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I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND MY DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO MY FAMILY, ESTELLE, ORTELIUS, SERINA, HENRY, AND FRANCO WHO WITHOUT, THIS DISSERTATION STUDY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE.

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation study explores the events of the Liberian civil war and the effects that it had on the communities and people's homes at the time. Whilst investigating the effects of the Liberian civil war, this study will also be looking at the importance of the home, and what home means to different individuals, including the people that I have involved in my study. This investigation will help to give a personal perspective of the civil war, rather than understanding it through facts and figures, as it will include anecdotes from individuals about how they were personally affected by the war, and it will explore how one goes about finding home or feeling at home in a situation where they have been forced out of their current, physical home.

The resources and research that I will be using to support my discussion will be a combination of both primary and secondary sources. I will be using texts such as *The Memory Palace* by Ed Hollis, which explores the cultural history of interiors and how the spaces in which we live help us to make sense of the world around us and help us connect with our traditions and values. I will also be interviewing some of my family members, as they lived through the civil war, and therefore will be able to give a first-hand account about their experiences, how their lives and home were affected by the war, and what home meant to and for them during this time.

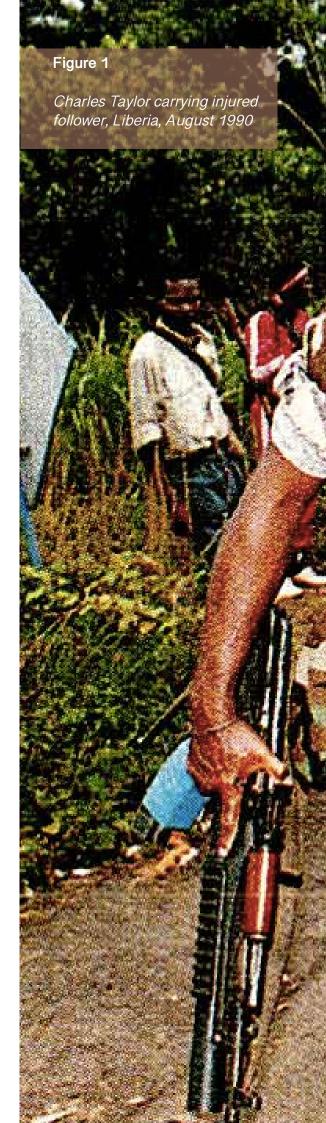
The structure of this study will start off by giving some background history about the Liberian Civil War. Although my investigation is not solely based on the war, and more on the effects that it had, it is important to explain how and why the war happened so that there is an understanding of the severity of the incident, and the severity of its effects. It will also help to create a better understanding of the situation as a whole. In turn, the study will explore the effects that the war had on communities at the time and how this altered the lives of many. In this section, I will start to introduce stories from the interviews with my family members, to create a more personal insight by sharing these individual experiences. Finally, this study will discuss the importance of the home and what home means to different individuals, and to conclude, I will discuss why home is important, especially in times of conflict, how people find home in times of conflict, and how high intensity conflicts like the civil war effects individual's ideas and feelings about home.

# AN INTRODUCTION INTO THE LIBERIAN CIVIL WAR

The Liberian civil war began with former Liberian politician and president, Charles Taylor, photographed on the left in Figure 1. Taylor began working under the administration of Master Sergeant Samuel Doe shortly after he led Liberia's first successful coup d'tat in 1980, in which the president at the time, William Tolbert, was assassinated along with some ministers of his government. Only a few years later was Samuel Doe to become the next president of Liberia (Hurst, 2009). Whilst working as a part of Doe's team, Taylor was given the position to run the General Services Agency, a role that required him to handle most of Liberia's budget, and whilst in the position he had a disagreement with President Doe, as Doe accused him of stealing almost \$1 million from the Liberian government (*Charles Taylor: Preacher*, 2013).

After fleeing to the United States to escape the Liberian government in 1983, Taylor was arrested a year later in Boston for his crimes. The following year Taylor managed to escape from prison and seek asylum in Libya, where he formed the militia group, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (*Charles Taylor Fast Facts*, 2021). On December 24th, 1989, Taylor led a group of Libyan trained rebels and launched a rebellion by invading Liberia from Ivory Coast, to overthrow President Samuel Doe's administration (Momodu, 2016). This ultimately triggered the beginning of the first Liberian Civil War.

The Liberian Civil War consisted of two wars spanning over 14 years from 1989 to 2003 (Dahir, 2018), where it is estimated that over 200,000 civilians lost their lives, and around a million Liberians had to flee to refugee camps in neighbouring countries (Momodu, 2016).





## A PERSONAL INSIGHT

Being Liberian myself, many of my immediate family members were born and raised in Liberia and were living in the country with their families when the Liberian civil war began, therefore, they experienced the war and its effects first-hand. To help me with my study of the civil war and the importance of the home, especially in times of conflict, I sat down and spoke with my uncles, Henry Greenfield, Franco Greenfield and Ortelius Trueh, my aunt, Serina Trueh and my mother, Estelle Greenfield Richards.

#### HOME LIFE BEFORE THE WAR

For a more thorough insight into the severity of the effects of the civil war on the country and its inhabitants, it is also important to understand what home life and communities were like prior to the conflict. Through discussions with my family members, it became possible to piece together a picture of life in Liberia before the war.

Liberia was a liberal and open society (see Appendix A) that consisted of many close-knit, and peaceful communities. Sharing and caring was the way of life (see Appendix B), especially as the typical Liberian home not only consisted of the children, father, and/or mother, but also members of the extended family, which is evident in Figure 2. As Ortelius recalls, his household was made up of his father, mother, seven children, and three cousins that lived with them, bringing the total number of people in the household up to twelve (see Appendix C). Many families did not have much financially, however, the atmosphere of peace within communities meant that people practiced a relaxed and calm way of life, and parents always strived to make ends meet for their children and family, whilst also having the support of their community and extended family to fall back on (see Appendix B).

Serina, Estelle, Henry and Franco grew up in a private community that was situated on a LAMCO (Liberian-American-Swedish Mining Company) camp in Buchanan (see Appendix A). Within this community, everyone had mutual respect for one another as many of the homes held the same morals and values, which meant children had the freedom to explore the outdoors without parents having to worry about their children's safety. As everyone knew each other and grew up together, especially amongst the younger generation, this contributed to the formation of strong and healthy relationships many of which have resulted in marriages and families today. The community was cohesive and safe, with crime rates so low that it was arguably almost unheard of. People would visit each other's houses daily, and this sense of togetherness created the feeling of a large extended family, where the whole community was your family. This idea of a 'large family' was particularly evident in how the community would come together in times of tragedy; everyone would come together to comfort and support the family by sending food and contributing to the funeral and burial (see Appendix B).

Respect for elders was and is still a huge part of Liberian culture within the communities. Anyone older than you was seen as your senior and had the right to discipline and reprimand you if you were misbehaving. Having this respect for their elders contributed to the children's well-mannered and disciplined behaviour, and from a young age they were given responsibilities within the household such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of the home. These responsibilities would change or become more advanced with age or depending on whether you were the eldest or youngest child in the household. This was not only so that they could take over these responsibilities from their parents, or to give their

parents the opportunity to rest before and after they came from work, but also to give the children the skills to be independent, and to prepare them for life when they would have their own home and family (see Appendix B).

Many of the homes within these communities had the basic amenities that every home needed to operate, and they were not sophisticated in regard to their decor, nevertheless, Liberians still took pride in their homes, and still do till the present day (see Appendix A). As the children were responsible for taking care of the household, in my grandmother's house, between 5am and 6am every morning the house had to be cleaned, with particular attention paid to the kitchen and bathroom, as when my mother and her siblings were children they were told, 'if one wanted to know whether you were a clean and tidy family, it could be determined from how you kept your kitchen and bathroom.' This pride in the home and practice of cleanliness also continued outside the home in the surrounding area, as their front yard also had to be cleaned and well maintained (See Appendix B).

Overall, life within Liberian communities was safe, fun, structured, and generous. People took pride in their homes and enjoyed their home life, and many of the values held within these communities is what supported them and gave them hope when the war took place.



'It was not the space itself, not the house, but the way of inhabiting it that made it a home'

(Boym, 1994, as cited in Wise, 2000).

#### THE WAR AND ITS EFFECTS

With family, home, and community being a valued part of life in Liberia, I asked my family the question, 'how did the war effect your community and your home?' The Liberian civil war brought destruction, separation and irreplaceable loss amongst communities (see Appendix F). It destroyed many lives, friendships, families, neighbours and humanity, and life quickly became a struggle for survival (see Appendix D). Civilians had to disperse and flee from their communities, especially when the war moved into Monrovia (see Appendix B).

In 1989 the war began, and Serina, Estelle and Henry were studying at university in Monrovia, Franco was living with his mother at home in Buchanan, and Ortelius was studying in the USSR (see Appendix C). As the war moved into Monrovia, Serina, Estelle and Henry had to quickly leave their university campus and return to their home in Buchanan, which in itself was a high risk, as there was the risk of being killed on their journey. One of their earliest traumatic memories of the war was a house opposite their own being set on fire by the rebels, and the shooting that took place all throughout the night (see Appendix E). Traumatic moments and memories like these are what started to tear apart what they knew as their home, and some of these memories have also resulted in many post-traumatic stress side effects to this day.

Liberia was quickly being taken over by rebels who were targeting men to become soldiers, raping women, and killing innocent people. Although their physical home was rapidly changing as it was being destroyed, this was even more of a reason for Liberians to hold on to what they knew to be the idea of home, which for them was their family, values and faith (see Appendix E).

Once they reached back home to Buchanan, life was slightly easier, which meant that in the beginning, fortunately for them and their community, they did not have to leave the area or their homes. During this time, my grandmother's house became a place where they were able to offer help, food and shelter to those who had left their homes and travelled to the next safest county, like those shown in Figure 3, as their own areas had become

dangerous to stay in due to the rebels taking them over (see Appendix B). Hollis makes a statement in his book, *The Memory Palace*, that 'rooms aren't just places we go to be alone. They are where we meet one another, and where we live together, not just as friends and intimates, but in wider society too' (Hollis, 2013, p. 18), and these are the same values that Liberian communities practiced, and that allowed people to open their home up to so many others, especially in a time of need. Due to this, my family's small home now hosted over 30 people, which was made of up six families that were all escaping the pressures of the war. The house consisted of three bedrooms, a lounge and a dining room; the bedrooms were given to the elders in the house, out of respect, and the younger people had to sleep on the floor wherever they could find a space (see Appendix B).

Despite the house now being occupied by more than 30 people, house chores still applied during this time and were still the responsibility of the children in the household. Therefore, tasks such as cooking still had to be done, however, this time on a larger scale, which posed as quite a challenge for Estelle to do. However, as it was their house, and everyone else was a guest, it was still their responsibility to make sure that everyone under their roof was fed (see Appendix E). The girls and the women of the household also had to take on most of the responsibilities of looking after the house themselves, as it was no longer safe for men to travel freely outside their houses to work and make money to support their family. Owing to this, gender roles within the household rapidly began changing, with women being forced to assume the role of the breadwinner. Some women unfortunately were also forced into prostitution or dating wealthy, older men just to support their families, and although they were not targeted to be soldiers like the men were, they were still at risk as they were travelling amongst armed rebels, who at times would stop and kill innocent people (see Appendix E). Luckily for Estelle, who was too afraid to leave the house due to this risk, her mother and godmother, although the elders of the household, would go out to get food, and living close to the coast proved advantageous in easily fishing for fresh produce (see Appendix B).





The war also created a lot of shortages in resources for communities, such as food, essentials, electricity and water, thereby leaving Liberians having to adapt their way of living and become resourceful with what they had. For example, using wood or coal, and making their own oil to cook with, fetching water from the stream to bathe and cook with, and making their own personal hygiene products such as lime for deodorant, and ashes from the wood or coal for toothpaste and washing up liquid (see Appendix B). Serina, as the eldest sibling, described her role during the war as one In which she wore many hats, and one of those 'hats' was her ability to speak French. This skill provided her the opportunity to cross their closest border into Ivory Coast every now and then to buy essentials for her family; so, although Liberians were able to be resourceful and innovative with what they had, Serina's knowledge of the French language allowed her to give her family this luxury (see Appendix E).

When the war first began and started to tear apart communities, the values and morals that these communities had allowed people, even from different communities, to hold together and support one another like they always had, and this was the main 'concept' of home that remained constant for people to hold onto during this time when there was a lot of chaos. It was also important to keep morale high during the war, so in efforts to do this everyone in my grandmother's house would gather together in the garage in the evenings telling stories as a means of entertainment. During this time, many memories and friendships were formed (see Appendix B).

The war later intensified as rebels were coming into communities and killing people. As it was quickly becoming dangerous to live there, the people in Buchanan were now forced to leave their homes and quickly find refuge in neighbouring countries such as Ghana, Guinea and Ivory Coast. This meant that Serina, Estelle and Henry also had to leave their home abruptly in the middle of the night to seek refuge in Abidjan in Ivory Coast (see Appendix E). Franco on the other hand, being the youngest, stayed home with his mother locked up for days in the house, hiding from the 'freedom fighters' that were searching

houses for people that were associated with President Doe's government (see Appendix D). Estelle recalls crying bitterly when they reached the decision to leave their home because she knew things were never going to be the same again (see Appendix B). Dr. Huettel, chair of the department of psychology and neuroscience at Duke University, carried out research on the link between physical space and memory, and came to understand that "we have memories and associations that are connected to all of those things that make houses so heavily connected to ourselves," (Miller, 2018) which explains Estelle and many others emotional reaction to having to leave their home so abruptly, as the memories associated with a physical space such as home make it all the more difficult to part with.

After some time in Abidjan, Serina decided that Franco being at home was not beneficial for his education, so she returned to the country, to take her brother to Ghana where he could attend school. Franco had to be smuggled across the Ghanaian border, as Ghana did not want to accept any more refugees into their country, and being his first time away from home, this put him through a lot of psychological stress. He quickly had to learn how to depend on himself as he was alone and would go months without seeing his family. For Franco this meant that he had a huge detachment from home during this time, both mentally and physically, as he was still young, by himself, and away from everything that he knew to be home. This also put a lot of stress on his mother, as he was the youngest, so she was worried for his wellbeing and safety (see Appendix E).

Fortunately, in some aspects, for Ortelius his experience of the war was much different and not physically traumatic, as he was studying in the USSR at the time and did not experience the war first-hand. Nevertheless, it was still a difficult time for him as he had lost contact with friends and family members back home; he no longer knew where anyone was or lived, as everyone had to abruptly flee from their homes and communities. This left Ortelius unaware about what was happening in Liberia, as he was unable to communicate with anyone back home; he did not know whether his family and friends were alive, whether they had escaped, or if they had been separated (see Appendix C).

So, although Ortelius did not suffer from any post-traumatic stress from his experiences of the war, he had to deal with the anxieties of being disconnected from home and not knowing anything about his family during this time, which proved particularly mentally challenging.

Once Franco was in Ghana, he never returned home (see Appendix D), however he later moved to the United States where he presently resides. The others also did not return home as Serina and Ortelius also moved to the United States, whilst Estelle moved to the United Kingdom, and Henry moved to the Netherlands. These journeys are depicted in Figure 4.

The civil war was tough for everyone and left many of my family members with a lot of mental, psychological and physical stresses, some of which still affects them today. The tragedies of the war had a major effect on what many civilians' understanding of home was for them at the time, which made it difficult for them to find peace and comfort during such a traumatic experience. Many knew home to be their 'physical' home, community and family, which in a time of conflict was quickly being taken from them, therefore, in order to have a sense of home, peace, and comfort, whilst not physically being at home, they quickly had to understand home through different terms, such as traditions, memories, values and faith. The war was also very unexpected for the Liberian public, however this sudden turn quickly highlighted the value and importance of home, both physically and mentally, as it made people understand the value of what was taken from them, but it also made them appreciate their morals, values, memories, traditions, family and faith, even more so, as they would be able to hold on to these and honour them indefinitely.



Figure 4

Map portraying Serina, Ortelius, Estelle, Henry and Franco's movements and journeys during the war.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF HOME

Due to the traumatic events encountered during the war, home quickly developed a whole new meaning, both psychologically and physically. The Cambridge Dictionary defines home as 'someone's or something's place of origin, or the place where a person feels they belong' (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Johnston and Valentine (1995, p.162) describe the word home to have 'multiple meanings', referring to Somerville's seven-point breakdown of the 'concept': 'shelter, hearth (i.e., emotional and physical wellbeing), heart (loving and caring social relations), privacy, roots (source of identity and meaningfulness), abode and paradise ('ideal home' as distinct from everyday life).' (Somerville, 1992, as cited in Johnston & Valentine, 1995). The Liberian civil war stripped civilians of their physical home, their 'shelter', 'hearth', 'privacy', 'abode', and for some, 'paradise' and 'hearth' as Somerville describes it, however due to the strong values of family, faith and togetherness rooted in Liberian culture and society, they still had their home in the form of their 'heart' and 'roots'. Therefore, despite being displaced across the country, and later on the world, Liberians' 'heart' and 'roots' is what allowed them to sustain a strong connection to their culture, family and physical home, even though in its current state, it may not be how they remember it to be.

In this study I have aimed to understand the way of life and significance of home in Liberian culture, and how this may have changed during the war. Up until this point, I have come to understand the structure, way of life, and relations within the communities, the responsibilities and roles of those living within the household, and how the war disrupted this. During my research I also asked my family members if they felt at home where they are currently living away from Liberia, if they still consider Liberia to be home, and also to define home in their own words after what they had experienced. This would enable me to gain further insight Into the importance of home and their perspective of

home, how home differs now to the one that they remember in Liberia, and how they were able to find 'home' during a time of conflict.

When defining what home means to them, Estelle described home as her birth country, her birth town, the way in which they lived together and shared, their strong faith and similar ways of thinking which created a safe space of understanding (see Appendix B). Ortelius described home as 'a place where you, your family and those you care about reside, where there is peace, a gathering of family members, and where loving memories have been built and created' (see Appendix C). Serina and Franco described home as, 'a resting place of refuge, safety, comfort, peace and stability' (see Appendix F), 'the place where you can make a living and feel comfortable' (see Appendix D). When analysing these answers, it is evident that some recognise home to be a physical place and some recognise it as a feeling or emotion, which when compared to Somerville's breakdown of the word home, led me to question whether home is a concept, a physical place, or both, and if so, what did this mean for individuals during and after the events of the war, as their physical home, and feeling of peace and comfort were taken from them.

Despite the destruction and the threat that the war brought to their home, many of my family members still perceived home as a place that was safe (see Appendix F) and where all their family gathered (see Appendix C), however, one could argue that this connection between home and feeling of security, even when their safety was at risk, could be formed from their memories of home prior to the war, (as they were able to leave their home before the rebels got to them). In The Memory Palace, Hollis (2013, p.14) explains that 'the rooms we live in are collages, constructed conversations between the past and the present.' Therefore, the 'collages' created within the rooms of their home in Liberia, would have consisted of only of past, happy memories that were created there, hence forming a



positive memory of home that associates it with feeling of safety.

For Ortelius, who was living in the USSR away from his family during the war, he did not have the physical or the emotional and psychological connection to home, which in turn built up a lot of anxiety and tainted his perception of home at the time. Not physically being in Liberia and being unable to have any communication with his family or friends to know where they were displaced, or what happened to them, created a disconnect between him and his home. When Ortelius was finally able to return to Liberia after a few years to visit, going through his community and not knowing anyone or recognising any faces there, unlike before the war when he knew almost everyone in his community (see Appendix C), made it difficult to restore that physical connection with home again, however his memories and ties to Liberia through his family, upbringing and values are what enable him to still have that emotional and psychological connection, which subsequently allows him to still call Liberia home. This individual experience highlights the importance of home through the psychological and emotional aspects, as it shows that despite the physical place of home not being present, it is the psychological and emotional connection that allows people to preserve a relationship with their home.

From many, like Estelle and Franco, who moved from Liberia to other countries such as the UK, and US, it was difficult, especially coming from a different culture, climate, and society with different morals and values. Many felt that they were seen as inferior, or a minority, which led to them feel misunderstood, and therefore they were, unable to feel fully at home or be themselves in their new environments, as there was always a constant struggle to try and fit in or be accepted into the society (see Appendix B). However, individuals such as Henry and Serina, found it easy to adapt, as Henry quickly learnt the Dutch language, and Serina used the phrase, 'home is where you hang your hat' to describe her experience. She now considers her home in the US to be home and explained that she was able to leave a country that was dangerous and destroyed by the civil war, therefore she is grateful and thankful to God that she had the

opportunity to create a home in the US where she can be at peace, live with her family and raise her children on the same morals and values that she herself grew up on as a child (see Appendix F).

Regardless of their different experiences adapting in a new country, they all had to find a way to adapt so that they could feel somewhat at home. Linking back to one of Somerville's (1992, as cited in Johnston & Valentine, 1995) concepts of home, 'roots', and the pride that Liberians took in their homes, my family took what they had been taught as children about the upkeep of a household and began to implement this in their own homes to embrace their backgrounds and create a 'source of identity and meaningfulness' (Somerville, 1992, as cited in Johnston & Valentine, 1995). They were able to do this by raising their children (see Appendix F) on the same morals, values, and traditions that they were raised on, cooking traditional Liberian dishes, decorating their homes to represent and express their identity whilst also embracing their culture, and opening their homes up to share with those around them, as they did back in their communities. Sparke emphasises the importance of expressing of ones identity through the interior, as she explains that our understanding of modern interior should not be limited to only its aesthetic value, but that these spaces should also 'emphasize its social, cultural, and psychological relationship with its users/inhabitants; its continuity with history' and 'the roles of both amateur homemakers and professional decorators interested in the interior as a site for (mostly feminine) self-expression and identity formation.' (Sparke, 2010, p.14).

While Sparke's statement suggests that home-makers are usually female, the practice of taking care of the home whilst growing up in Liberia was the responsibility of both the males and females of the household, therefore as Wise suggests, 'the process of homemaking is a cultural one', rather than a gender role, as 'cultures are ways of territorializing, the ways one makes oneself at home' (Wise, 2000, p. 394). This is evident in the way in which Liberians incorporate art, photographs, plants, souvenirs, ornaments and other types of decor into the 'homemaking' of their interior

spaces, which can be seen in Figure 5 (see Appendix A), as these physical items create a cultural connection to one's home and identity. Naturally, as humans 'we daily recreate within our dwellings the intimate internal landscape of our fantasies' as Troutman (1997, p. 359) suggests, and in this case the fantasies would be the fond memories of home life in Liberia; this, therefore, allows Liberians to express themselves freely, and feel comfortable in their own home away from home, whilst also sharing and enjoying their identity, culture, (refer to Figure 6), and space with others around them, a common value that was practiced within Liberian communities. In modern Liberian households today, a new form of the physical 'home' has been created to form a connection with the emotional and psychological concept of 'home'.

#### Figure 6

Estelle and her children, wearing traditional dress at a Liberian Independence Day Celebration in London.



'Interiors do not just remind us who we are, where we're from, or how to behave. They remind us to remember. In fact, the story of memory always begins with a room, or at least it begins with the end of one.'

(Hollis, 2013, p.19).

## CONCLUSION

From this study I have come to understand Liberia's rich culture and the values behind it that were integrated into the society, homes and communities. Having an understanding of these values makes it much easier to understand how devastating the effects of the war were on the country, society and people's lives, especially when life prior to the war was peaceful and cohesive. Throughout my exploration of life in traditional Liberian households, I was able to see how people valued and took pride their houses, and these values that made the house a home, are the same values that Liberians cherish, take pride in and have incorporated into their own homes and lives today, especially after seeing first-hand how one's home, along with all the memories created within that space can be taken away so guickly. Owing to this perspective, my study has shown that the importance of home has two meanings, one being the importance of the physical home, that relates to the sentimental value of an immobile space where one grew up, was raised and made memories, as well as the importance of the psychological and emotional home, which relates to the feeling of being home, the traditions, culture, faith, peace, comfort, and family. Although many struggled to make this transition from the physical to the emotional and psychological idea of home whilst their homes were being destroyed by the war, which in turn created negative connotations of the word home, the emotional and psychological concept of what people remembered to be home is what gave people hope and allowed them to connect with and find home in a time of conflict.

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## **APPENDIX A**

#### Discussion about Liberia - Henry Greenfield

#### What was home life like in Liberia prior to the war?

- Liberal and open society
- LAMCO #342 (Buchannan) set up by the American Swedish mining company (British and German) connections with Europeans beautiful interiors

#### How did the war displace you and your family, where did you have to go?

- Had to leave home abruptly in the middle of the night
- Take a car to the border and go to Abidjan
- He went to Ghana, mum to UK, aunt to US, Franco school in Ghana, no one went back

#### What does home mean to you today, living away from Liberia?

- The way we dress our homes shows how we take pride in our homes
- Enjoying and sharing identity
- Enjoy the space with others Liberians (create a beautifully space)
- Pictures connect with family
- Art, plants, ornaments

#### Do you feel fully at home where you live now?

- Difficult to show where you're from when he went to Holland

#### Do you still consider Liberia home, if so, why?

- everything is different people were more sophisticated, schools were better (less investment)
- No development

#### Why is home important to you?

- Always feels like home
- At home, at peace, change of attitude
- Pieces in the home that introduce art and culture

#### Any other comments or stories?

- R. Vanjah's impact of interior design furniture and artwork
- His work created an identity of home or a larger level who we are, uniqueness, Liberian culture
- Uniqueness of home your space

## **APPENDIX B**

#### Discussion about Liberia - Estelle Greenfield Richards

#### What was home life like in Liberia prior to the war?

Home was a place of unity, togetherness and peace. Our Christian faith was central to our family. Sharing and caring was a way of life. Chores were shared based on your age and older you grew that more responsibility and as you became an adolescent, you were then relieved of most of the duty which was passed on the next person under you.

Our homes were not sophisticated in terms of decor, but it was kept very clean. Our homes were our pride and joy. The home had to be swept and cleaned up every day and earlier in the morning between 5am and 6am. It was almost forbidden that someone come to your house in the morning and you had not cleaned up the house. Particular attention was given to the kitchen and bathroom, because we were told that "if one wanted to know you were a clean and tidy family, it could be determined from how you kept your kitchen and bathroom.

The outside of our home was always immaculate with crushed rocks at the based on the foundation and further out the crushed rocks were lovely tropical flowers neatly planted and beautiful taken care of by my cousin who knew I had a passion for flowers, and he could get anything off me once he did the garden. Further from the roll of flower was the lawn which of always beautifully green and maintained. The entrance of our home led into the garage and the back of the house where the kitchen was also filled with crushed rocks. The garage was like a terrace and where all the fun with family, as well as with friends was had.

We were disciplined and told to honour our parents, grandparents and everyone who was you senior (anyone is older than you) and everyone in the community had to right to chastise you if you were misbehaving.

We were taught to work and take responsibilities. You were taught once and not repeatedly. We were also taught to prepare meals that when you reached the age of adolescent, you would have been fully ready to go into the world independent.

We were advised, corrected and guided and respected our parent's judgement with no argument.

#### What was the local community and society like prior to the war?

The local community and society was cohesive, safe, peaceful, committed to family and neighbours. Everyone behaved well and almost every home had the same procedure of discipline. There was room to explore, the outdoors was wonderful, and schools were solely in charge of education, the teachers had empathy, maybe because they were living in the community and were hardly respected. There were lots of fun activities for young people and healthy relationships were encouraged amongst young people and today, some of those relationships have blossomed into wonderful families. Crimes were seldomly heard off. If there was a tragedy, the entire community were on board and supported the family the best way possible, from sending prepared meals every day to that family to contributing to the burial.

Christmas and New Year were always a wonderful time of the year. There were less focus on gifts like the West. Gifts were given the children and every child had a new outfit made for the day and their hair given special attention. For the rest of the family and the community it was centred around food. All our festive meals are made on this day and you have like an open house. Family stop by to

say Merry Christmas or Happy New Year and eat some of your meals and you do the same with other neighbours or families.

## How did the war effect your home/ what happened to your home during the war? e.g., was it damaged, were you able to return to your home?

We had to flee our home because it became dangerous to live there. There was shelling missile to the foreign force who were fighting the rebels and as the rebels were gaining ground on the war front and coming into communities, they were killing individuals, so we had to leave with our home all intact and flee for our lives.

#### How did the war effect your community?

The entire community dispersed. Almost everyone fled the country and sort refugee in neighbouring Countries like Guinea and Ivory Coast. My family became refugees in Ivory Coast.

#### How did the war displace you and your family, where did you have to go?

We were very far from borders of both Guinea and Ivory Coast, so we had to travel from one city to another and had to get help from a Special Force Commander who had authority to travel up and down the Country. We sort refugee in Ivory Coast.

#### In your own words define what home means/is to you?

Home to me is my birth Country, my birth town, how we lived being together, sharing everything we had to the other. If the other did not want your offer that was fine, but you had to share; it was just a part of life. Being a family of strong faith and seeing nothing as an impossibility and everyone thinking the same way.... you can talk about the goodness of God without having to think you are offending someone.

#### What did home mean to you/ what was home for you during the war?

Before we fled our home, we were host to more than 30 individuals which made up of 6 families. These family's friends came as a result of the rebel taking over their areas and the danger it posed to stay there. So, they came to the next safe county which was ours. Our house has 3 large bedrooms and large lounge and dinner area. So, the rooms had to be occupied by the older folks and the younger people like myself and my siblings had to sleep on the floor. Cooking was difficult! I was the main cook in the home because I loved cooking but after this experience, I don't think I do like I was. One was afraid to go out to the local market, for fret that you could be picked up by the rebels in the streets, accused for something you did not do and sometimes get killed. However, my Mom and my Godmother, would always go out a bring some food. Fortunately for us, our hometown is a coastal town so we could get fish to eat. All the older folks sat at the table for lunch time at noon and because I had to dish up their meals by head or couple paring in the other's dish to see who I had given more fish or meat to. We had to be very innovative with the food. We had to make our own palm oil to use, the water supply was cut; so, we had to fetch water from the stream far away. Which bring home boiled and stream to drink. The electricity was also cut out, so we had to use wood or coal to cook. We had run out of personal hygiene materials but was taught to use lime for our armpit, the ashes from the wood or coal was used as toothpaste and the ashes from the wood or coal when gathered and some water added to it and drained was used as washing up liquid. It could cut right through the grease. We would all gather in the garage in the evening and have fun telling stories and being entertained by each other. Few people fell in love during these difficult times.

#### How did the war effect you physically, mentally and psychologically?

I cried bitterly when we reached the decision to leave our home because I knew we were never, ever going to be the same again. It is traumatising to separate from the people you love. We had to leave my grandmother, my cousins, aunties and uncles, it was difficult. I was haunted for leaving my

grandmother and still thinks, had we taken her she might have lived longer. I don't think I have recovered fully. I have managed to live with it. Especially when you come to other society and culture you are treatment less favourable; you are missed understand and sometimes made to think you are inferior. You always have to be in an assertive mode even if you are quite in nature and confident. If you are not in the face of others you are miss judged as not being confident. I was ill from the weather for nearly 8 years and it was hard orientated. Raising kids is difficult. Different value system is a challenge which is not of best interest to the children and eventually leads to disaster, so you have to pray and talk to your children and teach them what our values are. It is almost difficult for nature progression in work. It is always a fight or formal procedure.

## How did you find peace and comfort in such a difficult time? My faith

#### What does home mean to you today, living away from Liberia?

Liberia still means home to me. Even though I live with friends when I return home these days, there's a certain warmth from the weather and people that just welcomes you like no other. The care and love you begin to receive from everyone around - those you know and those you don't. Everyone wants to welcome you and make you feel as comfortable as possible. You absolutely do nothing for yourself unless you insist.

#### Do you feel fully at home where you live now?

No. I feel everywhere I go; I am still striving to fit in or be accepted. Even though my children are, I don't.

#### Do you still consider Liberia home, if so, why?

Yes, please see second to previous question answered.

#### Why is home important to you?

It make me feel whole again and belonged to.

#### Any other comments or stories?

I guess so many other stories but can't think of them right now.

When we got to Abidjan, Ivory Coast, my older sister was able to get a visa to travel to the United States. Upon her arrival she started working and was able to rent a very nice house for the family and take care of our upkeep. The moral of this was the caring and sharing we were taught going up paid off and my sister felt it was her obligation and I can say we lived very well and was blessed to be stay on a refugee camp. We have tried to be there for each other, and I feel it is a priceless value our mother instilled in us.

## **APPENDIX C**

#### Discussion about Liberia - Ortelius Trueh

#### **Bullet Points for Vanelle**

- Liberia was founded from freed American slaves. Freed slaves took the option to relocate to Africa a to a land bought by the American Colonization Society in West Africa. The area was called Liberia which means free in from the Latin "Libre" and the capital called Monrovia from James Monroe the 5th President of the USA.
- Freed slaves in Liberia were called Americo-Liberians and became the ruling class over the indigenous people that they met on the land.
- Americo-Liberians ruled Liberia from its independence in 1847 (first independent African country up to 1980 when the government was overthrown in a bloody coup by a bunch of soldiers from the Armed Forces of Liberia of all indigenous citizens.
- It then became a country that was first ruled by the minority Americo- Liberian over the majority indigenous to now a country that was ruled by indigenous people.

#### What was home life like in Liberia prior to the war?

Prior to the civil war in Liberia, home was like any other home in any part of the world. Liberian family consisted of not only the dad, mother and kids but most times extended families. I came from a large family with my mom, dad and seven siblings as well as three other cousins in our household. We had a household of about twelve (12) members in the family.

#### What was the local community and society like prior to the war?

My local community was a community of people that pretty much grew up together and lived together for so many years that it was community just like a large extended family. We all knew each other and visited each other homes daily. Parents within the community gave parenting advises to all and discipline kids within the community whenever they saw a kid going astray.

#### How did the war effect your community?

My community was dispersed. People had to leave and flee from the community when the war went into Monrovia. After the war, when I went through my community, I hardly knew anyone there. There were all new faces within the community unlike before when I pretty much knew every family in the community.

#### How did the war displace you and your family, where did you have to go?

Fortunately for me, I was there for the war because I had already left the country before the war. I had travelled to the USSR for studies and it was tough for me since during those times I had lost contact with my friends and family members. I had lost all contact numbers and most of the people I knew and where I knew they were when I left, had flee away from their areas. I could not even communicate with them and was not sure what was going on with them during the war. Did not know if there were alive, escaped together or have been separated. I did not have any battle scars from the war but had a lot of anxieties since I literally did not know anything about my family members. This was a tough situation for me.

#### In your own words define what home means/is to you?

Home meant a place where you and your family or people that you care about and love, reside. A place where there is peace and a gathering of family members. Home is a place were great, loving memories have been built.

#### What did home mean to you/ what was home for you during the war?

I was living in a strange land all during the war. I was in Odessa, in the Ukraine a part of the then USSR. IT was a difficult situation when so far away from home and cannot even call home or speak to any one since there was a war and everyone had practically scattered. I did not have an idea of how to contact my immediate family members did not know how there were faring during the war.

## **APPENDIX D**

#### Discussion about Liberia - Franco Greenfield

#### What was home life like in Liberia prior to the war?

It was peaceful, relaxing and with no worries. I wasn't rich, but my mother made it possible that I had nothing to worry about.

## What was the local community and society like prior to the war? How did the war effect your home/ what happened to your home during the war, e.g., was it damaged, were you able to return to your home?

We live in a private community in which we had 24hours electricity and water.

Fortunately, we did not have to leave our home. As the situation intensified, it was just me and my mother that was left within the neighbourhood, and we had to stay lock up for days while the so call freedom fighters searched home for people that were affiliated with the Government. I later left and never return.

#### How did the war effect your community?

It destroyed lives, friendships, families and neighbours and humanity. It became a bloody struggle for survival.

#### How did the war displace you and your family, where did you have to go?

It was the beginning of my life as a young adult. With me being the youngest and most vulnerable at that time, my family decided to send me away, and this being my first time in my life to live home and see the world.

I had to leave for the neighbouring country of Ghana to continue my education.

#### In your own words define what home means/s to you?

I will say, home is the place where you can make a living and feel comfortable.

#### What did home mean to you/ what was home for you during the war?

A safe place. However, during the war, it was a safe house that could be discovered by the enemy at any time.

#### How did the war affect you physically, mentally and psychologically?

Physically, I had to learn to depend on myself.

Mentally, I believe that I began to think beyond reasoning about survival.

Psychologically, I learned that there was a thin line between good and evil and that anyone can flip with a push.

#### How did you find peace and comfort in such a difficult time?

I did not.

#### What does home mean to you today, living away from Liberia?

A place where I will lay to rest passed away.

#### Do you feel fully at home where you live now?

No

#### Do you still consider Liberia home, if so, why?

Yes, because I believe that there, I will not be asked where I am from

#### Why is home important to you?

I believe that you want to belong and not feel like a stranger.

I feel that no matter how long you stay in a foreign country, you are always trying to adapt.

## **APPENDIX E**

#### Discussion about Liberia - Ortelius & Serina Trueh, and Estelle Greenfield Richards

#### How did the war displace you and your family, where did you have to go?

- -Aunt had to smuggled little brother into Ghana for him to go to school as there was no school in Liberia had to work with him psychological had a delayed development when young from a head injury couldn't talk till 7 had anxiety could go wrong very easily (get arrested) -mentally had to prepare him
- Had to send him first to make sure he got past practiced all the possible questions
- Had to give him a fake name and hide passports
- Liberian refugee camp in Ghana didn't want any more Liberian refugees because of the war
- Men couldn't travel freely were targets to be soldiers
- Women were bread winners putting themselves at risk travelling amongst armed men
- Women were forced in prostitution and selling on the street and dating older men to get money from their families
- If they didn't leave Monrovia, they would've been killed
- Mum was in the line at checkpoint, soldiers were taking young women from the line to rape them asking them if they could cook, asked my mum to come so she could cook, told him she couldn't cook
- Dress in disguise, ugly tied their hair and dressed in rice sacks to look unattractive
- Night before they left Monrovia house opposite was set on fire, shooting all night, someone was shot but didn't die was groaning all night, died in the morning
- Had to travel with him in the middle as he was a target
- Life was slightly easier when they got to Buchanan

#### How did the war effect you physically, mentally and psychologically?

- Went through psychological stress was there alone a lot had to make sure he didn't run out of money – put stress on their mother
- Soldiers shot around Uncle HG
- Being the big sister wear more than one hat speak French could go to Ivory Coast closet border for essentials was risky
- People felt discouraged or let down by their faith
- Tough war
- Aunt took a lot of stress as she took charge
- PTSD fear of fireworks mum took cover under table had to do that when planes flew over
- Cut off heads at checkpoints

#### How did you find peace and comfort in such a difficult time?

- People held together during the war
- It takes a village, the value of extended family, helped with the psychological effects entire country benefitted from that tradition
- People took in and fed people they didn't know it didn't matter values explains Liberians resilience
- How parents brought them up relied on community, neighbours and values, everyone was going through similar things
- Single parent families
- Faith got them through values + traditions

#### Do you feel fully at home where you live now?

- Struggle to raise kids here as they don't have the same value

#### Any other comments or stories?

- Talk about Liberia first the history (Uncle OT) caused the civil war
- Uncle HG had three-gun shells in his pocket out of curiosity when they were searched, they didn't find it, but he could've been killed for it
- Dealt with everyone's different personalities scared, curious

## **APPENDIX F**

#### Discussion about Liberia - Serina Trueh

#### How did the war effect your community?

It brought about destruction, separation and irreplaceable loss

#### In your own words define what home means/is to you?

A resting place of Refugee, safety, comfort, peace and stability.

#### What did home mean to you/ what was home for you during the war?

A resting place of Refugee, safety, comfort, peace and stability.

#### How did the war effect you physically, mentally and psychologically?

Personally, the civil war resulted in some post traumatic and emotional effects. It affected my health and lead to a diagnosis of hypertension. The destruction, displacement and exploitation of our Country and Countrymen, resources, etc. was depression and heart breaking

#### How did you find peace and comfort in such a difficult time?

My Faith is how I find peace and comfort. It keeps me hopeful

#### What does home mean to you today, living away from Liberia?

There's a phrase that says "Home is where you hang your hat"; and it is within that context that I can that I consider the US — Lawrenceville, Georgia - as home. It is where I now live and with my family; and experience peace and live out and raise my children in the Christian Faith.

#### Do you feel fully at home where you live now?

I do. As an immigrant fleeing a Country devastated and destroyed due to a deadly Civil war, I am grateful and thankful to God for the opportunity to be able to live in the US and raise a family.

#### Do you still consider Liberia home, if so, why?

I do. Liberia is my Mother's Land. My birthplace. And, where I was brought up. The nostalgia and sentiments of Liberia will forever remain. It is where the best of family values and traditions and Faith were instilled into my siblings and me. Those values have shaped me; transitioned me from childhood to be coming of age—and now a wife and mother (parent); and hope to pass them on to my grandchildren by the grace of God.

#### Why is home important to you?

Home and tradition is important to me because when intentionally kept, they keep the family together and strengthen the bond with connection with family members. These values create the opportunities preserve and learn Family history, lineages, and to pass on tradition from one generation to the next generations of family.