disobedience in protest of abuses by Taylor. His activism made him a target of the regime, leading him to make frequent changes in where he slept at night, welcomed by friends and supporters despite the risks they took in doing so.

> I lived in communities where ordinary people protected me without weapons. They said to me that we are protecting you because you are advocating for us … I always believe that good will transform evil but good will not transform evil by retreating from evil. We must confront evil. It is only by confronting evil that we offer society a moral alternative.[13]

Human Rights Activism – "Delivering Body Blows to Taylor"

Taylor's repression stimulated a growing resistance. "I think they intensified human rights advocacy by their repression because – the more they became repressive, the more people became resilient."[14] By some accounts of Liberians interviewed, repression under President Taylor was as bad as or worse than under Doe. Human rights attorney Dempster Brown, one of those who challenged Taylor on legal grounds, said bluntly: "He was worse than Doe." An example of the violent and unpredictable behavior of some of Taylor's forces during his presidency adds credence to the comparisons. Noweh Flomo sold peanuts in a market in Monrovia. She was outside her home one day in July 1998, the year after Taylor's election. Some Taylor security personnel came to her house to see her niece who was staying with her. They arrived in a pickup with music blaring and lights on. Noweh told them the war was over and it was no longer time to act like rebels. "They took her into her home, raped her and slit her throat," recalled Etweda Cooper, then running the secretariat for the Liberia Women's Initiative (LWI), a peace movement. But what happened next showed the strength of the human rights activists even at a time of severe repression. Cooper called a press conference to denounce the murder and was herself ordered to report to the police, which she did, flanked by six lawyers including well-known human rights lawyer Tiawan Gongloe and several attorneys from the female lawyers association. Police were apparently intimidated by this show of solidarity by known activists and all but one of them quickly found an

13 Woods interview.
14 Gongloe interview.

excuse to leave the police station. She was read her rights, something the female lawyers had never seen done for a woman in years. Cooper added:

> Then you had everybody calling: you had the human rights groups calling; you had the international human rights calling. The National Endowment for Democracy called. You had the women who decided they were going to demonstrate the next day. It was on Focus on Africa on the BBC because the women had called the BBC. There were members in Taylor's government who went to talk to him. Several ambassadors and human rights agencies called Taylor. At about 9 [p.m.] I was freed.[15]

Liberians had awakened to their power of claiming their rights. Some of them had been in the Liberian diaspora and had returned to Monrovia from the United States, accustomed to the freedoms of America. As the number of advocacy organizations grew, people began coordinating their efforts and cooperating. "They were even coming together as networks." When someone in civil society was arrested for speaking out against abuses, the local newspapers published it; people talked openly about it. Various tactics were used to curb repressive acts by the rebel coalition regime. On one occasion, people had been asked to wear black for a day; on another occasion, civil servants were asked to stay home for a day.[16] Taylor responded to this growing activism. But when Taylor began targeting opponents, human rights groups began targeting Taylor.

> As soon as he got into office, [Taylor] started targeting the human rights groups. He didn't like the human rights groups [or] the press. People disappeared during Mr. Taylor's time. A lot of people disappeared; sometimes we'd find the bodies after two or three months. So – starting around 2000, Mr. Taylor became the target of the human rights groups because he was very brutal. We insisted that he should be removed from office.[17]

International Support for Advocacy

Though there was no one central organization opposing Taylor, there were several opposition groups in civil society that were well organized, including

15 Cooper interview.
16 Cooper interview.
17 Brown interview.

the Coalition of Human Rights Defenders. "We were highly organized and the leadership was focused on the rule of law and dignity for man."[18] The coalition was formed by local activists with help from other countries including Canada and Senegal. The National Human Rights Center and more than two dozen other organizations became a part of the coalition, which began working closely with international human rights groups such as Amnesty International. At one point the coalition staged a march to protest human rights abuses, defying a threat by Taylor not to do it. Dempster Brown, a leader in the human rights struggle, was one of those arrested. Quick response by human rights groups abroad and by Archbishop Francis, who called Taylor, led to Brown's release. On another occasion, Brown went to Taylor's minister of justice to demand the release of 125 persons jailed without trial. They got into a shouting match. "You do not have the legal right to put people in jail without trial," Brown insisted. He was not detained.

Given the high level of repression during the early Taylor regime years, however, there was not the more classical social movement with a formal organizations; that was too dangerous. Instead, the movement was multicentered; that is, there were various points of resistance including some organizations but also an informal network of human rights lawyers, independent journalists, a handful of outspoken clergy, and others. When a principal activist in this loose social movement was arrested, it trigged a response by other parts of the movement, as in the case of Brown's arrest. When Bility would get arrested, a group of human rights lawyers would descend on the police who were holding him, as human rights attorney Frances Johnson-Morris, an activist attorney at the time, explained. "We were asking and calling upon government to release him [Bility] and drawing the attention of government to his bad treatment and the torture. There was this overwhelming solidarity. Not just with the JPC but with the other human rights organizations."[19]

According to Liberian political scientist Elwood Dunn: "Human rights activism was delivering body blows to Taylor's political machine as their activities delegitimized the regime on a daily basis."[20] The National Bar Association also challenged Taylor in 2001. The bar association in Liberia had been banned and was "inactive and scared" in the 1980s under Doe.[21] Under Taylor, "a few members of the bar [were] outspoken but as an organization

18 Brown interview.

19 Johnson-Morris interview.

20 Elwood Dunn, in an e-mail to the author, 2006.

21 Best interview.

it has not been in the forefront of radical or social transformation."[22] There were exceptions. In 2001, Councilor Emmanuel Wureh, an associate justice of the Supreme Court, was arrested under a sweeping legislative contempt ruling. The bar association temporarily froze the courts with a boycott. Two leaders of the bar, Marcus Jones and Ismael Campbell, were imprisoned for opposing the legislative ruling. Taylor promised to release the two if they apologized. "They told the American Ambassador [who visited them in prison] that they would never apologize to Mr. Taylor. They prefer to die in jail. So Mr. Taylor could not penetrate the National Bar Association."[23] They were released in two months when the legislative ruling against them expired.

The number of human rights organizations mushroomed in the late 1990s and early 2000s. But despite what appeared outwardly as a mass movement for human rights, the number of activists willing to risk the dangers of open advocacy against the regime was relatively small, according to activists interviewed. Many of these organizations were just after donor funds; the actual number of committed human rights organizations was "very small," according to international human rights award winner Aloysius Toe.[24] Human rights organizations were in close contact with international organizations such as the Committee to Protect Journalists, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International. "The various international human rights groups would then link up – buttress the work of local human rights groups by issuing statements, by extending their advocacy internationally and giving voice to advocacy on the ground."[25] Taylor tried to cloak his administration in a robe of legality as he continued to seek international support and legitimacy from Liberians themselves. Without this goal, Taylor might have been even more brutal against the human rights defenders.

Ripples of Hope: Activists Inspire Others

Leaders of the anti-Taylor nonviolent social movement sometimes found themselves the focus of unexpected public support in the form of spontaneous demonstrations. Tiawan Gongloe was a courageous human rights

22 Gongloe interview.

23 Brown interview.

24 Aloysius Toe, in an interview with the author, June 24, 2006, in Monrovia, Liberia. Toe, like fellow Liberian activist Kofi Woods, was a winner of the Reebok Human Rights award.

25 Gongloe interview.

supporter as a human rights attorney. In 2003, Gongloe received the highest human rights award from Human Rights Watch. Binaifer Nowrojee, then counsel with the Africa division of HRW, said at the time: "During the darkest days of Liberia's civil conflicts, Tiawan Gongloe was a beacon of hope. Without Mr. Gongloe's courageous intervention, many political detainees, journalists, and other victims of abuse would have languished in prison or worse" (Human Rights Watch 2003). In 2002, Gongloe was arrested for a speech he gave during a visit to Guinea in which he advocated for human rights. He was taken to Monrovia police station and tortured through the night with severe beatings and candle wax poured on his body. Word quickly spread what was happening and a mass gathering occurred outside the police station then later at a hospital where he was taken the next day.

> To my surprise thousands of people turned out to fight the dreadful special police force of Taylor called the Special Operation Mission and came to the police station and advocated for my release. Many persons were arrested as a result of that but they remained defiant until I was released and taken to the hospital. Thousands of people turned out to visit me at the hospital.[26]

Toe, another human rights attorney, also gave hope to others and inspired some to join in resistance of one form or another. His resistance exemplifies the complex interweaving of individual and organizational activism in Liberia under Doe as well as the range of tactics, target audiences, and motives of key activists. "We had to use personal strategies and tactics at times. At other times it was organizational." As we parted after a long interview at his home outside of Monrovia, Toe, answered my last question about what motivated him to take the risks he had. "Gandhi and Martin Luther King," he said quickly, adding: "I can't be silent in the face of evil."[27] In a separate interview (McConnell 2008), he said he was also inspired by Henry David Thoreau. He elaborated on his motivation: "I can't really say how brave I am but there comes a time when everybody falls silent and then a voice that I refer to as God [picks me] up and says, 'It is by you that others are being kept alive.' I take courage from that."

26 Gongloe interview.
27 Toe interview.

Array of Tactics in the Resistance

During the dangerous Taylor years he was anything but silent, showing how one individual can help create some of the ripples of hope that Robert Kennedy spoke of in 1966. Toe operated at times as a courageous individual and at times as an organizational activist in collaboration with other human rights groups such as the National Human Rights Center of Liberia and the Liberia Coalition of Human Rights Defenders, both comprised of member groups. His activism included helping build popular understanding of human rights. "He started over 100 human rights clubs [and] called attention to human rights abuses and promoted human rights education in Liberian schools. He also organized a network of 245 volunteers in rural communities to monitor and report human rights abuses. In 2001, he led non-violent protests against the politically motivated murders of Liberian activists" (Malek 2005). In 2002, Taylor, who Toe described as "very, very, very arrogant," began arresting "dissident collaborators." Rebels in LURD were pressing Monrovia. Taylor began arresting Mandingos, an ethnic group he suspected supported LURD rebels against him. Taylor was trying to argue that it was for the good of the country to make the arrests. Toe responded with challenges to the regime at several levels and with a variety of tactics.[28]

1 *Local level*. He filed writs of habeas corpus on behalf of some of those arrested and he issued press statements against the arrests.
2 *National level*. When Taylor said the cases would be handled by military courts, Toe went to the military courts and filed more writs of habeas corpus. He had seven attorneys helping him in this campaign, including Dempster Brown and Beyan Howard. During the resistance to Taylor, it became fairly typical that a number of attorneys would show up to challenge arrests of activists. They were usually acting as individuals without the support of the National Bar Association which was only periodically active as an organization in defense of human rights.
3 *International level*. Toe filed complaints in Banjul, Gambia, with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. He also documented some of the arrests and passed the information to Amnesty International, with whom he was working on a project at the time, and to other international human rights organizations.

28 Toe interview.

4 *Mass action*: When the courts didn't respond, he organized a prayer breakfast. He invited President Taylor and diplomats: Only the US charge d'affairs came. He invited some 150 religious organizations: only the Muslims came. No United Nations or other international officials came.

5 *March*. He organized a peaceful protest march to Taylor's Executive Mansion to present a petition to the president. Instead, the government sought his arrest. "Nineteen well-armed state security came to my home." Like numerous other activists engaged in dangerous tactics challenging the regime at various times, Toe wasn't sleeping in his home and thus escaped arrest, though his wife was at home and was taken into custody. She was released the next day upon the intervention of John Blaney, US ambassador to Liberia (2002-2005). Taylor responded to the planned march by putting Monrovia on a war footing, with helicopters overhead. "Every street had soldiers with AK47s and RPGs." Taylor charged that human rights activists were infiltrating rebels into the city. Taylor was looking for Toe. "I went underground for eight days. I refused to go into exile. Either Taylor killed you or he sent you into exile. I said even if I get killed, this is the price some must pay" to advance the rights of others. Then he took what he described as "the ultimate gamble": he turned himself in. He was charged with treason and imprisoned. At this point it was clear that Taylor was not just after Toe: he was determined to halt all resistance to his continued rule and plans for reelection.

> In the illegitimate governing process adopted by the Liberian Government, student leaders, journalists, politicians, human rights advocates and lawyers have fallen victim. It appears that the time has come for religious leaders, [to speak out]. History has proven people's power in the Philippines, Romania, Indonesia Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and many other places. In union [we are] strong; success is sure; we cannot fail" (Gongloe 2002).

After eight months in prison, as rebels closed in on Monrovia and shelling was occurring, prison personnel fled and the prisoners broke open the gates and fled, too, in June 2003. Toe smuggled himself out of Liberia by boat to neighboring Côte D'Ivoire. He stayed there four months, returning in August 2003 after Taylor resigned.

Courage and Commitment: Intangible "Resources" in the Struggle for Human Rights

The usual concept in social movement theories of material "resources" as key to a movement does not apply very well to repressive settings such as Liberia was in this period. The country is one of the poorest in Africa, located on the poorest continent in the world. Although some of the activists were well educated and came from various professions such as academics, law, journalism, the clergy, the organizations through which many of them carried out their advocacy for human rights and democracy were modest at best. A few organizations attracted international grants, especially in the later part of the study period. But often locally based organizations had little in the way of resources to offer their activist members, including clerical, financial, security or other assistance.

What the Liberian resistance did have, however, they used well: courage; ideas; ideals; a commitment to freedoms such as the rule of law; a sense of human rights (such as the right to due process in court, the right to publish and speak, and the right to assemble); and in the case of some of the politician activists, the ambition for political power. The focus of the human rights movement was on the absence of rule of law and the physical abuses by the Taylor regime. Challenges to the regime often met with arrests, sometimes torture, and death. The defenders of human rights did not have weapons, but they had these ideas that were powerful enough to build momentum and to gain both domestic and international support. It was really a battle of ideas vs. a tyrant. "We didn't have arms, but we were using our pens."[29]

An example of this courage and commitment was journalist Hassan Bility. Taylor's persistent persecution of Bility was triggered by his persistent reporting from 2000 to 2002 in the *Analyst* newspaper and interviews with the BBC about Taylor's human rights abuses, including Taylor's connections to Sierra Leone. Bility was arrested seven times and held from one day to six months, altogether in thirteen different prisons as Taylor tried to hide his whereabouts. At one point he was held for more than two weeks in an underground cell partially filled with water. During the night he was taken out and subjected to torture by electric shocks all over his body. In the cell he tried to sleep on a metal beam above the water. "If you slept, you rolled into the water. My feet were swollen; I had to crawl on my knees. They tied your hands behind your back so the two elbows touched each other …

29 Brown interview.

for hours. The rope would cut into your flesh." When Bility was arrested, sympathetic guards would smuggle out his communications to friends such as lawyer Aloysius Toe, who in turn would forward it to the international human rights groups. This probably saved his life and almost certainly played a factor in his release.[30]

The example of activists such as Bility sheds light on this concept of "resources" as well as motivational issues for activists. The rational choice argument that people act out of self-interest[31] would seem to falter in cases like his and that of some of the most ardent activists elsewhere, including the other sub-Saharan African countries highlighted in this study. Some Kenyan attorneys freely admitted it was in their self-interest as professionals to see rule of law restored. But why would a lawyer or a journalist risk possible torture or even death to publish an article or land additional legal clients?[32] A pure dichotomy between self-interest and selfless interest does not satisfy. Bility argues that the concept of self-interest was involved but not in the way it is usually treated. "People do things out of self-interest. But the definition of self-interest needs clarification …The reason I was in this [activism] was to see a better Liberia … I wanted people to have food and move freely. Seeing people happy was the motivation. The situation had become so hopeless that if I left, no one would expose things to the international community."

Women's Peace Movements

The women's peace movement began in early 1994 when Mary Brownell formed the Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI) which was the beginning of "a movement rather than simply an organization or a coalition of organizations" (*African Women and Peace Support Group* 2004, 17). It operated publicly, at some risk, with a central organization and was later joined by other key women's peace organizations. It had an identified leadership and a membership who, especially in a later phase in 2003, the last year of the war, organized mass marches or vigils with women wearing white as a symbol of peace. The movement engaged Christians and Moslems, rich

30 Bility interview.

31 See, among others, Mancur Olson (1965), *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Good and the theory of Groups*.

32 Some professionals and others took these risks while most did not, a behavior Olson (1965) explained as a "free rider" phenomenon.

and poor. They used a variety of tactics ranging from published statements and individual lobbying of rebel leaders and heads of state to, attending peace conferences, mass marches and "stay home" strikes. Though women were active in the peace campaign from 1994 to 2003, the year the war ended, much of the international attention has focused on the important and dramatic marches and vigil of the last few months of the war. Among the leaders of that final push for peace was Leymah Gbowee, who was interviewed for a film on the campaign and in 2011 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize along with Liberia's (and Africa's) first elected female president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. This section will examine highlights of the early peace movement as well as the dramatic campaign of 2003.

Women are usually depicted as victims of conflict, which they are. In the relevant literature "the majority of it tends to view women as victims rather than as active actors, largely as a result of patriarchal structures" (Karam 2000, 2). But women in conflict states can also be agents for change, including in a post-conflict society if they are part of the entire peace process. In Liberia, from 1994 to 2003, women found ways to involve themselves in the peace process despite the reluctance of the male negotiators to allow them to participate. The Liberian case stands out in three ways:

1 Women used their status as victims, and especially as mothers, to gain credibility in their peace campaigns and to help persuade the men to listen to them, which they did. The case of Liberia recalls past images of mothers of Chile, Argentina, and Guatemala, especially, who also used their status as mothers to insist on an end to conflict and a return of missing loved ones.
2 Liberian women peacemakers went beyond demanding an end to conflict: they employed creative tactics to engage informally in the peace process itself. United Nations resolutions call for such participation, especially in peace negotiations. But women have rarely succeeded in joining peace talks. "Official peace processes remain almost an exclusively male domain, and little has been done to encourage women's equal participation" (Sorensen 1998, 28).[33] In Liberia, the women were never allowed seats at the actual peace table, but they did manage to engage rebel negotiators in informal talks. And they rallied thousands

33 Sorensen notes, however (12), that women have been creative in some countries to help bring about peace. In Columbia, women march to the front areas to seek peace; in the Balkans and the Caucasus women hid husbands and sons, lying to authorities about their whereabouts to keep them from being recruited into the fighting; in the Philippines, women started "peace zones" to protect children from recruitment by militias and the army.

of Liberian women to mass demonstrations, marches, and educational campaigns focused on peace and human rights.

3 The case of the Liberian women peacemakers also stands out as an effective, nonviolent, political social movement in Africa, a region seldom studied through the lens of social movement theories. The women framed their message of peace in ways that attracted thousands of women, ranging from educated elites to illiterates. They formed alliances with other organizations, both male and female, and they made effective use of the media, both domestic and international.

In early 1994, a small group of women launched a peace campaign aimed at bringing peace to Liberia after four years of devastating civil war. Mary Brownell and about a dozen other women organized the LWI to press the rebel leaders to come together to end the civil war that had begun in December 1989. They organized two mass meetings in Monrovia calling for elections, full disarmament and an end to the war. Reaction among rebel leaders was mixed; some of it was quite negative. "We were called all kinds of names. We were puppets of Sawyer [then interim president], we were called prostitutes, we were [described] as looking for jobs, husbands, and lovers … frustrated women … We had interests, we did not have positions. Our interest was peace: we were not looking for jobs."[34]

The Catholic Church, led by Father Francis, was one of the biggest supporters of the LWI. That, along with his denouncements of the violence, led to the Taylor rebel forces in April 1996 setting fire to the main office of the church and its radio station, Radio Veritas, which had been broadcasting accounts of violence against civilians during the war. Tipped off that she, too, might be a target, Brownell, with the help of another rebel group led by Alhaji Kromah, went into hiding and later was evacuated by ECOMOG and flown to Freetown in neighboring Sierra Leone. When she returned she and the other women in LWI continued to press for peace until Taylor was elected president in 1997. On numerous occasions, members of various rebel groups, including Taylor's, warned her of plots against her and urged her to avoid certain events. Like many women in this early peace social movement, Brownell credits her faith for her protection, including not having her house burned down as happened to the homes of many perceived enemies of the state. "God was always with me … He sent his angels and they spread their wings over my house."[35]

34 Cooper interview.

35 Mary Brownell, in an interview with the author, June 20, 2006, in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Prayers were a key part of the work of the women involved in the peace campaigns. LWI actions, for example, included marches, petitions to rebel leaders, fasts, but also "prayer meetings held weekly in churches and mosques throughout the country." Working in collaboration with the Interfaith Mediation Council, the Catholic Church's Justice and Peace Commission, and the Council of Chiefs, women organized "stay home" days in 1993, March 1995, and early 1996. "The stay-home days paralyzed Monrovia, closing markets, government buildings, transport and businesses, and were so successful they were called 'the ghost town action.'" The actions were aimed at advancing peace talks but they also served to develop a sense of solidarity among the collaborating groups (*African Women and Peace Support Group*, 21, 18).

The main goal of the movement was ending the war. With some donations from local Liberian business interests, some of the women began travelling to the series of peace conferences. They asked to be part of the peace delegations but were refused by the rebel leaders. Nevertheless, they made their presence known. "Even though they did not give us that [a seat at the peace talks], I tell you, every decision that they were making, they consulted us, the women." They would win public commitments from the rebels then seek to hold them accountable. Later, when it became clear the rebel leaders were not moving toward peace, the women stepped up their activism. "We took to the air waves and we would blast them out: This is not what you promised us; you promised us to do better; you promised us that the war will come to an end, that you will stop fighting and everything else."[36]

Repeatedly they were refused a seat at the peace talks; it was even a challenge at first to be accredited as observers. However, they talked to delegates outside the formal sessions. "When they came out they wanted to meet with us. We did not side with anybody; we were just neutral."[37] A partial breakthrough came in 1995 at a summit meeting of the nine West African presidents and rebel faction leaders. The women's groups had prepared a detailed paper documenting the suffering of civilians in the war. But spokesmen for the presidents refused them entry into the hall. Then Jerry Rawlings, president of Ghana, and presiding at the conference, broke with protocol and announced: "We have listened to the men, we have listened to all the factions, but we never listened to the civilians; we have never listened to our mothers, we have never listened to our sisters." With that he welcomed Theresa Leigh-Sherman, an educator and a leader in the

36 Brownell interview.

37 Brownell interview.

movement, to the podium where she delivered a thirty-minute report, later recalling the impact. "The whole hall stood up and started clapping. The presidents, tears were in their eyes because they didn't know our side, and that turned the issue of Liberia around. They saw a different perspective of the war. They saw how we were suffering" (*African Women and Peace Support Group*, 77).

"When Mother Calls"

One of the more dramatic methods employed by the Liberian women peacemakers came in 1995 when the vicious civil war was dragging on and rebel leaders were not making progress at peace talks. Liberian women peacemakers invited them to a private session in Monrovia designed as an icebreaker. The question was: would they show up? Setting aside other meetings they had for that day, representatives of all the rebel factions came to the women's sensitivity training. They arrived dressed in suits, not battle fatigues. "When your mother calls you, you must show up," said one of the rebel participants. Their arrival confirmed a tradition in many countries that gives special status to mothers, as peace campaigner Etweda Cooper noted. "In Africa when your mother comes to you, to speak to you – you must listen. It has to be."[38]

The rebels sat down for what was intended as a one-day session that stretched into four days. ECOWAS stationed troops from its ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to provide security at the building where the meeting took place, so the press was alerted to the sessions going on in secret inside. But as they exited the sessions, the women would say "no comment." In the meetings the women asked rebel leaders to engage in a series of group confidence-building exercises, including putting pieces of cut paper together as a puzzle, which required everyone's cooperation and rebel leaders talking with each other and relaxing with each other. "They said they appreciated the approach we took … [that] they gained much more in the four days of dialogue" than might be seen in immediate political results, said Elizabeth Sele Mulbah, one of those conducting the sessions.[39] The rebels recommended that international facilitators in the formal peace negotiations use similar sessions, she added.

There is no way to measure what effect the session had on the war. The next month rebel leaders did sign an agreement in Nigeria calling for a

38 Cooper interview.

39 Elizabeth Sele Mulbah, in an interview with the author, June 21, 2006, in Monrovia, Liberia.

ceasefire and an interim government comprised of rebel faction leaders. But fighting soon broke out again, effulging Monrovia itself the following April, and the government comprised of representatives of the main fighting forces collapsed. At a second peace conference in Nigeria in 1996, Ruth Perry was appointed head of state in a third transitional government until Taylor was elected president in July 1997. The election of Taylor brought relative peace, but only temporarily. In 1999, LURD rebels began a series of attacks that continued until 2003 when Taylor stepped down.

The peace movement revived with several new groups joining the campaign. One of them the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) was formed in 2000 to push for peace in various ways and to get the three presidents in the immediate region – Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea – to help negotiate peace. Women in Peace Building Network (WIPNET) was formed in March 2003, just months before Taylor stepped down in August. It was led by Leymah Gbowee. In 2011, when Gbowee received the Nobel Peace Prize, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced she had "mobilized and organized women across ethnic and religious dividing lines to bring an end to the long war in Liberia, and to ensure women's participation in elections."[40] WIPNET also included hundreds of women from refugee camps near Monrovia. At one point, about 1,000 women in WIPNET, dressed in white, marched on city hall for a rally. Women such as Cecelie Danweli, a WIPNET activist at the time, were drawn into the peace campaign by what they saw with their own eyes as a result of the war. "We saw these babies dying from hunger, at one of the schools at the outskirts of Monrovia; old men were dying from hunger." She and others were convinced that the women had to keep attending the peace talks. "If we don't … talk to the 'boys' [warlords] about what's happening, we may not have a Liberia."[41] In April, the group organized women in a sit-in at the small Sinkor, airfield across from a fish market, prompting sit-ins/vigils in towns around the country (*African Women and Peace Support Group*, 44-7.) The group of women in Monrovia was there from dawn to dusk, rain or shine, on a highway President Taylor passed by regularly between his office and his residence.

40 The same year, in awarding the Nobel Prize to President Johnson-Sirleaf, the committee cited her for "having contributed to securing peace in Liberia, to promoting economic and social development, and to strengthening the position of women." The third winner that year, Tawakkul Karman, was cited for having "played a leading part in the struggle for women's rights and for democracy and peace in Yemen."

41 Cecelie Danweli, in an interview with the author, June 21, 2006, in Monrovia, Liberia.

> People told us that … we must be crazy. In Liberia when it rains you see everybody running. We have this saying in Liberia that Liberians are afraid of rain. But who are these women, by the way, who gather under the rain, whether it is raining or not; they don't run. We followed our emotions and our instinct and we just went about doing things.[42]

Women Seize Peace Talks Hall

In June 2003, rebel leaders agreed on a ceasefire and a transitional government without Taylor. But almost immediately he reneged on his promise to step down and the agreement fell apart with LURD launching three attacks on Monrovia so devastating that they were dubbed locally as World Wars I, II, and III. "People ran on carpets of shell casings and carried their wounded by wheelbarrow or on their backs, desperately trying to reach the makeshift clinics operated by international volunteers." Meanwhile in July, delegates walked on clean carpets at the four-star La Palme Royal Beach Hotel where they were staying in Accra, Ghana for peace talks. "In the off-hours, you could observe these self-satisfied negotiators lounging around the pool in crisp new shirts, having drinks … The warlords were on vacation, with the international community paying for it all" (Gbowee 2011, 158). Leymah Gbowee was in Accra with other Liberian peace campaign women lobbying delegates outside the conference hall. She felt broken, defeated. "How could I have been so stupid as to think a handful of women could stop a war? *You fooled me, God* … Suddenly I felt a rage greater than any I'd ever known" (160). She decided to organize the women into a spontaneous sit-in, blocking the doors of the conference hall with their bodies until they signed an agreement. "Sit at this door and loop arms," she instructed the women. "No one will come out of this place until a peace agreement is signed." She passed a note to former Nigerian President General Abdulsalami Alhaji Abubakar: "We are holding these delegates, especially the Liberians, hostage. They will feel the pain of what our people are feeling at home." General Abubakar announced to the delegates: "the peace hall has been seized by General Leymah and her troops" (161). Part of the pain delegates felt was the need to go to the bathroom. The Ghanaian press and stringers for international media covered the unusual tactic. After about an hour the women, following a talk with General Abubakar, agreed to withdraw but only after insisting that the talks proceed with all delegates attending regularly.

42 Lindora Diawara-Howard, in an interview with the author, June 22, 2006, Monrovia, Liberia. Diawara-Howard was a WIPNET organizer.

> What we've done today is send out a signal to the world that we, the Liberian women in Ghana, at this conference, we are fed up with the war and we are doing this to tell the world we are tired of the killing of our people. We can do it again – *and we will do it again!*" (163).

The following month, August 2003, Taylor handed over power to his vice president and went into exile in Nigeria where he was later arrested for trying to leave the country without notice. Under indictment by the United Nations-backed Special Court of Sierra Leone, he was detained and eventually tried in The Hague, convicted, and sentenced to fifty years. After an interim government headed by Guyde Bryant, who came under international criticism on charges of official corruption, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected in November 2005. She was reelected in 2012.

Implications of Nonviolent Resistance during a Civil War

Theoretically, the two social movements mounted in Liberia between 1990 and 2003, most the time during a civil war, show several important points: (1) how members of civil society in a repressive setting can mount a nonviolent resistance movement against a regime, and how such a movement starts; (2) how a movement seeking regime change can survive extreme repression by operating partially in secret (for planning) and partly openly with alliances and multiple organizations, not a central organization that could easily be shut down; (3) the importance of individual activism in repressive settings when key organizations (e.g., bar associations) are not supportive of members' political activism; (4) how nonviolent resistance against a repressive regime can take place in a poor country with very limited material resources, where activists rely heavily on commitment to human rights and democracy as "resources"; (5) how women denied a place at peace talks can still have an impact.

There were contrasts in the way the two social movements operated which offer insights on social movements' survival in repressive settings. The women's campaign, which was not seeking regime change but peace, had a central organization (first just one; later several), and functioned publically with clearly identified leaders. Though occasionally threatened by rebels in the pre-Taylor regime period, they generally did not face extreme dangers because they were no direct threat to the power of President Taylor. The second movement, whose aim was regime change, operated without a centralized, formal leadership. That would have provided too easy a target

for Taylor. Instead the movement was a loosely linked collection of small groups, sometimes united in coalitions, and involving both individual and organizational activism. Even so, the leaders of the various elements of the movement were well known, and some of them were targeted for abuse by the regime. Activists were linked through professional or social relationships, or both. They used a variety of tactics including legal challenges, strikes, critical publications, clerical criticism, and information gathering. Their reports and findings were relayed to international organizations, including embassies and human rights groups which in turn put pressure on Taylor.

Liberian President Samuel Doe (1980-90) managed to thwart formation of an effective nonviolent social movement against his regime with extreme repression. President Charles Taylor (1997-2003) would have liked to do the same but things had changed by the time he was elected after leading a rebel force since late 1989. First, there was a relatively calm period of freedom of speech and association under the interim presidency of academic Amos Sawyer (1990-94). Many newspapers and human rights organizations formed during this period and Liberians (at least in Monrovia) grew accustomed to exercising basic human rights. Second, this was also a period of major political transformation across sub-Saharan Africa from authoritarian regimes to many more democratic ones of varying quality. Finally the West, including the United States, was no longer playing the Cold War chess game in the region and was generally winding down automatic support for authoritarian regimes that had received aid simply because they were not communist. Third, when Taylor was elected, he sought – and needed – international recognition and support: Liberia is one of the poorest nations, and the rebel threat never fully went away. The civil war, which ended in 1997, restarted in 1999. Taylor tried to cloak his regime in a thin and all too transparent veil of legitimacy and rule of law and thus, to some extent, tried to tolerate those who would rip the veil down.

The peace campaign began in 1994 and was led by women. It continued until the end of the war, using a variety of tactics ranging from published statements and lobbying of delegates at peace talks to marches and sit-ins. There are lessons to learn from Liberia for women elsewhere who wish to move beyond their status of victims to that of actors in conflict states, in seeking to shape a return to peace and restoration of society along less patriarchal lines. The women's peace campaign never drew the wrath Taylor levied on the anti-regime social movement which had two aims: (1) expose the human rights abuses of the regime; (2) push Taylor from

office. Whereas Taylor could accept a pro-peace campaign, he could not accept a regime-change campaign. Many of the activists of the anti-regime social movement were detained – some were tortured, some were killed. International notoriety kept some key activists alive and often resulted in their early release.

Were the movements effective? Liberia got rid of two authoritarian leaders in thirteen years: Doe in 1980 and Taylor in 2013, as Liberian human rights activist Pajibo noted. The resistance movements showed the courage, cunning, persistence, and commitment of its participants. However, this study does not argue that the movements brought peace or forced Taylor out of office. Peace came when Taylor resigned. He did so under pressure of rebel attacks by LURD that had reached the edge of Monrovia itself, and under an international indictment for supplying Sierra Leone rebels arms in exchange for diamonds to fund his own war in Liberia. But human rights and peace advocates had weakened his claims of legitimacy, exposed his repugnant abuses of power, and engaged the international community in the campaigns against him.

In the end Taylor may have lost because he forgot the story of the elephant. At one of his last meetings with Taylor, one of his closest confidants, Thomas Woewiyu, reminded him of the elephant story:

> In my tribe, the Bassa, they said you don't show a child an elephant. You don't have to tell him that's an elephant because he knows right away. The thing that Taylor neglected to know was when he saw an elephant he thought maybe it was an ant. He didn't know the power of the elephant, and that was his problem. I said to him, you know, Mr. President, the United States rules the world, and they rule everything in it. You try to exempt yourself and you don't let that elephant recognize you, it will step on you.

Eventually President George W. Bush called for Taylor's resignation. The LURD rebel force that had reached the edge of Monrovia was based in Guinea and aided by that government. LURD also had at least the "tacit support of Britain and the United States," but in many ways was "no different" than Taylor's forces (Global Security).

The war ended in 2003, the same year Liberia ratified the UN Convention on the International Criminal Court. Among President Johnson-Sirleaf's early appointments in 2005 were some of the leaders of the human rights campaigns, including Tiawan Gongloe and Kofi Woods. Aloysius Toe

continued his human rights advocacy as did numerous other former activists against Taylor. President Johnson-Sirleaf tackled the business of a country nearly broke, ridden by decades of ethnic strife and mistrust and with a crumbling infrastructure. The peace continued.

In the struggle between principled ideas and the force of the Doe and Taylor regimes, activist attorney Gongloe said the regimes mistakenly thought they could silence the opposition with brutality but ended up helping create a movement against them. "I think they intensified human rights advocacy by their repression because the more they became repressive, the more people became resilient … Their despotism … brought human rights issues to the front … Pressmen were writing about abuses; journalists were being arrested and newspaper houses were being burned. People were going into exile. So human rights issues became a major issue of concern."[43] Liberian Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee said: "You can tell people of the need to struggle. But when the powerless start to see that they really can make a difference, nothing can quench the fire."[44]

43 Tiawan Gongloe interview.

44 Gbowee's quote is included in an op-ed October 9, 2011 by Carol Mithers in the *Los Angeles Times,* http://articles.latimes.com/print/2011/oct/09/opinion/la-oe-mithers-gbowee-nobel-peace-prize-20111009, accessed March 1, 2014.

Figure 9 Young street salesman, Monrovia, Liberia, 2006

Photo by Betty Press

Figure 10 Village home, Liberia, 2006

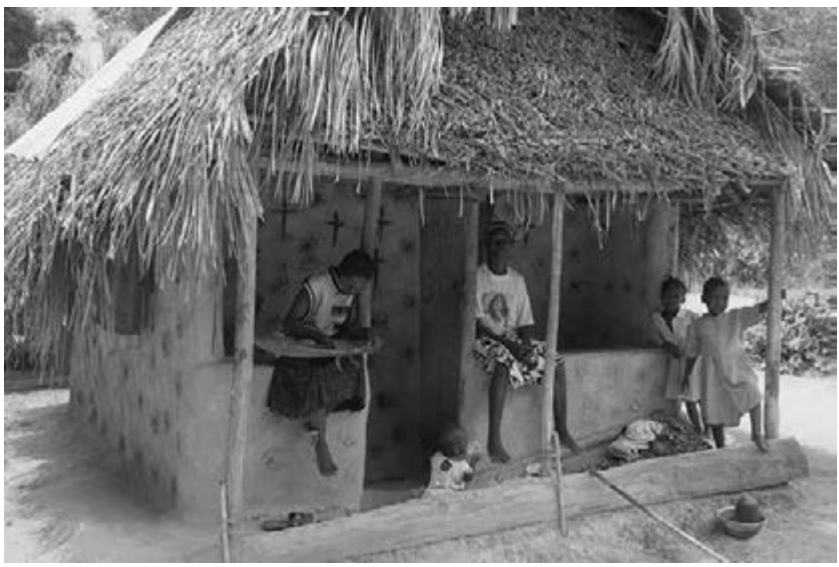


Photo by Betty Press