

ESTABLISHING A BIBLICALLY AND THEOLOGICALLY BASED SOCIAL
JUSTICE MINISTRY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES OF LIBERIAN IMMIGRATION
AND ACCULTURATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this project was an inquiry into the challenges of immigration and acculturation of Liberian immigrants in the United States. The project dealt particularly with the difficulty of the US government-granted Temporary Protective Status (TPS). The project was conducted at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church, located in a Liberian immigrant community in Lansdowne, Pennsylvania. The project brought to light the plight of exiled émigrés and theologized their painful experiences through the use of the shared personal narratives of Liberian immigrants in the congregation and selected biblical narratives introduced within an immigrant hermeneutic. Scripture was employed with liberation themes of justice.

The project also included a one day acculturation and immigration retreat where the aforementioned narratives were shared and where professional speakers gave information and direction on topics relevant to the stresses of immigration and acculturation into US culture. Forty Liberian immigrants, adults and youth, shared their stories and their difficult and frustrating encounters within a safe and sacred space. Their stories revealed a community suffering isolation, despair, and a different type of exile in the US, their chosen country.

The project ended with a Jubilee service celebrating God's presence throughout the struggles in the homeland of Liberia as well as here in the United States. The service celebrated the historical, theological, and African collective spirits. Surveys and interviews were used to determine information about how these issues affected the participants and also to gain feedback about the success of the project. Emphasis was placed on the importance of faith and scripture as tools of empowerment. Overall, participant feedback was very positive. Project results demonstrated an increase in church unity and the motivation for involvement in immigration advocacy. The project also resulted in the development of a networking effort resulting in the possession of a radio station that now offers Liberian immigration programming

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INTRODUCTION

This project began a journey of exploration to ascertain the critical challenges that Liberian immigrants face in the United States. It focused on two predominant issues that immigrants face: the issues involved in having Temporary Protective Status (TPS), and those associated with the struggle for social identity or acculturation. Social identity and acculturation are critical struggles for people of African descent in America. It also offered a theological and biblical interpretation of the lives of Christian Liberian immigrants living in the United States. This interpretation grounds the identity and social contexts of African Christians in the United States in their belief in the power of the liberated gospel of Jesus Christ to set them free. It is in keeping with the Black theological context within which liberation is a major theme.

The project is entitled, “Establishing a Biblically and Theologically Based Social Justice Ministry to Address the Issues of Immigration and Acculturation.” It was the goal of this project to include central themes of liberation and emancipation rooted in the Black prophetic tradition. As such, it sought to empower a community of Liberian immigrants through the teachings of constructs related to a concept of “Blackness.” The project taught our faith community of Liberian immigrants and many associated with our community to learn how to understand and to challenge the stereotypes by which black and brown people are characterized by the dominant culture of the United States.

Through the project we taught our immigrant community of faith to look beyond the surface of American hypocrisy that suggests equality for all people. We emphasized

the link between anti-immigration sentiments and the level of progress of black and brown people in America. An overall project goal was to build an immigration ministry dedicated to serving the spiritual and social identity needs of Liberian immigrants facing immigration and acculturation issues. The intent was to articulate and teach a prophetic visioning for liberating a community. The method by which this would be accomplished was through the pairing of shared personal narratives and biblical stories whose similar themes are linked to our current struggles. Our struggle was to create a prophetic vision and a policy for immigration that would create a pathway for Liberians with TPS to finally obtain a permanent US citizenship status.

Through this project, we hoped to educate the immigrant community—Liberian immigrants with the TPS in particular—about the importance of forming a cohesive platform of solidarity in order to fight the stigma of immigration xenophobia. The project was a community-based project. Because our struggle is the struggle of an African people, I believe that it must be waged collectively. We must create a Black collective response to the present US system of oppression in which Black people and African immigrants in particular are left in perpetual despair and immigration isolation. Our project included special speakers who sought to educate, empower, and inspire participants by teaching a model of cooperative resistance against racism and the negative stereotyping related to immigrants. We desired to teach congregants and people in our community that people working together with a common purpose and a collaborative understanding are bound to create transforming force.

This project is about a story. And this story reflects stories of suffering immigrants found in America, searching for a redemptive meaning to their struggle. This

struggle continues in the lives people from all over the world who come to America and find themselves in the position of immigrant. When you are an immigrant, you have to be very mindful about the social constructs and social challenges that one will face in a country that sees the immigrant as the problem. Some of these challenges include the following: (a) the struggle to fit into the dominant narrative, (b) the fight for social identity as an African immigrant, (c) the bigoted stereotyping that suggests that nothing good comes out Africa and all people from Africa are poor and uneducated (d) the struggle and despair from wanting to belong—wanting to realize the dream we held before arrival in the US, (e) challenges associated with our skin color, our accent, and even our names resulting in daily questioning of who we are, (f) daily facing questions that clearly illustrate misconceptions and a lack of knowledge about who the immigrant is, (g) dealing with the repercussions of our children not being granted opportunities to go to school or receive student financial aid, and (h) struggling to comprehend why their driver's license is of shorter duration when compared to American citizens.

In addition to these daily immigrant facts of life, legal immigration issues resides among them. It would be unfathomable for a non-immigrant conceive of much less understand the complicated, expensive, and unsettling aspects of processing immigration papers. Each 18 months a Liberian with TPS will have to pay three hundred and eighty dollars for immigration paper. A Liberian residing here does not have the same travel rights and privileges to leave the country as other Americans. Liberians with TPS lose the ability to visit their homeland. If they do, it means they will forfeit their temporary residency. A driver's license granted to each TPS holder has a time limit based upon the

expiration date of the TPS. The law requires that you be fingerprinted and photographed at intervals. The full highlights of the TPS process is found in the appendix.

The issues and challenges outlined above constitute the foundational background for this project. As outlined before, this project holds a theological vision in which freedom for the poor and oppressed is only obtained through collaborative action. In this vision, every voice is lifted unto the unchanging hands of an omnipotent and triumph God who is always on the side of the poor and those on the margins of society. It echoes pedagogical, theological and liberating philosophies that see a new day in America. A day in which black and brown people, are granted their fundamental human dignity—a dignity that I believe is already offered to White immigrants who are also foreigners just as Liberians

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

This project was entitled, “Establishing a Biblically and Theologically-Based Social Justice Ministry to Address the Issues of Immigration and Acculturation.” Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church in Lansdowne, Pennsylvania was the project site. Faith-Immanuel is a congregation of predominantly Liberian immigrants. The project was based upon a theological praxis aimed at advocacy, empowerment and education of a community of Liberian immigrants in the Greater Philadelphia area of Pennsylvania. In formulating a critical framework we sought to offer not only an intellectual component that would build understanding among our people, but we also included several activities aimed at offering a theological and moral message that would create empowerment. The highlights of this project included the following activities:

- a nine week of Bible study
- acculturation and immigration retreat
- a survey for Bible study and youth acculturation retreat
- forums and workshops lead by professional speakers
- a closing Jubilee service
- conducting of interviews and completion of post-Bible study surveys with immigrants, which included information regarding Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) status.

- the building of a credible coalition for social justice in the greater Philadelphia area

Immigration is a complex and divisive issue for African immigrants in the United States. It is such because of the many challenges and intricate realities associated with immigration. The process and battles of survival, acculturation, and immigration often times become an utter nightmare for many including members of the Liberian community. Because I am cognizant of the historical and cultural challenge immigrants face in navigating the treacherous waters of US acculturation, I believe there is an ever-increasing need for African immigrants to understand the cultural and historical landscape of American life. Life in America is feasible for the immigrant when s/he understands some of the rudimentary elements of the basic norms and culture of their new “land of refuge.” Such rudimentary elements include information about the US system of government, the rules and nuances of US law and the abuse thereof, the consequences of breaking the law, the process of acculturation and/or assimilation to the American way of life, the historical significance of multiculturalism and diversity in America, African American history, and the history of US immigration and people of color.

Many critical theological and biblical challenges come to the fore when exploring the difficult immigration laws in the United States. Can a Christian model of social justice be adapted to address the challenges of immigration and acculturation for Liberians in the United States? If so, how would such a model look? These questions are essential for thousands of Liberians residing in this country as temporary immigrants. In light of these and many other concerns, this project sought to examine two critical areas

of great challenge facing Liberians residing in the United States. The two areas examined are social identity/acculturation and immigration reform.

Acculturation is the adaptation to the way of life of another culture. Tamara Warner characterizes “acculturation” as the “extent to which an ethnic minority individual participates in the values and beliefs of the dominant ethnic-majority culture.”¹ “Acculturation can be thought of as a continuum from traditional at one extreme, to bi-culture in the middle, to acculturated at one extreme.”² It is the phenomenon in which one migrating person(s) or people(s) gravitate from one original culture(s) to a dominant majority culture in the new country of refuge. The concept of adapting to the cultures and beliefs of the new country and leaving behind the identity of what the country of origin has taught and inculcated in you as a person or a group or ethnic minority is a challenging proposition for the human spirit. The trials of acculturation and adaptation for immigrants in America’s history have always been a problematic phenomenon for many new arrivals, minorities in particular. As Hugo Kamyia emphasizes in his writings, African immigrants have similar stories to others who have immigrated to the US:

Africans, like other immigrants, experience a deep sense of loss of their culture, which is partly associated with loss of a common language with their children. Parents lament their inability to communicate with their sons and daughters, as they could in their home countries, and are pained when their American children fail to learn their language of origin.³

¹ Tamara D. Warner, “Acculturation Scales: African Acculturation Scales,” in *Encyclopedia of Multicultural Psychology*, ed. Yo Jackson, 13-14 (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2006) doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412952668.n7> (accessed February 1, 2015).

² Ibid.

³ Hugo Kamyia, “African Immigrant Families,” in *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*, ed. Monica McGoldrick, Joe Giordano, and Nydia Garcia-Preto (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 103.

In speaking about the needs of immigrants in *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*, Kanya illustrates that African immigrants struggle with an identity crisis in their attempts to establish a new life between their country of origin and their newly adopted home in the United States. Citing one example of an emotional challenge for a Kenyan family struggling with the challenges of acculturation and fears of deportation, Kanya writes,

African immigrants encounter many stressors as they adapt to American life. A recent immigrant from Nigeria, one of the largest and richest African countries, with more than 100 million people, reported, "I feel so hopeless," describing how drastically his life has changed. He felt this because his skills did not matter in America, he did not belong.⁴

These passages speak to immigrants who are in search of identity and acculturation as they struggle to adapt to the new way of life in America, while not losing the culture of the land left behind. Kanya describes aspects of this phenomenon of acculturation:

Africans, like other immigrants, experience a deep sense of loss of their culture, which is partly associated with loss of a common language with their children. Parents lament their inability to communicate with their sons and daughters, as they could in their home countries, and are pained when Americanized children fail to learn their language.⁵

This trend is a current reality in our congregation where this project has strived to inspire and articulate solidarity as an instrument of resistance in fighting to create a balance between being the Liberian we are and the one we become due to constantly navigating a foreign culture. An intrusion of counselors and therapists is a constant reality in our community. Parents are in fear of losing their children as an entire generation forgets where they have come from.

⁴ Ibid., 101.

⁵ Ibid.

For Liberians and members of our faith community at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania, acculturating to the way of life in America is similar to the acculturation of African Americans and their persistent struggle to fit it. An African American member of our congregation said to me, “We struggle with issues of losing the little African heritage that we have. We struggle with acculturation versus assimilation, with not fitting in by virtue of our color, which makes us stand out.” My response to her was that we too, Liberian immigrants, struggle with such issues of acculturation and assimilation. We, too, fear losing the very identity and spiritual beliefs of our cultural heritage since we find ourselves in the cosmopolitan and diverse culture of the US. Here, being a part of the dominant narrative is the path to assimilating and acculturating for us as immigrants. I said passionately to my Black American congregant, “We are also caught between wanting to become more of the dominant culture, while at the same-time fighting to keep those old traditions that actually make us who we are.” It is like Blacks of American birth and African ancestry struggling to balance who they really are—they want to become like White Americans in the sense that they are dominant—while feeling a sense of being characterized as a traitor to their African heritage if they embrace too much of a US culture within which they are marginalized.

Many in our African immigrant community come to the US from a patriarchal society where gender roles classes are shifted. This becomes an ever-increasing challenge for African families in the US. The struggle to adapt to the new culture in which gender equity is the norm, becomes a cultural challenge for the traditionalists and those from male dominant cultures like Liberia. The traditionalists struggle with what Tamara Warner identifies as the difficulty of learning to participate in the new culture and the

new reality. Warner contends that the “traditional individuals retain almost exclusively the values and beliefs of their culture of origin and do not participate in the majority culture.”⁶

To the previous history and life realities cited, the issues of racism and stereotyping are also added. Many Liberians and others of the African Diaspora face struggles that are related to their African-ness. Experiences of stereotype and discrimination are encountered as a result of their accent or skin color. More is said about the issue of race in the section on social justice advocacy. The struggle of acculturation holds many emotional, social, and cultural shocks and challenges for families and members of extended families who have migrated to the US.

One social construct of the US dominant narrative has been stated to focus on individualism. In this construct one is responsible only to one’s nuclear family. In the African schema, a person does not belong only to oneself and one’s immediate family. The person also belongs to the community as a whole and the extended family in particular. Incorporating an individualistic narrative is difficult if not impossible for an African immigrant. For us as Africans and Liberians, the extended family is an integral part of the very fiber of our being. Our social and emotional connectivity is rooted in our heritage and cultural beliefs that one person does not exist without the support of a community of heritage. While it is true that we live in America our social lineage and connection culminating with sending remittances back home to families and friends, is part of the African creed. We are people of who value collective solidarity and collective compassion. This burden for the family represents an added pressure to our quest for

⁶ Warner, 13-14.

survival as a community here in America. If immigration is a human reality and the sign of the times, then the church must participate in the advocacy for immigrants just as they do for the poor and the marginalized. A Jesus agenda calls for love of all humanity as one—the biblical and theological proclamation that sees the oppressed as critical and crucial to the survival of human beings.

Now that we have outlined some of those issues associated with the challenge of acculturation, we will begin the first part of our narrative of Liberian immigration. It begins in the country of Liberia.

Summary of Liberian History

Historically, Liberians were regular visitors to the United States. Many came before the forced migration for ancestral reasons in that some of the early settlers to the nation state of Liberia were actually citizens of the United States. An example of the incredible American influence on the body politic of Liberia is reflected in the Liberian Constitution. The majority of the freed slaves from America who eventually took over the helm of power and campaigned in the establishment of the first freed state in Africa were historically more American than Liberian. Christian missionaries including the influential American Colonization Society who fought in expediting this “Back to Africa Movement” also propagated American influence on this new nation and its declaration as an independent state in 1847. Schools and churches established during this early period of the nation’s formation and continuum all taught English as a standard language. The sons and daughters of the natives, Liberian aborigines, were not taught in their native language but in English, the language of freed slaves and missionaries. Thus, Liberians have

always been connected to the American way of life since missionaries stepped foot on the land of Liberia.

The mass Liberian migration to the United States actually began during two critical times in the history of the nation. The first was reported to have taken place during the first military coup of 1980. At this time, a handful of enlisted men of the so called, "People's Redemption Council," headed by a Master Sergeant, staged the first military coup, overthrowing the government of President William Richard Tolbert. This situation was the first of its kind in Liberia's history. As a result of this unprecedented situation, many in the elite class and particularly members of the Tolbert administration fled to the United States, fearing persecution and reprisal from the military junta.

The second wave of mass migration from Liberia did not occur until a decade after the ascension to power of Sergeant Doe. It commenced as a result of a civil war in 1990. The war was tribal, religious, and vehemently brutal. It killed over two hundred thousand innocent children, women, men, and elderly. The second wave of Liberian immigrants coming to the United States began in earnest when the war was reportedly ravaging the country side beginning in the east of the country and eventually ending up in the Liberian Capital of Monrovia. While hundreds of thousands were killed, many fled into neighboring countries and subsequently ended up in the United States through the granting of family reunification and refugee statuses. Some came as visitors with regular visas, but they found that they could not return home because the engulfing war had taken over the entire nation.

This sad narrative of violence within Liberian history informs my theological hermeneutic. My writing is affected by experiences of separation of families,

displacement of people in the West African sub-region, and lastly the life reality of the wider world of Liberians regarded as refugees and asylum seekers. Some, if not the majority of these displaced Liberians ended up as temporary residents of the United States. In the early 1990s, under the stewardship of President Clinton, the American government decided that because of the war, Liberia was not a safe place to return for the many Liberians residing in the United States. By presidential decree, the government proclaimed that Liberians fleeing the war would be granted a special status, namely, “Temporary Protective Status.” TPS was a legal statute, granting Liberians fleeing the conflict, a safe haven in the United States. Such status has changed over the years. It is now referred to as the Deferred Enforced Departure (DED). Below is the text of the recent memorandum⁷ by President Barrack Obama granting Liberians a temporary reprieve from being deported:

The White House
Office of the Press Secretary
For Immediate Release
September 26, 2014
Presidential Memorandum -- Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY

SUBJECT: Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians

Since 1991, the United States has provided safe haven for Liberians who were forced to flee their country as a result of armed conflict and widespread civil strife, in part through granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The armed conflict ended in 2003 and conditions improved such that TPS ended effective October 1, 2007. President Bush then deferred the enforced departure of the Liberians originally granted TPS. I extended that grant of Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) to September 30, 2014. I have determined that there are compelling foreign policy reasons to again extend DED to those Liberians presently residing in the United States under the existing grant of DED.

⁷ Barack Obama, “Presidential Memorandum: Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians,” The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/26/presidential-memorandum-deferred-enforced-departure-liberians> (accessed March 2, 2015).

Pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States, I have determined that it is in the foreign policy interest of the United States to defer for 24 months the removal of any Liberian national, or person without nationality who last habitually resided in Liberia, who is present in the United States and who is under a grant of DED as of September 30, 2011. The grant of DED only applies to an individual who has continuously resided in the United States since October 1, 2002, except for Liberian nationals, or persons without nationality who last habitually resided in Liberia:

- (1) Who are ineligible for TPS for the reasons provided in section 244(c)(2)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1254a(c)(2)(B);
- (2) Whose removal you determine is in the interest of the United States;
- (3) Whose presence or activities in the United States the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds to believe would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States;
- (4) Who have voluntarily returned to Liberia or his or her country of last habitual residence outside the United States;
- (5) Who were deported, excluded, or removed prior to the date of this memorandum; or
- (6) Who are subject to extradition.

Accordingly, I direct you to take the necessary steps to implement for eligible Liberians:

- (1) A deferral of enforced departure from the United States for 24 months from October 1, 2014; and
- (2) Authorization for employment for 24 months from October 1, 2014.

BARACK OBAMA

Temporary Residency and The Dilemma of the Exile Life

While the first part of our immigration narrative begins in Liberia, the second part begins upon immigration into the US. One major issue is that of temporary residency.

There are several categories of Liberians residing in the United States. The two key categories are those with permanent and legal status and those who have only temporary status. The most vulnerable between the two categories are those Liberians with TPS. President Bill Clinton granted Liberians in the TPS category temporary immigration status due to the civil war. Since then, nearly all of President Clinton's successors have followed a similar tradition. The majority of Liberians arriving from the period of the

early 1990s to the late 2000s were considered visitors fleeing the war and were granted TPS by the US government.

Temporary residency is a challenge for many African immigrants who come to the United States as is true for many immigrants who migrate to the United States from other parts of the world. For many Liberians, the biggest challenge are the issues of social identity and acculturation. The temporary residency granted Liberians in the US does not permit them to return to the motherland even in a crisis situation. To do so would mean the loss of status granted by the US government. For instance, a Liberian family granted TPS does not have the legal rights to return for a visit to their homeland. Many Liberian citizens also enter the US through familial connections. These may be either through invitation by a family member or through the Family Reunification Program, which automatically grants legal status for those Liberians. According to recent statistics 25,000 Liberians are holders of the TPS.

Social Justice Advocacy

In the building of a credible social justice ministry dedicated to advocacy in the 21st century, one must learn to build credible partnerships. Advocacy is only possible and effective when prophetic leaders are interconnected with people and organizations of like minds. The fight for advocacy and partnership is grounded in the firm belief that Liberians are not alone in the struggle for immigration reform, and that partnership is the only way out of the immigration nightmare. A campaign for social and immigration reform requires a cadre who will fight a huge bureaucratic social system that sees the immigrant as the least common denominator. Thousands of Liberians residing in the US

are hopeful the American government will act to bring resolution to the challenges of temporary status for Liberians.

The issue of status is one that is relevant to the membership at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church where this project was carried out. One project goal was to create an avenue through which many of our church members with TPS and other immigration anxieties could form a network of support through becoming advocates for immigration reform. This fight is an absolute necessity, not only for the researcher, but also for an entire community who see their plight as intertwined with the struggle of the many millions of immigrants residing in the United States. Liberians residing in the United States are constantly bombarded by the pitfalls of immigration such as isolation and the ubiquitous xenophobia that permeates American politics and pits Americans immigrants. The project sought to bring to the attention of our people and the community the power and benefit of organizing around these issues. The project goals delineated a sense of faith and empowerment to our community. It is clear to us as a community that what all humans need to survive is security, collaboration, solidarity, and preservation.

This project served as a microcosm for not only consolidating our ethnicity and cultural ties as Liberians, but also for further strengthening and reinvigorating our commitment to press forward for immigration reform in a land that many cherish and appreciate. Additionally, this project sought to build credible networking platforms through which our members could have access to resources for a better life in America. We hope for a new American possibility that will help Americans learn to accept us as credible contributors to the viability of America.

A profound theological proposition exists in the Liberian community living in the United States. This proposition sees immigration advocacy as a fundamental and prophetic vehicle by which we will attain survival as an immigrant community. Despite the many years that we have lived and worked here, the United States government is still not convinced nor prepared to grant us full recognition and acceptance as legitimate and permanent residents in this country. I believe this is based on historical precedence regarding black and brown immigrants. Throughout the pages of American history, immigrants of color, especially those of Africans descent have always received undue scrutiny and unfair treatment. Historically, black and brown people have been relegated to the back of the line and suffered the manacles of injustice and racism. In one of his theological discourses to the nation, famed civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., addressed an American audience that included White protestant ministers. Some of those assembled were critical of his advocacy for poor, oppressed, and working class people in Birmingham. He focused on the need for social action as a means of ending the deplorable and inhumane working conditions of Blacks and poor people in Birmingham. In his famous "Letter from a Birmingham jail," he writes poignantly about justice for all as the essential belief for the one who ministers to the poor and the oppressed:

Let us turn to a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a majority inflicts on a minority that is not binding on itself. This is difference made legal. On the other hand, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow, and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal.⁸

⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1986), 294.

The imposition of an unjust law upon a community of immigrants in this country because of their immigration status goes counter to the teachings of the gospel. I believe that the intention of some laws is to reinforce the status quo and appease those who are anti-immigration and/or deem immigrants as inferior and not worthy of citizenship. The foundational thinking for some immigration practices is based on retribution and immigration xenophobia. It is ironic to see earlier immigrant arrivals castigating new arrivals. As for black and brown people, specifically Liberian immigrants, this is nothing new. These anti-immigrant sentiments have permeated American society for many generations. A review of US immigration history demonstrates that there have always been groups who were carefully monitored and deemed unacceptable. An example of this immigrant xenophobia and its unjust disposition is highlighted in a statement by an American lawmaker in the 1920s when he said, “I say the class of immigrant coming to the shores of the United States at this time are not the kind of people we want as citizens of this country.”⁹ This sentiment was expressed by a congressional member of the Democratic Party from Oklahoma, during another wave of mass immigration to the United States.

While it is true that America professes to be a land of opportunity for all immigrants, it is evidently clear that racial and economic disparities have always been socially constructed disproportionately against Blacks and minorities in the United States. The goals of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Birmingham campaign” were social justice and equality. His campaign sought to fight for suffering people, especially poor, Black, and oppressed people, who were subjects of a ruling class. This powerful and elite class

⁹ Representative James V. McClintic (D. Okla.), Cong., 1st sess., 1921, 177.

regarded Blacks and poor workers as just mere servants and not worthy of fair wages.

Unjust laws were working for the elite and aristocrats of American society while those at the bottom of social structures of American society were left to fend for themselves. It is an unjust law that causes a group of people to be singled out and separated because of their Blackness. It is an unjust law that negatively singles people out based on their country of origin. It is clear that public sentiment in American society plays a significant role in shifting opinions of congressional leaders in the making of immigration laws. At times, these laws are not prudent but rather serve to calm the fears and emotions of American public opinion. In most cases, the loudest even if not the wisest succeed. An example of such is seen in the report of the Dillingham Commission of 1907 as analyzed by Daisy Machado. In reaction to the opposition to anti-immigration sentiments in the United States at the time, Congress through the Dillingham Commission, after nearly four years of investigation made some startling assertions:

The post 1890 immigrants were economically inferior to the older European types... and that the children of immigrants were more apt to be criminals than were children of native-born Americans... At bottom its bias formed the basis of its conclusion that peoples of southern and eastern Europe were inferior to those of northern and western Europe, and hence should be restricted.¹⁰

The afore-mentioned response from the Dillingham Commission report shows just how public opinion from the loudest quarters of American society can influence governmental action. The Dillingham Commission pointedly characterized immigrants from southern

¹⁰ Report of the Dillingham Commission of 1907, quoted in Daisy L. Machado, "Promoting Solidarity with Migrants," in *Justice In A Global Economy: Strategies For Home, Community, And World*, ed. Pamela K. Brubaker, Rebecca Todd Peters, and Laura A. Stivers (Louisville: Kentucky: John Knox Press, 2006), 115-116.

and eastern Europe as inferior to immigrants from the northern and western part of the same geographical and continental location.

Writer and social justice activist, Daisy Machado, in a provocative article titled, “Promoting Solidarity with Migrants,” writes,

Given the findings of the Dillingham Commission it is not surprising that Congress would develop national origins quotas or that these quotas, which thoroughly reduced immigration from the undesirable nations of southern and eastern Europe, were based on the “expert” of eugenics like Harry Laughlin, who in 1920 became the “eugenics expert” for the House Commission on Immigration and Naturalization.¹¹

The above-mentioned analysis by Machado illustrates that even among the White community, there existed rifts and isolations amongst the power structure. Italians and Jews were once regarded as outcast and not worthy of participating in the American experience and certainly not worthy of citizenship. Southern and eastern Europeans were also not considered as legitimate participants in the American mosaic at the time. Italians and Irish were once called derogatory names and characterized as inferior to the native born. It is evidently clear that black and brown people were not even a consideration. In the crucibles of these national challenges facing Blacks, poor, and oppressed people in America, Dr. King and many other social justice activists used their theological, pedagogical, and prophetic imaginations to challenge those in power to bring about the change necessary. In the “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., challenged the moral compass and social consciousness of white religious leaders condemning him for participating in the protest in Birmingham. For Dr. King, standing up to the status-quo in ensuring freedom and better wages for Blacks, poor, and

¹¹ Ibid., 116.

oppressed migrant workers in the South was the ethical course of action to ensure freedom for a suffering people. Freedom and justice for Black people in America has never been offered on a silver platter. It has come through social action, Black consciousness raising, and liberating action rooted in organizing for the fight for rights. To succeed in America, our members are made aware that social justice ministry is the right campaign—the moral and theological proposition that seeks enlightenment and empowerment of our community in the fight for social action to bring about the change necessary. As immigrant and Black people in America, we are aware of the enormous challenges we face. We, too, face the brunt of a flawed power system that has kept Blacks and African people at the margins of American society. Dr. King, W.E.B. DuBois, and many other Black prophets and activists before us have struggled against the social constructs of White injustice and policies intended to keep minorities at the bottom of American social structure.

This project seeks a prophetic platform of spiritual and theological reawakening that will in turn bring empowerment, enlightenment, and Black consciousness to the Liberian immigrant members at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church. I believe that American history has never and will never be kind to Black immigrants if they fail to take a stand for social justice and righteousness. In the history of race and race relations in America, Black immigrants have always been kept in the shadow of exclusion and limitations creating a phenomenon that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his famous, “I Have a Dream” speech during the March on Washington characterizes as the “Negro discontent.” He writes:

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate

discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.¹²

The fight for social justice and equality in America for black and brown people and the stories of many immigrants, especially black ones, in the United States, have never been pleasant. With the exception of Native Americans, all that have come to these shores are declaratively immigrants. Our plight—our fight for legal status and the final legitimization of our human dignity as children of the Almighty Yahweh— will come through social action. Our struggle is a long climb to a righteous place of recognition in American society and Liberian immigrants will have to hold onto the unchanging hand of a God and a Christ who has suffered and died with us in our struggle. What is clear, though, is that Jesus is with us and will continue to be with us in this struggle for the adjustment of our immigration status in America. Until this is attained, the trumpets of social action and organizing will continue to be a legitimate and moral vehicle for addressing struggle.

What is significantly important to note in this exile narrative is that our people are now gravitating toward a more “we consciousness” in opposition to an individualistic culture that has become seductive to many poor people in America. The historical fight for rights and justice in America more than half a century ago was organized by a people’s movement that centered on a “we-consciousness” approach. It strategically engaged a coalition of not only the willing and the victimized, but it also incorporated a

¹² Martin Luther King Jr., “I Have a Dream Speech,” in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: HarperCollings, 1986), 218.

coalition of truth delineators. People embraced the prophetic vision that saw America in a better light. A prophetic light that says the prophets had the legitimate and ethical responsibility to speak truth to power against the vices that oppressed the poor and the marginalized of American society.

Cornel West, a prophetic voice of this century, illustratively suggests that while it is true that tremendous progress has been made on race and race relations in America several decades after the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, a lot more is yet to be done to advance justice. There is need to work toward the realization of the virtues and values that these historical figures in Black liberation fought and died for. West gives a clarion call:

The Occupy Wall Street movement was a global response to the thirty-year class war from above, which pushed the middle class into the ranks of the working class and poor, and even further, exacerbated the sufferings of working-class and poor people. The 2008 financial crisis, primarily caused by the systemic greed of unregulated Wall Street oligarchs and their bailout by the Wall Street—dominated US government, revealed the degree to which American society is ruled by big money.¹³

It appears that even the debates on inequality and racial disparities that Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and many freedom fighters of the fifties and the sixties vehemently fought and protested against, still exist in America. The existence of racial profiling in this century and this very moment indicates to many in minority communities throughout the country that we are perhaps taking one step ahead and four steps behind. The slayings of unarmed Black teens are more numerous today than in the time of Emmett Till. The justice system is prone to meting out justice to Blacks in disproportion to Whites.

¹³ Cornel West and Christa Buschendorf, *Black Prophetic Fire*, ed. Christa Buschendorf (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 4.

Studies conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2013 further supports a view held by many Americans, both Black and White, that there is inequality in the justice system in America. The survey on social and demographic trends entitled, “King’s Dream Remains an Elusive Goal; Many Americans See Racial Disparities,” reports that fewer than half, approximately 45%, of all Americans say the country has made substantial progress toward racial equality and about the same share that “a lot more” remains to be done. Blacks are much more negative than whites about the pace of progress toward a color-blind society. They are also more likely to say that blacks are treated less fairly than whites by police, the courts, public schools and other key community institutions.¹⁴

The current realities of our times demonstrate that there are still stagnating economic realities for the Black, poor, and oppressed people in the United States nearly five decades after the March On Washington. The dream for the Black immigrant is elusive and only realizable when we take a “we-consciousness” approach by working strategically and collaboratively to stand up to the powers that be. This fight is a march forward and not backward. In the era of Obama, the first Black American president, it would be foolhardy to think that the fight for justice has arrived at what Martin Luther King characterized as the “palace of Justice” for the poor and the oppressed.

Black immigrants in America, including members of our church community at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church, are quite aware of the obstacles stacked up against US Blacks in general. We believe what affects black and brown people in America also affects us as Black immigrants. This struggle for freedom and human liberation is an

¹⁴ Pew Research Center Social and Demographic Trends, “King’s Dream Remains and Elusive Goal; Many Americans See Racial Disparities,” <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/08/22/kings-dream-remains-an-elusive-goal-many-americans-see-racial-disparities/> (accessed December 12, 2014).

unending struggle. US history is the history of the coming of Irish, Italians, Jews, Polish, Europeans, Chinese, Africans and peoples of many nationalities and all races. We will not rest until the powers that be come to accept the fundamental reality that for America to be what it professes to be, a great nation, a nation of immigrants, it must truly embrace and accept its humble history—a history whose very foundation is rooted in immigration and acculturation.

CHAPTER 2

THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION

This project was undertaken at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church in Lansdowne, Pennsylvania. Faith-Immanuel is now an integrated faith community whose history of the congregation dates back as far as 1906. Initially established in 1906 as a predominantly Caucasian congregation, then named, Immanuel Lutheran church, reveals the story of the changing demographic of America and its connectivity to immigrants. Because of the changing times and the changing demographic, Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church is now regarded as one of the leading African immigrant churches of the South Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). The church has a purpose and mission that is biblically based theologically sound: At Faith Immanuel Lutheran Church, we are a faith family anchored in Jesus Christ through worship, fellowship and service. Our vision for 2014 is AYear of Divine Increase & Expansion. The mission and vision is based on the following scriptures Genesis 1:26-31, Ephesians 3:20, and 1 Corinthians 2-9.

In its infancy and for many years later, Immanuel Lutheran Church was a predominantly White congregation. This historic factor changed in 2006 when many African immigrants were moving to the Lansdowne community. The membership of the congregation sank dismally. In response, the South Eastern Conference of the ELCA saw the need to sow a seed of evangelism in the growing West African community of

immigrants. Out of this genuine belief and astute commitment, an immigrant church was born in 2003 under the leadership of Pastor Moses Dennis. Pastor Dennis, a graduate from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, was given the responsibility to guide this process. The author and researcher of this project was indeed one of those volunteers selected by another local Lutheran congregation selected to assist with the mission effort to work along with Pastor Dennis.

Zayzay Kpadeh's Affiliation with Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church

My affiliation with Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church began from the onset of its foundation as a mission station in 2003. When I came in contact with Pastor Dennis, he had recently graduated from the Lutheran Theological Seminary the previous year. I was a Methodist minister fleeing a civil war in my native Liberia in 2002. Upon the recommendation of a local Lutheran pastor, David Shaheen, then pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in the Upper Darby area of Philadelphia, PA, I met with Pastor Dennis.

I needed social capital and a solidarity that blended me with people from my country. As a new arrival and a minister of the Liberian United Methodist Church, I attended the Christ Lutheran Church a block away from where I temporarily resided. Since there was no Methodist Church in the area, I had decided to visit a church and begin a relationship. Christ Lutheran Church became that church, and Pastor Shaheen became a pastor friend in the area. When the mission effort for Faith-Immanuel Lutheran began several months later, I was one of the first representatives from Christ Lutheran Church selected by Pastor Shaheen to participate in the laying of the cornerstone for the mission work. At that time, Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church was called the Faith Worship Center. I participated in the first mission workshop and the gathering of the first

brief worship meeting at the congregation in 2003. Genuinely committed to the purpose of mission work in an ecumenical spirit, I remained in contact with Pastor Dennis and the congregation. I decided to pursue theological education at Drew University in 2008. During this time and prior to graduation, I was involved in several preaching and teaching engagements at the congregation upon the invitation of Pastor Dennis. Upon the completion of a Master's of Divinity degree in 2010 and still determined to pursue higher education, I enrolled in a doctoral program which culminated in this project. Quite aware of the struggles and challenges that many Liberian immigrants face with the issues of immigration and acculturation, I thought it unequivocally expedient to undertake this project at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church. After several consultations with Pastor Dennis and the leadership of the congregation, this project was born.

The development and implementation of this project was a group effort of the selected members of my Lay Advisory Team, comprised of professionals selected for their experience and expertise in writing, editing, research, and knowledge of the issues under review. The Advisory Team was headed by the President of the Church Council of Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church, Sister Joyce Adams and assisted by an Assistant Minister of the congregation. I worked closely in collaboration with Sister Adams in ensuring the effective implementation of the project. Members of the Advisory Team included:

- Joyce Adams, Council President, Faith Immanuel Lutheran
- Jeanne Lee, Program Manager and Grant Consultant, Greater Philadelphia
- Springfield

- Rev. David Shaheen, Executive Director, Upper Darby Outreach Corporation
- Rev. Moses Suah Dennis, Sr. Pastor/Developer, Faith Immanuel Lutheran Church
- Chaplain Aarona Cooper, Social Justice Activist, Christian Love Baptist Church, Baltimore, MD
- Rev. Nancy Brown, Pastor, St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church
- Rev. Jerome Forkpa Kennedy, Sr. Pastor, Faithful Flower-Charge UnitedMethodist Church, Knox Dale, Pennsylvania
- Rev. Solomon Muin, Secretary General, Liberian Ministers Association of Pennsylvania
- Sam Howard, United Nations Expert on Refugees/Conflict Management, Democratic Republic of Congo
- Susan MacDonnell, Drew University Theological School graduate, Social Justice Advocate/Philanthropist
- Augustine Gongar, The Youth President

Developing a Strategy for Ministry

As part of our commitment to ministering to a community of immigrants, this project worked to engage and encourage Liberian immigrants in the Lansdowne area of Pennsylvania to join this advocacy project. Our outreach included members of Faith-Immanuel, the Liberian community in the church's surrounding area, and the churches of The Liberian Ministers Association, which has over fifty churches. These groups were encouraged to join us in our struggle to educate and collaborate in creating a ministry that

would serve the general good of each Liberian immigrant facing issues of immigration and acculturation.

The project included the following components:

1. A Bible study on selected narratives relevant to the immigrant experience and a follow-up evaluation interview.
2. A one day retreat
3. A collection of “immigrant narratives” from Faith-Immanuel members shared by the members at the retreat.
4. An acculturation and immigration survey.
5. A closing Jubilee service

The Bible Study

The nine-week Bible study joined the narratives of the congregation at Faith-Immanuel with selected Biblical narratives that were chosen to highlight the struggles of a marginalized people. It brought together 45 people. Fifteen were youths between the ages of 15 to 20 and 30 were adults between the ages of 25-60. There were 20 women and 15 men. One objective was to reemphasize that God is with them in challenging situations such as immigration. A second objective was to draw upon Biblical narratives that offered a reason for hope.

The Bible study commenced on February 9, 2014 and ended on March 29, 2014. The study format and vision was for about 15 participants. However, by the 3rd week, it had exceeded the expectations. Because of the congregation’s growing interest we averaged a total participation that ranged between 20-44 people.

Christian theology is a powerful tool of inspiration within the context of liberation struggles, and the Bible is a critical instrument in telling our story as immigrants. It was the intent of the Bible study to serve as an eye opener to the Biblical truth that God is holy and identifies with immigrants. We are part and parcel of God's divine tapestry, and, as children of God, we are also entitled to those God-given rights guaranteed to all humanity.

My theological analysis proposes this truth: that God is an immigrant God. God is not only the God of Israel but also the God of all nations and all peoples. Since God is the God of all creation and the earth and its fullness belongs to God, why then would God who created humanity be against any human person? The Bible study's specific Liberian immigrant hermeneutic brought into focus the tremendous power of the social gospel to bring about social transformation. Not only did the study seek to bring reassurance and comfort, but it also sought to strengthen their resolve and empower them to advocate for immigration reform. The scriptures used for the study are listed below along with their significance to the issues of immigration.

- Week One: February 9, 2014; Texts examined: Exodus 3:1-12, 13:17-22
- Week Two: February 16, 2014; Texts examined: Hebrews 13:2, Deuteronomy 6:10-12
- Week Three: February 23, 2014; Texts examined: Genesis chapter 12-16
- Week Four: February 29, 2014; Texts examined: Matthew 2:13-18: Jesus' life as an undocumented person in Egypt. The Egyptian escape for Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus is a critical theological interpretation of the undocumented experience of the Son of God. This interpretation highlights the true and historical

significance of Jesus Christ as both immigrant and true liberator of the poor and oppressed of society. Although Jesus and his family encountered many hurdles along the way, Jesus persevered and triumphed over evil. Herod's sinister motive and evil plan did not succeed in eliminating Jesus.

- Week Five: March 1, 2014; Texts examined: Jeremiah 29
- Week Six: March 8, 2014; Texts examined: John's account of Jesus admonishing his followers to serve the poor and the oppressed of society; the feeding of the hungry.
- Week Seven: March 23, 2014; Texts examined: The theological perspective taken here was that God has no borders. Any social construct that forces destructive borders around people and sets them apart to live as "other," is outside of the divine will of God. Hospitality toward the stranger is a Christian obligation.
- Week eight: March 29, 2014; An 8-week review, critical questions, and feedback from participants; the survey questions were completed in order to determine if it was feasible to formulate an effort aimed at the establishment of an immigration and advocacy ministry. A Bible study on selected narratives relevant to the immigrant experience.

Post Bible Study Survey

The post Bible study survey was conducted through interviews with the participants. The questions posed highlighted a number of critical areas of inquiry into the effectiveness of the entire project and the impact of the Bible study on the community. The questions were designed by the researcher in close consultation with the Leadership Advisory Team for the project. The post survey included the following questions:

1. Is the title appropriate?
2. Did the project encapsulate the issues as they pertained to the title?
3. How would you rate the participation of the candidate and the congregants?
4. Did the role of the Leadership Advisory Team help facilitate the project?
5. If yes, How? _____ No _____
6. How would you evaluate the theology and ministry of the researcher (Associate Pastor, Rev. Kpadeh)?

The second portion of the evaluation focused on the objective of the project. Below is a sampling of the questions:

1. Was the aim and objective of the study clearly defined?
2. Did the candidate achieve his goal?
3. Did the study make an impact on the congregation? If so, in what way?
4. If the aim and the objective of the project were not achieved, what would you recommend to the researcher?
5. Assessment and evaluation of the researcher.

The Acculturation Retreat

The Youth Acculturation and Immigration Retreat was a full day retreat, held on March 29, 2014 at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church. The time together was filled with the sharing of narratives of the personal immigration struggles experienced by participants. The narratives were, indeed, part of the immigration and acculturation experiences of the Liberian immigrant community at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church. The effect of the sharing and discussion of these narratives meshed well with the second half of the retreat

focused on more specific presentations on the many complex issues relating to immigration and acculturation. The retreat program included,

- Litany of Intercession
- Welcome remarks: Rev. Zayzay Kpadeh, Organizer & Researcher
- Sharing of Immigrant Narratives
 - Ernest Knowlden
 - Augustine Gongar
 - Mother Ellen Brown
 - Minister Alberta Kpankpa
 - Rev. Zayzay Kpadeh
- Question and Answer Session
- 1st Speaker: Facilitator
- Topic: Acculturation in the African Diaspora: An African Immigrant Perspective, Hon Moses Sandy
- Question and Answer Session
- Lunch Break
- 2nd Facilitator/Speaker
- Multiculturalism: The Black Experience in America on Cultural Identity, Minister & Chaplain Aarona Cooper, Christian Love Baptist Church, Baltimore, MD
- Mazola Gizzie
- Sharing of Immigrant Narratives
 - Agnes Dolo
 - Rev. Moses Suah Dennis, Sr. Pastor, Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church
- 3rd Facilitator/Speaker
- Acculturation in America and its theological implications from a dominant Culture Perspective in America, Susan MacDonnell
- Question and Answer Session
- Vote of Thanks & Special Remarks
- Benediction

Immigrant Narratives from Faith-Immanuel Church

Storytelling and sharing narratives is a part of many cultures around the world. In the African tradition, story sharing in a sacred space is an important form of therapy for many. Historically, many Africans use stories as a source of inspiration and resistance. The sharing and telling of stories in the African cultures and traditions has always been a source of empowerment and appreciation of the great ancestors who fought for freedom.

Storytelling reveals in us a cognitive and psychological understanding of our past histories, plagues, and exploitations. Storytelling as a form of resistance is an illustrative model of liberation. This form of thinking has long permeated African cultures from the time of slavery to the present 21st century. During the time of slavery, it is reportedly revealed that slaves used another form of communication to talk about the slave master. They spoke in a language that the slave master was unable to comprehend. Slaves in the US South used songs of information and inspiration to foster hope and perseverance against the hardship meted out to them by their slave masters. Thus, in parallel, the gathering of members of this community of believers and Liberian immigrants is not only an act of defiance but also a conscious decision of awareness and empowerment. It is a source of empowerment because coming together and sharing exile stories do not only bring enlightenment but also serves as source of inspiration. Our hope is that despite the prevailing immigration dilemma, the God of justice identifies with us in our immigration saga. God also reassures our community of the unflinching love and majestic hands of the liberated Jesus. This liberated Jesus is the one who sees and identifies with the suffering immigrant.

Selected Immigration Narratives

Rev. Zayzay Kpadeh

The story of my immigration journey began on a faithful March 11, 2002 when I touched foot on American soil. A former workmate picked me up from the John F. Kennedy International Airport. It was a late afternoon and very windy and cold indeed. This was my very first visit to America. I arrived with fifty dollars in my pocket.

In retrospect, my journey really began at the Roberts International Airport where I was almost denied the one and only chance left for me to leave the country. I managed to get on a sensor plane for the Ivory Coast. There was no hope in sight for returning to Liberia at the time. There was nothing to return to anyway. My hopes and aspirations for a better Liberia were dashed as a result of the prevailing circumstances facing the country. The persistent atmosphere of war, insecurity, and street violence was the order of the day. There was no way for anyone with a genuine desire to do well to succeed in Liberia.

My friend and former workmate in Liberia picked me up and took me to a single bedroom apartment in Staten Island, New York. I stayed with my friend and his wife for a week while we figured out what next to do. My friend was a graduate student at a New York college. When I could no longer stay with my friend, we began to look at other ways to find alternative lodging. We contacted a mutual friend in Connecticut to see whether he could help to accommodate me. After a series of conversations with him, he consented to serve as a host. This was a temporary arrangement, because he could only afford to host me for a short period of time. I was not making any contribution to his expenses. Where could I go? This was a daunting task.

I had arrived in this country prepared to face whatever circumstances I encountered in this new land. My friend and host set the date for me to leave the following week. Left with the option of trying to find a place to live with just twenty-five dollars in my pocket, I remembered another childhood friend who lived in Pennsylvania. I did not have his number. Networking had served me well. I made several calls back home to Liberia and managed to get the number for my friend. I moved to Pennsylvania the following week. This was in late April of 2002. I stayed at my friend's place, doing all

the domestic work, cooking, washing clothes, doing errands and whatever I could offer in return for his having accepted me at very short notice. I stayed with him from April to late August of 2002.

During this period, I navigated the treacherous waters of despair now living a life unbecoming of a syndicated columnist and an Executive Producer, my titles before escaping the conflict at home in Liberia in early 2002. But here I was in exile, relegated to nothing more than trying to survive. Eventually, my childhood friend in Pennsylvania turned a blind eye to my situation. The only offer I had was to either stay and make a substantial contribution towards the rent or leave. It was obvious that the only option I had was to leave.

The news about my challenge and unfortunate situation came to a head when I went to volunteer the next day at Christ Lutheran Church. The sexton for the congregation had heard about my challenge and apparently delivered the sad news to the pastor. The pastor showed me a studio apartment that was managed by the church. He indicated that because of my volunteer work and good will toward the congregation, the church was giving me the place for free for six months. I lived at this facility until I finally got on my feet. Social capital and the power of volunteering contributed towards this blessing. My new residence came as a result of the connection and sincere commitment of the pastor not to allow another suffering foreigner, a Liberian and a volunteer at Christ Lutheran Church, become a homeless man. I had volunteered for this congregation since arrival in the Upper Darby area in late April of 2002. This was a pastor giving back to me not only because of my volunteering, but I sincerely believe it was his genuine desire to minister to a foreigner in a strange land fighting to survive. This

was a genuine act of kindness, the kind expected of every believer professing to be a representative of the gospel. From the time of the Torah to the good news of the gospel, the scriptures say that Christians are obligated to those in need:

When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am The Lord your God.¹

Looking back after having several conversations with members of the congregation and the pastor himself, I have learned that the pastor is a son of immigrants who migrated here from Lebanon several generations ago. He has in his veins and soul a passion for the immigrant like that little child who was taken to Egypt in the Matthew 2 narrative.

I experienced other blessings during my 2008-2010 years of graduate work at Drew University. Affordability and accessibility were two key words that defined my challenge at an elite American institution like Drew. Attending Drew University and completing graduate work in three years meant a lot to me. It also meant a lot to the many friends and family members back home in Liberia. Affordability turned out to be an important word. Being granted a hundred percent Stafford Loan Scholarship meant a lot to me. Offered through an anonymous grantee and managed by the United Methodist Church, it was awarded to any student who qualified for financial assistance in completing theological education. Each year I was requested to write a letter of appreciation to this wonderful family.

Life at Drew was challenging and I faced the economic difficulties that every immigrant encounters in the American immigration narrative. Studies at Drew were

¹ Lv 19:33-34 (English Standard Version).

challenging but for me it was the financial challenges that were even greater and threatened my very survival. Housing fees were too expensive for me during the early stages of the school year. For nearly three semesters I struggled to fit in while at the same time fighting to navigate these and other challenges. Paying \$4,700 a year for campus housing was nothing this immigrant son of a farmer and fleeing victim of a civil war could afford. I began sleeping in my vehicle. I spent most of the early evening in the library after class doing reading and assignments. My nightmare began each night when the library alarm sounded at 1:30 a.m. informing everyone that the library would be closing in thirty minutes. I remember vividly being one of those last students to leave the library. Some nights I considered staying in the library after it closed. After brief contemplation, I felt it was not a good idea. I feared, if discovered, it would not only ruin my journey at Drew but would create negative expectations for any immigrants coming after me. So, at 2:00 a.m., I left the library and headed for my vehicle, a brown 1999 Honda Accord. I would then start the vehicle and turn on the heat. After warming it for about half an hour, I would turn the vehicle off and go to sleep covered by a blanket. I would only sleep until 4:00 a.m. for fear of someone seeing me. I was also up early each morning in order to avoid the early morning workers, cleaners, cooks, and janitors. A majority of the workers were immigrants bused into Madison every morning.

The hotels were expensive. The hostel available at nearby Elizabeth College was more reasonable, but most times still unaffordable to me. I slept at the Elizabeth facility some semesters during my three years of study. Over time, the news about my situation spread like wildfire on campus and the seminary community in particular.

One fateful morning, the Dean of Student Affairs called me into her office to

inquire about my housing dilemma. I confirmed that I was indeed having difficulties with housing. She stressed the importance of finding a quick solution to my housing problem. She further stressed that I could not fully focus on my studies if I was at the same time struggling with housing. She finally noted that it was not healthy. I believed the Dean was implying that I find a place in a relatively short period or take a leave of absence until I could find a remedy to my economic plight. I vividly remember shedding tears as I walked away from the Dean's office. This was a critical moment in my pursuit of a theological education at Drew. A Good Samaritan offered to help, and on a couple of occasions, I slept at a rented apartment of another student who had decided to give me a helping hand. She offered her sitting room whenever the need arose. I slept at her residence on several occasions during one semester. Another family in downtown Madison offered their basement. On several occasions I slept in my vehicle during some very cold winter nights on Drew's campus. After several semesters of struggling with housing, I got relief through an act of divine intervention.

As a commuting student at Drew University, my strong faith and genuine commitment to always be in service of the Lord's work led me to worship with the Chester Bethel United Methodist Church in Wilmington, Delaware. The church offered housing that involved sharing a triple occupancy with two other Drew University students. This was a great relief and a tremendous assistance in keeping my commitment to graduate on schedule. In December 2010, I completed the requirement for the Master of Divinity Degree. My immigration saga and unpredicted struggles in navigating the treacherous waters of American life are still ongoing.

The frontiers of a new day and hopeful horizons of a better life in the United States are still unfolding. I look to the future as an immigrant with great hopes and aspirations for an immigration reform in the United States that will afford us the opportunity to stay and continue to contribute to America's development. Returning to Liberia seems elusive at the moment. As I write this narrative, the news coming out of a country that I have not visited since 2002 is bleak and unpredictable. Ebola is sweeping the nation. Because of this disease, many of those we left behind are no longer victims of war. They are now being decimated by a virus called Ebola. What lies ahead in this human catastrophe and how it will come to be eradicated remains a mystery.

As I sit on the balcony of a one-bedroom apartment here in Delaware, I am amazed by the power of resilience in my people. As they fight the battle of disease and survival, I am wondering what is to become of our unending immigration saga in the United States. However, what keeps me hopeful is my faith in the unchanging hands of God. Hopeful that there will come a day when the millions of immigrants in this country facing the very difficult challenges of immigration, acculturation, and assimilation will have a comfortable seat at the table in America. They will share their testimonies for posterity about how tedious the journey was in becoming a part of the American fabric. That day is what I hope to see in my life's journey.

Elder Mary Brown

Mother Mary Brown is an elder in the congregation at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church. Mother Brown is a retired rural communications employee of the Liberian Rural Communications Network. She began her journey to the United States in 1995. Addressing the gathering at the retreat, she said her journey to the United States was

under very difficult circumstances. The first part of her journey actually began when heavy fighting engulfed the Liberian capital of Monrovia. The fighting was between forces loyal to General Prince Johnson of the Independent National Patriotic Front. This Front is a breakaway faction from the main rebel National Patriotic Front of former President Charles Taylor. She and her family lived on the outskirts of the Liberian capital in the Paynesville area. They walked between two rebel forces on the one hand and government forces on the other. She explained that she and her children walked about 75 kilometers from Monrovia to the border with the Ivory Coast where they sought refuge.

Like many Liberians fleeing the civil war, the Brown family resided in neighboring Ivory Coast for five years before managing to migrate to the United States. Speaking to the gathering at the retreat, she was reflective on those difficult and challenging times in Ivory Coast where her family did not understand the national language. The language barrier became an incredible impediment to the survival of she and her family. All the money she and her husband had in their possession was confiscated by a band of militia fighters.

Life was daunting, unpredictable and emotionally stressful. Reflecting on the experience, she said that God was a reliable source of comfort during the time in the French speaking Ivory Coast. They depended on remittances from family and relatives in the United States while there. Mother Brown stated that despite their personal struggles, they began a campaign to fight for the rights of Liberians under the refugee convention of the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). After many civic engagements and pleading with Ivorian authorities in the town of Dianne for help, the UNHCR finally intervened. She explained that they sought redress and were finally

granted a possibility for repatriation and resettlement to a third country. After nearly five years of waiting, the final green light was given for their documents to be processed for a third country. It was the United States. Now sixty-five, Mother Brown attributes her immigration journey to the United States as an act of divine intervention. Many died in Liberia she told the audience gathered at the retreat. “To be here,” she graciously explains, “is an act of the almighty God. Many died in the civil conflict, many were bruised as a result of this senseless conflict but me and my children made it to America. This is a remarkable day, a day where we can come together through this wonderful experience to share and to look back again. Looking back and appreciating God for all God has done for us.” She concluded by citing the 23rd Psalms and then taking her seat.

Agnes Dolo

Agnes is sixteen years old. She is a daughter of one of our congregation’s committed stewards, and has a genuine desire for serving God. She is a committed youth member and former leader of the Youth Department. While sharing her story of immigration and acculturation in America, she reflected on the time of her arrival and the challenges she experienced navigating American life. Her presentation is in full text below:

My name is Agnes Dolo. I am African. I came to the United States in 2004 when I was seven years old. Starting school for me was challenging because I didn’t know much English nor did I have adequate knowledge of the culture of my peers. Being around the kids in my class helped me to grasp some words and understand English better. It took me a year and a half to learn to speak American English. The first day of school in the United States I was bullied because the kids couldn’t understand what I was saying. They did not like me because I was different. I wanted to quit school, and every morning I would be unhappy to attend school. My dad helped me through the challenges. He bought me software called, “Mavis Beacon.” This educational software helped me to type

faster, to learn more English, and to comprehend stories. Now, I am one of the smartest kids in class. Many kids come to me to help them with their homework. It feels good. At once, I feel I belong. When I first arrived in the US I was in an ESL program for about five months. Five months into the program, my teacher said because of my fast progress and improvement, there was no need to continue. She congratulated me on my progress. Since then, I have continued to be at the top of my class each year. I graduated from sixth grade at Parkland Elementary with honors and achievement awards. I am in the National Society, and based on my conduct and good grades, I was able to attend private school. I attended Blessed Virgin Mary School (BMV). The First year at BMV was hard for me. The method was challenging but I still went through it and graduated with honors. My first year in High School was great. I have achieved honors and am involved in the National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS). I want to be a pediatrician and I am working towards achieving that goal. I just want you to know that there is nothing in this world that you cannot do. It doesn't matter where you come from, you can do the impossible once you believe in yourself, and remember your background. Through my journey I will never forget where God brought me from.

Mr. Ernest Knowlden

Another person to speak at the gathering was a father of 4 children. His immigration dilemma was very interesting. Of his 4 children, 3 live in the United States and his oldest daughter lives in Liberia. Two of his 3 children in the US are American citizens. His other daughter is a holder of the DED just as he is. His current struggle is whether his seventeen year-old daughter, soon to graduate high school, will ever have the opportunity to go to college. It is worrisome and difficult for a father to see his incredibly talented daughter's possibility for college limited by her immigration status. He tells our gathering, "Immigration laws in this country cannot and will not limit my daughter from attending college in this country!" Speaking passionately and about the plight of the immigrant, Mr. Knowlden admonished the gathering at the retreat to commit to serving God.

He shares that one of the many challenges encountered in the United States is the emotional stress related to fear of the expiration of the DED. Each time he notes that their DED is about to end, he is bombarded with questions from his daughter. She worries about what they would do if the DED was failed to be extended for another year. His deep faith in God is what keeps his sanity and emotional well being in tact. He cites one of his favorite biblical verses from Jeremiah 29. This was one of the Bible verses highlighted at the retreat to remind them of the power of scripture in alleviating and easing some of the pain of the immigrant.

For Earnest Knowlden, a key official of the Men's Department at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church, his arrival in the United States was not coincidental, but ordained by God. As a DED holder since 2001, he remained hopeful of a better tomorrow for him and his children in an America that will accept and treat him as a full human being. Since arrival in the United States, God has been and will continue to be his protector. Addressing the general gathering of immigrants at the retreat, he lamented the Liberian immigration experience in the United States. He shared that he was "emotionally destroyed by the feeling of always wanting to belong," and that he "feels let down by the system. How can I succeed in a system that is stacked against us?" He posed this question to those gathered at the retreat. He concluded by urging the audience to keep the faith and keep fighting for full recognition.

The Acculturation and Immigration Survey

As a part of the retreat, participants were asked to complete a specially developed survey that would help to inform us of their status and issues relative to immigration and acculturation. The survey is outlined below:

1. My current immigration status is:

- a. I am an American Citizen
- b. I am in the U.S. under Temporary Protective Status (TPS)
- c. Other

2. I have lived in the U.S. for:

- a. Less than 2 years
- b. Between 2 and 5 years
- c. Between 5 and 10 years
- d. Between 10 and 20 years
- e. Over 20 years
- f. I was born in the U.S.

3. My age is:

- a. 17 years or under
- b. Between 18 and 25 years of age
- c. Between 25 and 40 years of age
- d. Between 41 and 60 years of age
- e. Over age 60

4. If you or someone in your family has Temporary Protective Status, please select the statement that best applies:

- a. TPS Status has had little or no effect on living and working here in the U.S.
- b. TPS Status sometimes causes problems with living and working in the U.S.
- c. TPS Status frequently causes problems in terms of living and working in the U.S.

- d. TPS Status affects me or my family member in many ways and/or most of the time in terms of living and working in the U.S.
 - e. This question does not apply to me or any family member.
5. At this point in time, do you consider yourself to be:
- a. Definitely "more Liberian" than American.
 - b. Somewhat "more Liberian" than American.
 - c. Pretty evenly Liberian and American.
 - d. Somewhat "more American" than Liberian.
 - e. Definitely "more American" than Liberian.
6. Do you wear traditional Liberian dress or clothing:
- a. All the time
 - b. Most of the time
 - c. It varies, I wear both styles of dress comfortably.
 - d. Sometimes, for special occasions.
 - e. Never or hardly ever
7. Do you speak Liberian vernacular:
- a. Most or all of the time.
 - b. I speak Liberian and English interchangeably.
 - c. I don't speak Liberian very often.
 - d. I never speak Liberian, though I know the language.
 - e. I do not know how to speak Liberian.
8. Do American cultural influences affect how Liberians can practice their own culture here in the U.S.?

- a. Yes, a lot.
 - b. Yes, quite a bit.
 - c. Sometimes, it depends on the situation.
 - d. Not very much.
 - e. Hardly at all.
9. In thinking about my life in Liberia, and my life here in the U.S., I would say:
- a. Overall, my life in the U.S. is much better than my life was in Liberia.
 - b. Overall, my life in the U.S. is usually better than my life in Liberia.
 - c. Overall, my life here and my life in Liberia were both pretty much satisfactory.
 - d. Overall, my life here in the U.S. is worse than my life was in Liberia.
 - e. I have never lived in Liberia, or I left when I was very young.
10. Please select from the following choices. Choose the one that best expresses your opinion:
- a. If I am given the option of remaining in the U.S. as a legal resident, I would definitely stay.
 - b. If I am given the option of remaining in the U.S. as a legal resident, I would probably stay.
 - c. If it were just up to me, I might not stay in the U.S. even if I had the option to stay.
 - d. If it were just up to me, I would definitely want to return to Liberia.
 - e. This question doesn't apply to my situation, OR I am already a U.S. citizen.

The Closing Jubilee Service

Celebrations are essential in the African tradition. In the Black prophetic tradition, milestones in life's history and the history of an African people is celebrated. As

fundamental to this creed and theological disposition that sees a time and a season for everything under the earth, a service of celebration was held at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church to rejoice. The event took place on April 29, 2014 at a service of festivity and appreciation to YHWH for the immigrant experience. The Reverend Dr. Melinda Contreras-Byrd, my Faculty Advisor, graciously agreed to participate in the retreat on short notice as another speaker was unable to attend due to a family crisis. Using Hebrews 10 as a theological proposition for a suffering people, Rev. Dr. Contreras-Byrd emboldened the congregation to take solace in God in their toils and struggles. She called on the congregation to recall many of the tests and trials the prophets of old including Moses and Abraham encountered on the pilgrimage to the land of promise and peace. The service was followed by the sharing of traditional Liberian dishes to commemorate the climax of a wonderful project that had left many positive imprints upon the community.

CHAPTER 3
PROJECT FINDINGS

As previously stated, the project programming began with a 9-week Bible study.

It was well attended and surpassed our expectations.

February 9: participants	20
February 16: participants	30
February 23: participants	38
February 23: participants	40
March 2: participants	44
March 9: participants	43
March 16: participants	40
March 23 participants	40
March 30 participants	35

Attendance ranged from 20-43 three people with an average of 36 in attendance.

Post Bible Study Interviews and Survey

What is clear from the post survey responses is that an overwhelming majority of the respondents were in support of the project. Some described the project as therapeutic and spiritually renewing. They saw it as creating a new spirit of hope and raising aspirations for a better future for the community. The majority of the 50 respondents to the post survey questions praised the project and looked forward to future projects. The data collected during home visits also turned out to be overwhelmingly in support of the project. The majority of those engaged through home visits expressed a great degree of satisfaction with the impact the project had brought to the community. Many urged the researcher to continue organizing, galvanizing, and uniting the congregation. They pledged to work as enablers and strategic partners in promoting unity and solidarity in the community. The full evaluation form is in the appendix.

The Acculturation Retreat

There were 45 people who attended the entire retreat. A number of people came to a portion of the retreat but did not complete it. There were 10 people who spoke about their personal immigration experiences, but 6 of them were willing to give full personal narratives and to be quoted in this paper.

The were common elements to the narratives:

1. The experience of living in refugee camps
2. The experience leaving their homeland out of desperation
3. The willingness to do whatever is necessary to provide for the welfare of their children

4. Frustration over the inability to visit Liberia

Hearing the stories elicited tears from many Liberian listeners as old memories were uncovered. The struggle was made real by listening to the level of sacrifice and hardship that was part of their journey here. Some noted that whereas religion had been part of their life, this project raised the awareness, for the first time, that faith and God was a part of this struggle as well.

The speakers were well received. One African American speaker noted the Black experience in the US and how it mirrored some aspects of the Liberian immigration struggle. Participants were educated in African American history, the connection between Liberia and African Americans, and the need for solidarity amongst both groups. A White participant spoke about the issue from the point of the dominant culture here in the US and the US history of racism and stereotype. A final Liberian participant spoke about legal and socio-interpersonal issues as they pertain to the Liberian community. Issues for Liberians seeking to acculturate include:

1. Rethinking or adjusting to US ideas of gender roles, rights, and responsibilities
2. High dropout and truancy rates among Liberian youth who are bullied and frustrated by the lack of language skills needed for school success
3. A lack of understanding of the laws in the US that differ from the cultural thinking of Africa, i.e. drinking and driving, acceptable child discipline tactics, spousal abuse, etc.

Sixty surveys¹ were completed. Not all questions were answered on each survey, but the majority of people completed them. Responses were broken into age groups. There were a total of 50 respondents to question 1. Analysis of the responses show that the majority of those in attendance held TPS status. There were a total of 53 respondents to question 2, most of whom had lived in the US between 10-20 years. To question 3, there were a total of 53 respondents, most of whom were between 25-60 years of age. There were a total of 51 respondents to question 4, however an issue with the data makes it impossible to determine the outcome. There were a total of 50 respondents to question 5. The majority of those who responded regardless of age felt that they were more Liberian than American. The age group 17 and under included a total of 6 people who felt equally American and Liberian. On question 6, there were a total of 50 respondents. The majority stated that they do wear traditional Liberian dress but only for special occasions. Eight of the respondents reported that they never wear traditional dress. Interestingly, they were not in the younger age groups. It is important to note that the wearing of traditional clothing is controversial even in Liberia where western clothing is preferred. To question 7, there were a total of 49 respondents, and the majority, 26 people, stated that they spoke both Liberian dialect and English equally. There were a total of 50 respondents to question 8. Twenty-one said that they felt that the American culture greatly influenced Liberian's practice of their own culture here in the US. Ten respondents felt that it did but only to a limited extent. To question 9, there were a total of 50 respondents, the largest majority of which, felt that their lives here were far better than they had been in Liberia.

¹ The full Acculturation and Immigration survey is listed in the appendix.

Finally, to question 10, there were a total of 48 respondents. Of those respondents, the question did not apply to 20 of them. Based upon discussions and knowledge of participants, the reason for seeing the question as irrelevant was either because they were already a citizen or because they no longer held a desire to return to Liberia. The next highest number of responses, 18, indicated that they would, "definitely want to stay in the US" if given the option.

The Jubilee Service

The service was a three hour service of celebration. Members were not asked to wear traditional garb, but most did. The attendance was good. Members were requested to assemble outside the church and then enter singing. Both the English singing choir sang as well as the Traditional choir who sang in Kpelleh and played traditional instruments. The sermon was about the excellence of God, and the need to cultivate a genuine faith that can bring people through the storms of life. At the close of service everyone went downstairs and fellowshiped while enjoying traditional Liberian cuisine.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The project included several program areas. The first was a nine-week Bible study. The second was a retreat focused on the issues associated with the experience of acculturation and immigration within the Liberian community. This was a two-part, one-day retreat. The first part was devoted to the sharing of personal narratives by selected Liberian immigrant participants. They each shared the struggles they endured, living the life of an immigrant in America. One highlight of the retreat was the thorough, open, and engaging discussions. The second part of the retreat was presentations by professional speakers. Finally, the project ended with a Jubilee Service to give thanks to God for the lives of immigrants in America. The results and findings are highlighted in the pages following.

It is overwhelmingly clear to the researcher, the teachers, the participants, and the congregants that the project was a tremendous, uplifting success. Dynamic educators, speakers, and trained facilitators created a rewarding retreat. These included some of the most highly skilled in educational and religious fields: Chaplain Aarona Cooper, teacher and community advocate, graduate of Drew University Theological Seminary, class of 2010; Mr. Moses Sandy, Liberian journalist and graduate of the Temple University School of Social Work; and Rev. Dr. Melinda Contreras-Byrd, Faculty Advisor of Drew University DMIN Program. Others included trained and talented members of the Advisory Team of the project previously listed. All brought to the retreat tremendous

inspiration and contributed to the viability and the successful completion of the project. The training and teachings, the lectures and speakers, as well as the Jubilee Service inspired the participants greatly.

The findings from the acculturation retreat are presented below. The intent of the retreat was to teach, inspire, and empower our people. They provide a clear narrative designed to give the reader and those in the academy a deeper understanding of the life challenges of African migration to the United States. Retreat speakers spoke from their hearts and brought substantial educational knowledge to share with the congregation. The retreat focused on the significance of acculturation, assimilation, and the problems facing Liberian immigrants in America. A brief summary of the messages from the retreat speakers are detailed in the paragraphs below, beginning with Chaplain Cooper who informed the participants on the historical and theological significance of Blackness in America.

Chaplain Aarona Cooper

Chaplain Cooper illustrated the significance of the power of the presence of God in our midst. She remarked that despite the challenges that our people have encountered and continue to experience, it is true and clear that a radiant air of divine inclination is keeping alive the spirits of our people. She likened our suffering to that of Israel in captivity in Egypt, and our hope, solace, and comfort as theirs in Yahweh.¹ Chaplain Cooper stressed that the struggle for freedom for Black people in America has never been realized without a redemptive collaboration of prophetic Black voices. Black prophetic tradition teaches that liberation for any marginalized group, as Blacks in America, is

¹ Is 40-55.

based upon holding to a vision that a pathway is always possible for poor and oppressed people. This is the vision that Africans, Black Americans, have lived with for generations in America.

While it is true that progress was made, continues to be made in America, Chaplain Cooper lamented that inequality is still ingrained in the culture. Encouraging those gathered at the retreat to seek comfort in God and the march to freedom. Working together in these engagements, further signifies the central theme of the social justice ministry. Cooper urged us as a community to learn the fundamental experiences from the Freedom Riders of the Civil Rights Movement. A clarion call went up from the children of Israel that was poignantly and prophetically stated through the Prophet Isaiah's declaration. She concluded by encouraging participants to know God is with them in their everyday struggles and challenges:

In the wilderness prepare the way of YHWH; make plain straight in the desert a way of our God. Every valley shall be lifted up and mount and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall be revealed, and all People shall see together, for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.²

Moses Sandy

Speaker, Moses Sandy, a Liberian journalist and social worker in the city of Philadelphia, spoke of multiculturalism and the African immigrant experience in America as we are to succeed in America. For Africans and immigrants in general to succeed in America, they have an obligation to understand the laws of the land, local and national, US laws. The project therefore brought in lecturers to the retreat to address some of the

² Is 40:3-5.

difficult challenges the community encounters on a daily basis while navigating the systems of local and constitutional democracy in America.

Moses Sandy has not only a Liberian cultural heritage, but he has also adapted and acculturated into the dominant culture. As a trained and educated Case Manager and Social Worker, Mr. Sandy was able to bring the message home to our people. Speaking to the gathering, Mr. Sandy encouraged those attending the retreat to work to live within the confines of the laws. He admonished the many men at the retreat to appreciate the role of the woman and US societal norms that encourage equal participation for both genders. He spoke about the issue of truancy, language barriers, bullying due to accents, and the inability of the working and overwhelmed parents to assist struggling students. As a social worker, Mr. Sandy admonished the youth at the retreat to learn to listen to their parents and attend to their educational responsibilities. The future and current challenges of acculturating to an American culture, Mr. Sandy cautioned, are to understand that such goal of attainment is never achieved without sacrifice and dedication.

He enumerated the following as some of the problems immigrants in the Liberian community face as a result of the acculturated and assimilated landscape of living in the United States:

African immigrants who come to the US as visitors or with defined immigration status often have problems adjusting to life in the country and upon returning to their native lands. Those people are often separated from their family members who are in Africa. The lack of legal status makes it difficult for them to reunite with their families or bring them to the US. Additionally, the woes of Africans resettling in the US are also compounded by their ignorance of the laws. Most African immigrants run into trouble with the US legal system as a result of their limited knowledge of state and federal laws in the country. In addition, they are often arrested and thrown into prison for offenses such as domestic violence, child abuse, and driving under the influence of either drugs or alcohol (DUI).

Following Mr. Sandy's presentation, a considerable applause came from the audience, a resounding manifestation of the appreciation of the community, especially those of Liberian heritage. The mothers and the sisters appreciated the clarity and the incredible analyses Mr. Sandy and all the speakers brought to the discussions after the question and answer session. The young and the old came to a standing ovation for the speakers at the retreat.

The Youth Participation

For a church as we are, an essential component of the future of the congregation is the youth of the church. The youth response was participatory, genuine, and commendable. Many of the young people in the congregation were grateful and shared several stories of triumph of their journey from Liberia to the United States. One of several accounts that stood out was a presentation by a 17 year-old student, Agnes Dolo, a daughter of one the members of the church congregation.

Future Work

Researching and programming for the project brought to light the little information available to US citizens about Liberians in general and those who live as immigrants in the US in particular. Through the project we have been energized to continue the platforms of the project.

The Analysis from the Retreat and Impact on the Congregation

The positive changes that the retreat brought as a result of the project are many. I will highlight significant ones. Before the retreat our people had no strong sense of solidarity in their life struggles as immigrants. It appears as though the project has created a vision to bring true transformation by forming a cohesive community. Congregants

have begun to focus much more on working together. An example of this new cohesiveness was demonstrated through the recent crisis in which we found ourselves during the Ebola crisis in the motherland of Liberia. The communicative tools of organizing that we adopted from the retreat and the Bible study created a consciousness in the congregation. In the Greater Philadelphia area and in surrounding areas, Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church has taken the leadership role to spread the news about the Ebola crisis facing Liberia and its neighbors of Guinea and Sierra Leone. Before the headlines were raging in the western newspapers, radio, and television networks, we were already involved in organizing collaboratively. Adding our voices and resources brought actual accounts of the effects of Ebola and the actual areas involved. We were able to gather remittances to help our people. This vibrant working mechanism developed through teamwork as a faith community helped to make aware the eyes and ears of the city of Philadelphia to help with donations to our suffering people in Liberia. A reflection of the human chain created connected peoples globally from Africa to the Americas, an illustrious demonstration of what affects one, affects all. It is this model that that is fundamental to our thinking. It is the aspiration of our people, our working together. It is a model we have adapted as a result of the project and its significant impact on the community of immigrants.

The inclusion of personal narratives was also a great benefit. Addressing one another's concerns within a framework of networking and support-building aided in fighting and eliminating some of the challenges we faced as immigrants. I believe that the burden will be easier to bear when we build an approach rooted in faith and liberation. We must learn to see Jesus in our experience. In building a viable network for change, we

must engage forces of like minds who will not see our experience in the US as a fairy tale; but rather the story of a true and just struggle needing their attention and empathy.

As James Cone wrote in *The God of The Oppressed*:

It is difficult to express this liberating truth in rational discourse alone; it must be told in a story. And when this truth is told as it was meant to be, the oppressed are transformed, taken into another world and given a glimpse of the Promised Land. And when they leave the church, they often say to one another the disciples said after having experienced the Risen Lord.³

Our story and the story of many immigrants is hard to raise in typical US discourse, but it must be made part of US social discourse and become a theological challenge that affirms the true meaning of the immigrant experience, our suffering and the challenges we face as a community. There is no other place more precisely suited to champion this cause than the church. The church is where we seek comfort in the arms of a liberating Christ. Our Christ is the true liberator, and the one who sees and identifies with our plight as immigrants.

This process of building social connectivity and social empowerment is now underway as a result of the building of the vehicles for this project. For the immigrant, to better assimilate into the American way of life means s/he must have better opportunities to share faith in an open and sacred space. The atmosphere at Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church is now much more relaxing, encouraging, and conducive to active participation. During this project, many of the members were trained and encouraged to participate in exercises aimed at expressing themselves. The method of teaching utilized in this project including the Bible study, the Acculturation Retreat, and the Jubilee Service were

³ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Orbis Books, 1975), 56.

participatory. The training of staff and participants to better understand American culture and to more easily assimilate were critical elements of the training sessions. Initiatives aimed at empowering members of the congregation in understanding American life and social contexts are continuously being reinforced as time progresses in this now on-going ministry effort.

Given the critical feedback on the project, I would say concretely that the project was a success. As a result of our outreach effort we have over 15 churches that have expressed interest in joining this DMIN project as an ongoing ministry.

The Radio Station

One of the significant achievements of our collaborative arrangement is the community radio project. It is a critical tool and platform to reach out to our people through a powerful communication medium. As a consequence of this project a radio ministry under the banner and canopy of the Christian Vision Broad Network was born. It is a community endeavor that will serve not only as a source of information for our people but also for those within the reach of our frequency. The radio station now broadcasts to the world and to our immediate community in Pennsylvania. It is a shining example of what people united by a cause can do to bring about transformation. Directly related to the project and its success is one of our radio programs called, "The Family Contact." It has begun to air on a Liberian radio station in Monrovia. Through this radio program another public affairs program was recently launched entitled, "The Morning Magazine." Liberians residing in the US have begun to reconnect with family and friends in Liberia. Using the power of radio, the immigrant has begun to have added

value to the Liberian community in the US and also to build bridges of hope that connects the human spirit.

Advisory Team

The Advisory Team members differed in their levels of engagement. One member was in the Congo and was unable to truly participate. I have learned not to select those who cannot participate fully. I became aware of the part that church politics and pastor support can play in the success of a program. Engaging committed members, determining key persons, and being clear and transparent about motives, program intentions, and results are all very important considerations.

Follow up with Post-Interviews

Another significant area of impact on the community was the Bible study. Follow-up interviews and post-Bible study survey results suggest a considerable level of appreciation for the project. Many in the congregation were glad that the teachings were on an intensive level and added to feelings of hope among participants. They noted the importance of seeing how their narratives mirrored Biblical narratives. The responses from the survey revealed that the Bible study was very effective.

Initially I was doubtful as to whether or not people may be interested in the exercise. There was little or no resistance to supporting the project. The willingness and the free spirit of people to help was wonderful. What I envision in the future is to encourage more people to participate in the sharing of struggles through their own personal stories. I would also include more of the shared narratives in the writing process.

APPENDIX 1

TEMPORARY PROTECTIVE STATUS

What is Temporary Protective Status¹

The Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a foreign country for TPS due to conditions in the country that temporarily prevent the country's nationals from returning safely, or in certain circumstances, where the country is unable to handle the return of its nationals adequately. USCIS may grant TPS to eligible nationals of certain countries (or parts of countries), who are already in the United States. Eligible individuals without nationality who last resided in the designated country may also be granted TPS.

The Secretary may designate a country for TPS due to the following temporary conditions in the country:

- Ongoing armed conflict (such as civil war)
- An environmental disaster (such as earthquake or hurricane), or an epidemic
- Other extraordinary and temporary conditions

During a designated period, individuals who are TPS beneficiaries or who are found preliminarily eligible for TPS upon initial review of their cases (*prima facie* eligible):

- Are not removable from the United States
- Can obtain an employment authorization document (EAD)
- May be granted travel authorization

Once granted TPS, an individual also cannot be detained by DHS on the basis of his or her immigration status in the United States.

TPS is a temporary benefit that does not lead to lawful permanent resident status or give any other immigration status. However, registration for TPS does not prevent you from:

- Applying for nonimmigrant status
- Filing for adjustment of status based on an immigrant petition
- Applying for any other immigration benefit or protection for which you may be eligible

PLEASE NOTE: To be granted any other immigration benefit you must still meet all the eligibility requirements for that particular benefit. An application for TPS does not affect an application for asylum or any other immigration benefit and vice versa. Denial of an application for asylum or any other immigration

¹ All of this data comes from the official website of the Department of Homeland Security, "Temporary Protected Status," Accessed February 27, 2015, <http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status-deferred-enforced-departure/temporary-protected-status>.

benefit does not affect your ability to register for TPS, although the grounds of denial of that application may also lead to denial of TPS.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for TPS, you must:

- Be a national of a country designated for TPS, or a person without nationality who last habitually resided in the designated country;
- File during the open initial registration or re-registration period, or you meet the requirements for late initial filing during any extension of your country's TPS designation (Late initial filers see '[Filing Late](#)' section below);
- Have been continuously physically present (CPP) in the United States since the effective date of the most recent designation date of your country; and
- Have been continuously residing (CR) in the United States since the date specified for your country. (See your country's TPS Web page to the left). The law allows an exception to the continuous physical presence and continuous residence requirements for brief, casual and innocent departures from the United States. When you apply or re-register for TPS, you must inform USCIS of all absences from the United States since the CPP and CR dates. USCIS will determine whether the exception applies in your case.

You may **NOT** be eligible for TPS or to maintain your existing TPS if you:

- Have been convicted of any felony or two or more misdemeanors committed in the United States;
- Are found inadmissible as an immigrant under applicable grounds in INA section 212(a), including non-waivable criminal and security-related grounds;
- Are subject to any of the mandatory bars to asylum. These include, but are not limited to, participating in the persecution of another individual or engaging in or inciting terrorist activity;
- Fail to meet the continuous physical presence and continuous residence in the United States requirements;
- Fail to meet initial or late initial TPS registration requirements; or
- If granted TPS, you fail to re-register for TPS, as required, without good cause.

What to File

You must include the necessary forms, evidence, fees or fee waiver when filing your TPS application. Below is information about what you must include in your TPS package. Please also check your country's specific TPS page to the left to see if there are any special filing instructions specific to your TPS designated country.

Forms

To register or re-register for TPS you must file:

1. [Form I-821, Application for Temporary Protected Status](#)
2. [Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#)

PLEASE NOTE: Both I-821 and I-765 forms must be filed even if you do not want an Employment Authorization Document.

If you are aware when you apply that a relevant ground of inadmissibility applies to you and you need a waiver to obtain TPS, please include a [Form I-601, Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility](#), and fee or fee waiver request, with your TPS application package. However, you do not need to file a new Form I-601 for an incident that USCIS has already waived with a prior TPS application. USCIS may grant a waiver of certain inadmissibility grounds for humanitarian purposes, to assure family unity, or when it is in the public interest.

These forms are **free** and available on the forms section of the USCIS website at: www.uscis.gov/forms or by calling the toll-free USCIS Forms Hotline at 1-800-870-3676. Please look below at the fee chart to see what fees you must pay (a properly documented fee waiver request may be submitted. If you do not pay the proper fees (or submit a proper fee waiver request), your application will be rejected.

Evidence

When filing an initial TPS application, you must submit:

- **Identity and Nationality Evidence:** to demonstrate your identity and that you are a national of a country designated for TPS (or that you have no nationality and you last habitually resided in a country designated for TPS)
- **Date of Entry Evidence:** to demonstrate when you entered the United States
- **Continuously Residing (CR) Evidence:** to demonstrate that you have been in the United States since the CR date specified for your country (See your country's TPS Web page to the left)

Any document that is not in English must be accompanied by a complete English translation. The translator must certify that:

- He or she is competent both in English and the foreign language used in the original document; and
- the translation is true and correct to the best of his or her ability, knowledge and belief.

Identity and Nationality Evidence

We encourage you to submit primary evidence, if available. If USCIS does not find that the documents you submit with your application are sufficient, we will send you a request for additional evidence. If you cannot submit primary evidence of your identity and nationality, you may submit the secondary evidence listed below with your application.

The following table explains the different types of evidence you can provide.

Primary Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A copy of your passport ● A copy of your birth certificate, accompanied by photo identification ● Any national identity document bearing your photograph or fingerprint (or both) issued by your country, including such documents issued by your country's Embassy or Consulate in the United States. Such as a national ID card or naturalization certificate
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<p>No Primary Evidence</p>	<p>If you do not have any of the primary evidence listed above, you must submit an affidavit with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proof of your unsuccessful efforts to obtain such documents; and ● An explanation why the consular process for your country was unavailable to you, and affirming that you are a national of your country. <p>USCIS will interview you regarding your identity and nationality, and you may also submit additional evidence of your nationality and identity then if available.</p>
<p>Secondary Evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nationality documentation, such as a naturalization certificate, even if it does not have your photograph and fingerprint ● Your baptismal certificate if it indicates your nationality or a parent's nationality ● Copies of your school or medical records if they have information supporting your claim that you are a national from a country designated for TPS ● Copies of other immigration documents showing your nationality and identity ● Affidavits from friends or family members who have close personal knowledge of the date and place of your birth and your parents' nationality. The person making the affidavit should include information about how he or she knows you or is related to you, and how he or she knows the details of the date and place of your birth and the nationality of your parents. The nationality of your parents is of importance if you are from a country where nationality is derived from a parent.

You may also provide any other document or information that you believe helps show your nationality.

PLEASE NOTE: Birth in a TPS designated country does not always mean you are a national from that country. Please see your TPS designated country's nationality laws for further information.

Date of Entry Evidence

- A copy of your passport
- I-94 Arrival/Departure Record
- Copies of documents specified in the 'Continuous Residing Evidence' section below

Continuously Residing (CR) Evidence

- Employment Records

- Rent receipts, utility bills, receipts or letters from companies
- School records from the schools that you or your children have attended in the U.S.
- Hospital or medical records concerning treatment or hospitalization of you or your children
- Attestations by church, union or other organization officials who know you and where you have been residing

Please see the I-821 Form Instructions for more details on acceptable evidence.

When and Where to File

For information about when and where you must file your TPS application, please see the country specific pages to the left.

Application Process

Step 1: File Your Petition

Once you have prepared your TPS package with the forms, evidence and filing fees (or request for a fee waiver), you will need to send it to the address indicated on your TPS country page to the left. Please make sure you **sign your application** and include the **correct fee** amount (or fee waiver request). These are the two of the most common mistakes USCIS receives on TPS applications. Please look above at the fee chart to see what fees you must pay (a properly documented fee waiver request may be submitted). If you do not pay the proper fees (or submit a proper fee waiver request), your application will be rejected.

Step 2: USCIS Receives Your Application

When USCIS receives your application, we will review it for completeness and for the proper fees or a properly documented fee waiver request. If your case meets the basic acceptance criteria, your application will be entered into our system and we will send you a receipt notice. At the top of this notice you will find a receipt number which can be used to check the [status of your case](#) online.

If you do not receive your receipt notice within three weeks of filing, you can call Customer Service at 1-800-375-5283 to request assistance. If your application is rejected at the initial review stage, you may re-file within the registration period after correcting the problems described in the USCIS notification.

If your application was rejected because we determined you were not eligible for a fee waiver, you may submit a new TPS package. Go to the 'Fee Waiver' section above for more information.

Step 3: USCIS Contacts You

If USCIS needs to collect your photograph, signature, and/or fingerprints (these are called biometrics), USCIS will send you an appointment notice to have your biometrics captured at an Application Support Center ([ASC](#)). Every TPS applicant over 14 years old must have their biometrics collected. Biometrics are required for identity verification, background checks and the production of an EAD, if one has been requested.

In certain situations, such as when it's impossible to take a fingerprint, USCIS can waive the collection of biometrics. In some cases, we may be able to reuse the biometrics previously collected in association with your previous TPS application. Even if you do not need to attend an ASC appointment, you still need to pay the biometrics fee (if required) to help cover costs associated with reusing your biometrics.

Step 4: Go to the ASC

When you report to an ASC, you must bring:

1. Evidence of nationality and identity with a photograph of you, such as a passport
2. Your receipt notice
3. Your ASC appointment notice
4. Your current EAD, if you already have one

If you cannot make your scheduled appointment, you may reschedule. To reschedule an ASC appointment, make a copy of your appointment notice to retain for your records, then mail the original notice with your rescheduling request to the ASC address listed on the notice. You should submit your request for rescheduling as soon as you know you have an unavoidable conflict on your scheduled ASC date. A new appointment notice will be sent to you by mail. Please note that rescheduling a biometrics appointment may cause the adjudication of your application to be delayed.

If you need an accommodation due to a disability that affects your ability to go to the ASC, please go to the [Requesting Accommodations for Disabilities](#) webpage for more information.

WARNING: If you fail to appear for your ASC appointment without rescheduling, or if you repeatedly miss scheduled ASC appointments, your TPS application could be denied for abandonment.

If there is an emergency need for you to travel abroad for humanitarian reasons, you may request expedited processing on your advance parole application (Form I-131) after you have appeared at an [ASC](#) for your biometrics appointment. Please see the travel section below for more information.

Step 5: USCIS Determines Work Eligibility

If you are not seeking an employment authorization document (EAD), skip to Step 6.

Step 6: USCIS Adjudicates the Application

During this phase, we may ask you for additional documents to establish your eligibility for TPS. If you receive a request for evidence (RFE) or a notice of intent to deny, it is extremely important that you respond immediately to avoid processing delays and possible denial for failure to timely respond. Upon completion of your case, USCIS will notify you if your request for TPS is granted or denied. If one of the waivable grounds of inadmissibility applies to you, USCIS will give you an opportunity to submit a [Form I-601, Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility if you did not include this with your TPS package](#). Please submit this form within the time frame specified in the USCIS notice, or your case will be denied.

Step 7: USCIS Approves or Denies the Application

If your application for TPS is...	Then...
Approved and you filed an initial application	USCIS will send you an approval notice and an EAD, if you requested one and haven't received it before this step.
Approved and you filed a re-registration application	USCIS will send you an approval notice if you do not request an EAD. USCIS will send you a new EAD if you do request one.

Denied	USCIS will send you a letter indicating the reason for your denial and, if applicable, provide you with the opportunity to appeal the denial .
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Maintaining TPS

Once you are granted TPS, you must re-register during each re-registration period to maintain TPS benefits. This applies to all TPS beneficiaries, including those who were initially granted by USCIS, an Immigration Judge, or the BIA. Follow the instructions above to apply for re-registration.

[Return to the top](#)

Automatic Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Extension

Sometimes DHS must issue a blanket automatic extension of the expiring EADs for TPS beneficiaries of a specific country in order to allow time for EADs with new validity dates to be issued. If your country's EADs have been automatically extended, it will be indicated on your country specific pages to the left.

Filing Late

Late Re-Registration for TPS

USCIS may accept a late re-registration application if you have good cause for filing after the end of the re-registration period of your country. You must submit a letter that explains your reason for filing late with your re-registration application.

If you file your TPS re-registration application late, processing may be delayed and can lead to gaps in your work authorization.

Late Initial Filing for TPS

You can apply for TPS for the first time during an extension of your country's TPS designation period. If you qualify to file your initial TPS application late, you must still independently meet all the TPS eligibility requirements listed in the Eligibility section above.

To qualify to file your initial TPS application late, you must meet at least one of the late initial filing conditions below:

- During either the initial registration period of your country's designation or during any subsequent initial registration period if your country was re-designated you met one of the following conditions, and you register while the condition still exists or within a 60-day period immediately following the expiration or termination of such condition
 - You were a nonimmigrant, were granted voluntary departure status, or any relief from removal
 - You had an application for change of status, adjustment of status, asylum, voluntary departure, or any relief from removal which was pending or subject to further review or appeal
 - You were a parolee or had a pending request for re-parole
 - You are a spouse of an individual who is currently eligible for TPS

OR

- During either the initial registration period of your country's designation or during any subsequent initial registration period if your country was re-designated you were a child of an individual who is currently eligible for TPS. There is no time limitation on filing if you meet this condition. So if your parent is currently eligible for TPS and you were his or her child (unmarried and under 21 years old) at any time during a TPS initial registration period for your country, you may still be eligible for late initial filing even if you are now over 21 years old or married. You may file during an extension of your TPS designated country.

Please check your country-specific Web page for the dates of the initial registration period or periods that apply for late initial filing.

PLEASE NOTE: You cannot obtain TPS as a derivative because your parent or child has TPS.

Travel

If you have TPS and wish to travel outside the United States, you must apply for a travel authorization. Travel authorization for TPS is issued as an advance parole document if USCIS determines it is appropriate to approve your request. This document gives you permission to leave the United States and return during a specified period of time. To apply for advance parole, you must file Form I-131, Application for Travel Document (see form on right). If you leave the United States without requesting advance parole, you may lose TPS and you may not be permitted to re-enter the United States.

If USCIS is still adjudicating your TPS application, you may miss important USCIS notices, such as Requests for Additional Evidence, while you are outside the U.S. Failure to respond to these requests may result in the denial of your application.

We encourage you to read and understand the travel warning on Form I-131 before requesting advance parole, even if you have been granted TPS. If you have been unlawfully present in the U.S. for any period of time, you may want to seek legal advice before requesting advance parole for travel.

Change of Address

If your address changes after you file your application, you must notify USCIS immediately. For information about how to notify USCIS go to www.uscis.gov/addresschange.

Help Filing an Application

Please be aware that some [unauthorized practitioners](#) may try to take advantage of you by claiming they can file TPS forms. These same individuals may ask that you pay them to file such forms. We want to ensure that all potential TPS applicants know how to obtain legitimate, accurate legal advice and assistance. A list of accredited representatives and free or low-cost legal providers is available on the USCIS website on the [finding legal advice](#) Web page.

TPS Granted by an Immigration Judge or the Board of Immigration Appeals

Step 1: If an Immigration Judge (IJ) or the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) granted you TPS, you must provide USCIS with proof of the TPS grant (such as a final order from the IJ or final decision from the BIA) when you file for your first TPS benefit (such as an EAD, travel authorization, or with your first TPS re-registration application filed with USCIS). You should also submit a copy of the I-821 TPS application that the IJ or the BIA approved.

Step 2: See the table below for filing information based on the first TPS benefit you are requesting after an IJ or BIA granted you TPS.

If the first TPS benefit you are requesting is...	Then you must...	And...
Your first EAD,	File Form I-765 only with required fee(s) or fee waiver request. You must also submit a cover sheet that states "DO NOT REJECT - TPS GRANTED BY IJ/BIA."	Send your Form I-765 to the mailing address on your country specific page to the left.
Travel Authorization	Form I-131 with required fee	Send your Form I-131 to the mailing address in the form instructions.
Your first re-registration NOTE: Even if you were granted TPS by an IJ or the BIA, you must re-register with USCIS during each future extension period for your country.	File Form I-821 and Form I-765 with required fee(s) or a fee waiver request. See re-registration instructions above.	Send your TPS package to the mailing address on your country specific page to the left.

Step 3: USCIS will send you a receipt notice. Once you get the receipt notice, immediately send an email to the TPS IJ grant email box at the Service Center processing your application.

When emailing the appropriate TPS IJ grant email box, please include the following information:

1. Your name
2. Your date of birth
3. The receipt number for your application
4. Your A-number
5. The date the IJ or BIA finally granted you TPS (Note: To be final, your IJ order granting TPS must not be subject to further appeal, or your BIA decision granting TPS must not be subject to further review.)

For further information concerning TPS and its requirements please go to www.uscis.gov/tps

APPENDIX 2

GENERAL EVALUATION FORM

This form is designed to assist in critically analyzing and evaluating the just ended Bible Study. Please share with us from your perspective and observation; or check the appropriate answer.

I. Project **The**

1. Is the title appropriate?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Did the project address the issues as they were prescribed by the title?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Somewhat (why?)_____

II. Theology and Ministry

1. How would you rate the theology and ministry of the candidate (Associate Pastor) in this project?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Very Good
 - c. Good
 - d. Needing Improvement
 - e. Comment

III. Participation

1. How would you rate or comment on the participation of the candidate (Associate pastor) and the Faith-Immanuel Lutheran Church family in which the project (Bible study) was carried out? _____
2. Did the role of the Leadership Advisory Team help facilitate the project? If yes, How?
 - (a) Yes
(How?)_____

(b) No

IV. AIM AND OBJECTIVE

1. Was the aim and objective of the study clearly defined?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
 - (c) Comment _____

2. From your own prospective, did the candidate achieve his objective (goal)?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
 - (c) Comment _____

3. Did the project (Bible study) make any impact on the congregation? If so, in what way?

4. If the aim and objective of the study (project) was not achieved, what would you recommend to the author (candidate)?

V. Pastor's (Candidate's) Own Evaluation

1. How did the pastor (candidate) feel about the project relative to planning, implementation and the end results?

 2. What is the Candidate's (Associate Pastor's) plan for future ministry?

-

Immigration and Acculturation
Survey Questions

1. My current immigration status is:

- d. I am an American Citizen
- e. I am in the U.S. under Temporary Protective Status (TPS)
- f. Other

2. I have lived in the U.S. for:

- g. Less than 2 years
- h. Between 2 and 5 years
- i. Between 5 and 10 years
- j. Between 10 and 20 years
- k. Over 20 years
- l. I was born in the U.S.

3. My age is:

- f. 17 years or under
- g. Between 18 and 25 years of age
- h. Between 25 and 40 years of age
- i. Between 41 and 60 years of age
- j. Over age 60

4. If you or someone in your family has Temporary Protective Status, please select the statement that best applies:

- f. TPS Status has had little or no effect on living and working here in the U.S.
 - g. TPS Status sometimes causes problems with living and working in the U.S.
 - h. TPS Status frequently causes problems in terms of living and working in the U.S.
-
- i. TPS Status affects me or my family member in many ways and/or most of the time in terms of living and working in the U.S.
 - j. This question does not apply to me or any family member.
5. At this point in time, do you consider yourself to be:
- f. Definitely "more Liberian" than American.
 - g. Somewhat "more Liberian" than American.
 - h. Pretty evenly Liberian and American.
 - i. Somewhat "more American" than Liberian.
 - j. Definitely "more American" than Liberian.
6. Do you wear traditional Liberian dress or clothing:
- f. All the time
 - g. Most of the time
 - h. It varies, I wear both styles of dress comfortably.
 - i. Sometimes, for special occasions.
 - j. Never or hardly ever
7. Do you speak Liberian vernacular:
- f. Most or all of the time.
 - g. I speak Liberian and English interchangeably.
 - h. I don't speak Liberian very often.

- i. I never speak Liberian, though I know the language.
 - j. I do not know how to speak Liberian.
8. Do American cultural influences affect how Liberians can practice their own culture here in the U.S.?
- f. Yes, a lot.
 - g. Yes, quite a bit.
 - h. Sometimes, it depends on the situation.
 - i. Not very much.
 - j. Hardly at all.
9. In thinking about my life in Liberia, and my life here in the U.S., I would say:
- f. Overall, my life in the U.S. is much better than my life was in Liberia.
 - g. Overall, my life in the U.S. is usually better than my life in Liberia.
 - h. Overall, my life here and my life in Liberia were both pretty much satisfactory.
 - i. Overall, my life here in the U.S. is worse than my life was in Liberia.
 - j. I have never lived in Liberia, or I left when I was very young.
10. Please select from the following choices. Choose the one that best expresses your opinion:
- f. If I am given the option of remaining in the U.S. as a legal resident, I would definitely stay.
 - g. If I am given the option of remaining in the U.S. as a legal resident, I would probably stay.
 - h. If it were just up to me, I might not stay in the U.S. even if I had the option to stay.

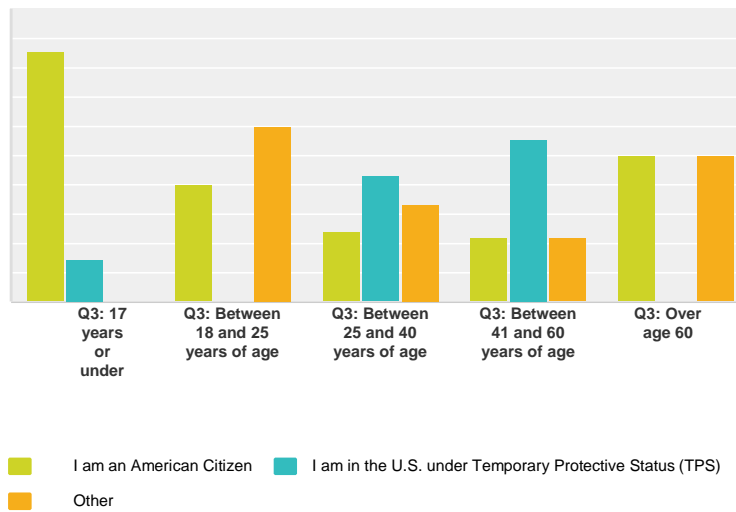
- i. If it were just up to me, I would definitely want to return to Liberia.
- j. This question doesn't apply to my situation, OR I am already a U.S. citizen

APPENDIX 3

IMMIGRATION AND ACCULTURATION SURVEY DATA

Q1 My current immigration status is:

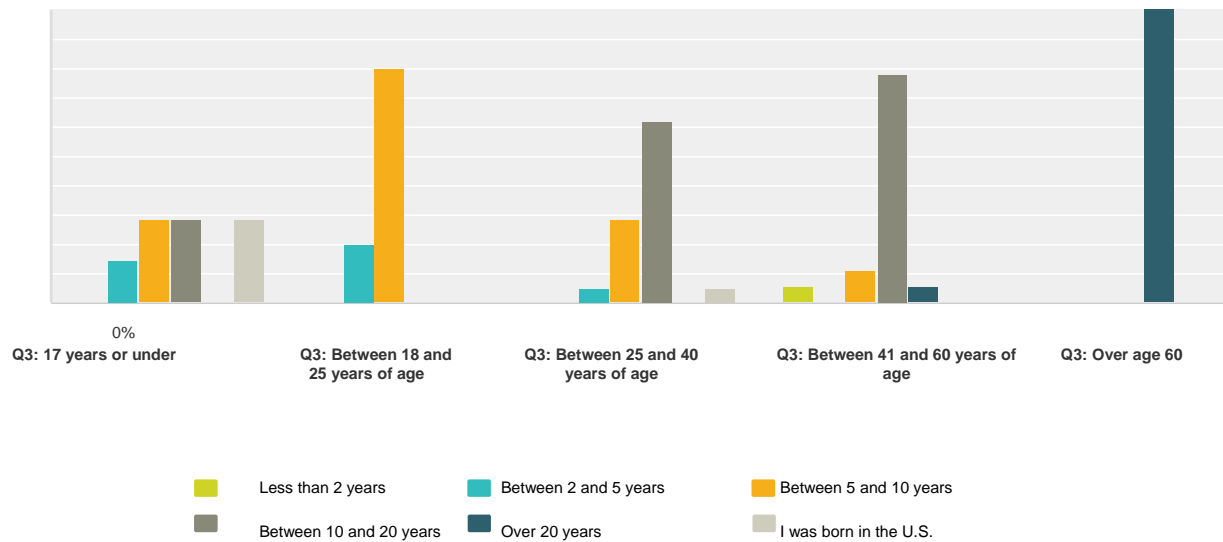
Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



	I am an American Citizen	I am in the U.S. under Temporary Protective Status (TPS)	Other	Total
Q3: 17 years or under	85.71% 6	14.29% 1	0.00% 0	7
Q3: Between 18 and 25 years of age	40.00% 2	0.00% 0	60.00% 3	5
Q3: Between 25 and 40 years of age	23.81% 5	42.86% 9	33.33% 7	21
Q3: Between 41 and 60 years of age	22.22% 4	55.56% 10	22.22% 4	18
Q3: Over age 60	50.00% 1	0.00% 0	50.00% 1	2
Total Respondents	18	20	15	53

Q2 I have lived in the U.S. for:

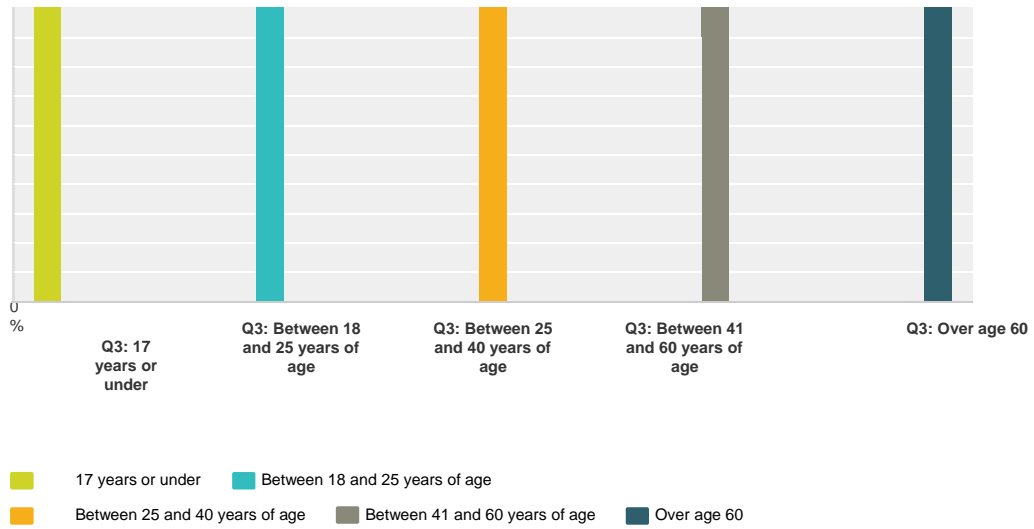
Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



	Less than 2 years	Between 2 and 5 years	Between 5 and 10 years	Between 10 and 20 years	Over 20 years	I was born in the U.S.	Total
Q3: 17 years or under	0.00% 0	14.29% 1	28.57% 2	28.57% 2	0.00% 0	28.57% 2	7
Q3: Between 18 and 25 years of age	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	80.00% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5
Q3: Between 25 and 40 years of age	0.00% 0	4.76% 1	28.57% 6	61.90% 13	0.00% 0	4.76% 1	21
Q3: Between 41 and 60 years of age	5.56% 1	0.00% 0	11.11% 2	77.78% 14	5.56% 1	0.00% 0	18
Q3: Over age 60	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 2	0.00% 0	2
Total Respondents	1	3	14	29	3	3	53

Q3 My age is:

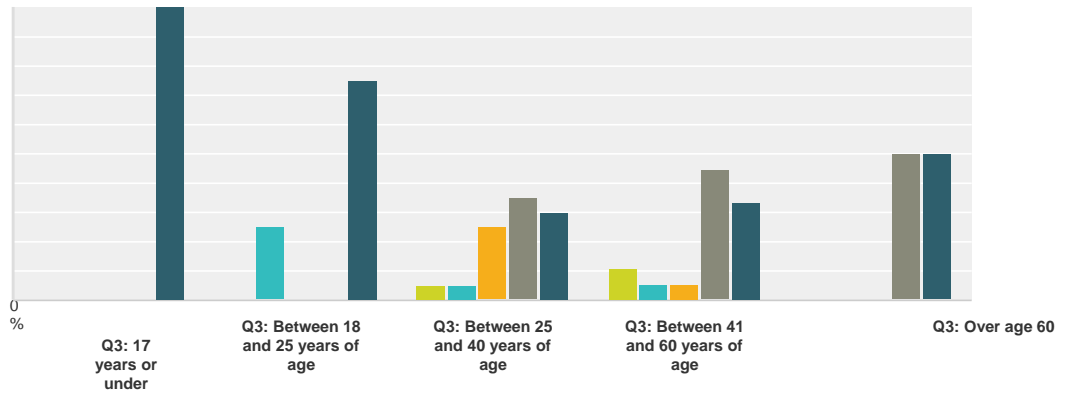
Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



	17 years or under	Between 18 and 25 years of age	Between 25 and 40 years of age	Between 41 and 60 years of age	Over age 60	Total
Q3: 17 years or under	100.00% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	7
Q3: Between 18 and 25 years of age	0.00% 0	100.00% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5
Q3: Between 25 and 40 years of age	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 21	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	21
Q3: Between 41 and 60 years of age	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 18	0.00% 0	18
Q3: Over age 60	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 2	2
Total Respondents	7	5	21	18	2	53

Q4 If you or someone in your family has Temporary Protective Status, please select the statement that best applies:

Answered: 51 Skipped: 2

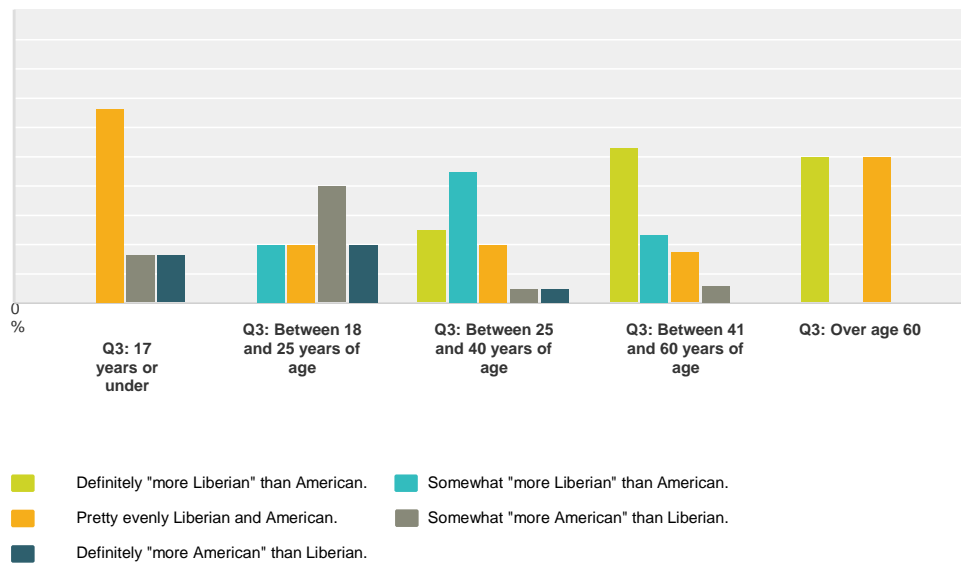


- TPS Status has had little or no effect on living and working here in the U.S.
- TPS Status sometimes causes problems with living and working in the U.S.
- TPS Status frequently causes problems in terms of living and working in the U.S.
- TPS Status affects me or my family member in many ways and/or most of the time in ter...
- This question does not apply to me or any family member.

	TPS Status has had little or no effect on living and working here in the U.S.	TPS Status sometimes causes problems with living and working in the U.S.	TPS Status frequently causes problems in terms of living and working in the U.S.	TPS Status affects me or my family member in many ways and/or most of the time in terms of living and working in the U.S.	This question does not apply to me or any family member.	Total
Q3: 17 years or under	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100.00%	7
Q3: Between 18 and 25 years of age	0 0.00%	1 25.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	3 75.00%	4
Q3: Between 25 and 40 years of age	1 5.00%	1 5.00%	5 25.00%	7 35.00%	6 30.00%	20
Q3: Between 41 and 60 years of age	2 11.11%	1 5.56%	1 5.56%	8 44.44%	6 33.33%	18
Q3: Over age 60	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 50.00%	1 50.00%	2
Total Respondents	3	3	6	16	23	51

Q5 At this point in time, do you consider yourself to be:

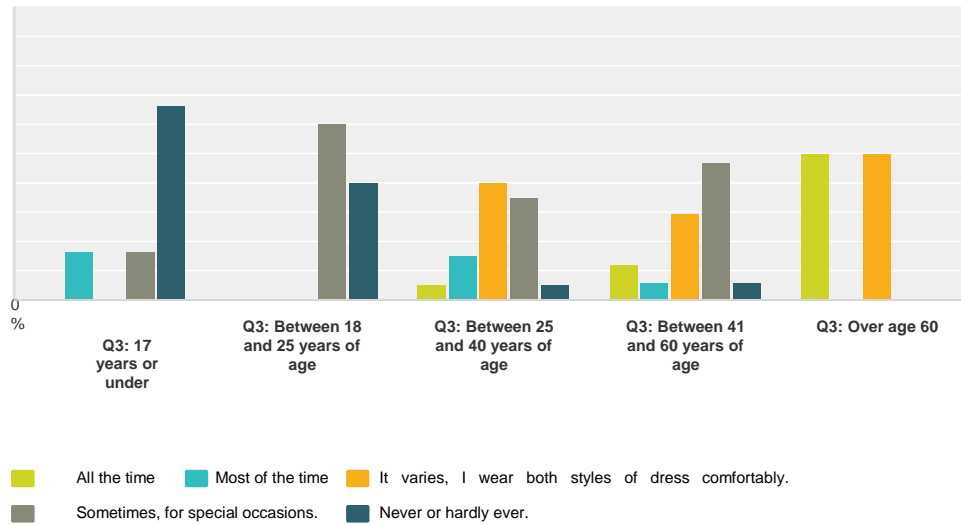
Answered: 50 Skipped: 3



	Definitely "more Liberian" than American.	Somewhat "more Liberian" than American.	Pretty evenly Liberian and American.	Somewhat "more American" than Liberian.	Definitely "more American" than Liberian.	Total
Q3: 17 years or under	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	66.67% 4	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	6
Q3: Between 18 and 25 years of age	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	40.00% 2	20.00% 1	5
Q3: Between 25 and 40 years of age	25.00% 5	45.00% 9	20.00% 4	5.00% 1	5.00% 1	20
Q3: Between 41 and 60 years of age	52.94% 9	23.53% 4	17.65% 3	5.88% 1	0.00% 0	17
Q3: Over age 60	50.00% 1	0.00% 0	50.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2
Total Respondents	15	14	13	5	3	50

Q6: Do you wear traditional Liberian dress/clothing:

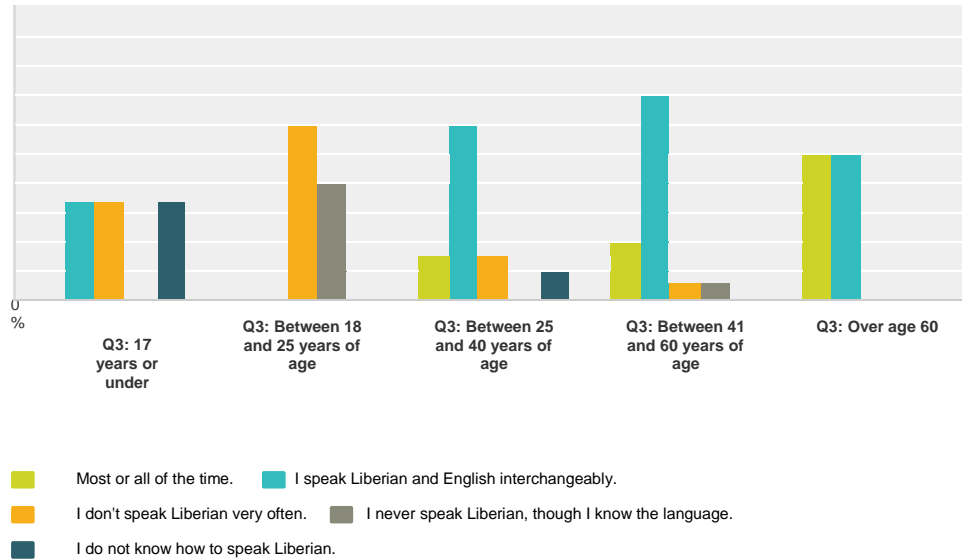
Answered: 50 Skipped: 3



	All the time	Most of the time	It varies, I wear both styles of dress comfortably.	Sometimes, for special occasions.	Never or hardly ever.	Total
Q3: 17 years or under	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	66.67% 4	6
Q3: Between 18 and 25 years of age	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	60.00% 3	40.00% 2	5
Q3: Between 25 and 40 years of age	5.00% 1	15.00% 3	40.00% 8	35.00% 7	5.00% 1	20
Q3: Between 41 and 60 years of age	11.76% 2	5.88% 1	29.41% 5	47.06% 8	5.88% 1	17
Q3: Over age 60	50.00% 1	0.00% 0	50.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2
Total Respondents	4	5	14	19	8	50

Q7 Do you speak Liberian vernacular:

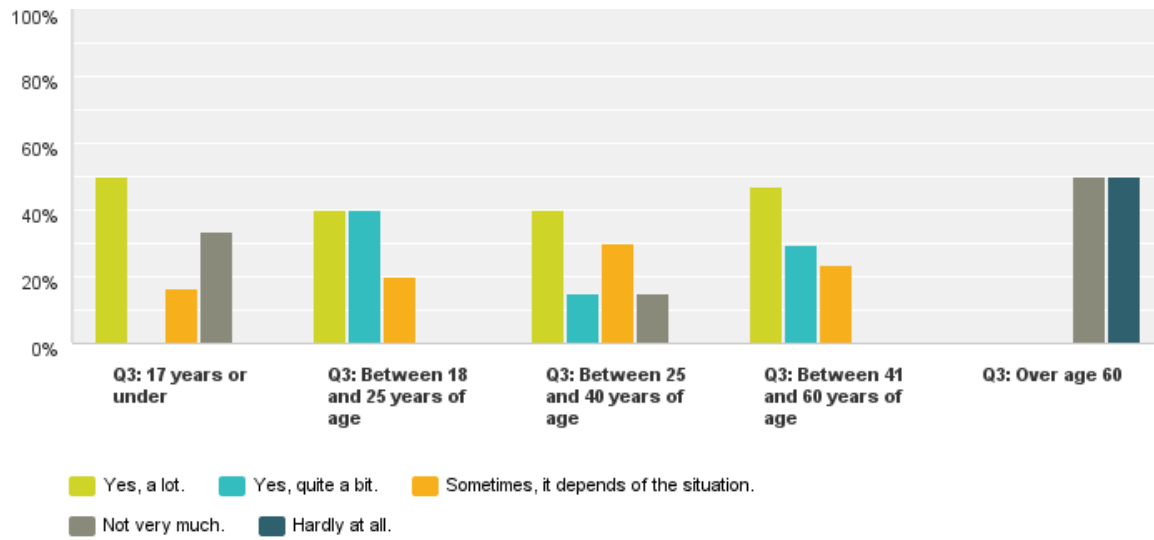
Answered: 49 Skipped: 4



	Most or all of the time.	I speak Liberian and English interchangeably.	I don't speak Liberian very often.	I never speak Liberian, though I know the language.	I do not know how to speak Liberian.	Total
Q3: 17 years or under	0.00% 0	33.33% 2	33.33% 2	0.00% 0	33.33% 2	6
Q3: Between 18 and 25 years of age	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	60.00% 3	40.00% 2	0.00% 0	5
Q3: Between 25 and 40 years of age	15.00% 3	60.00% 12	15.00% 3	0.00% 0	10.00% 2	20
Q3: Between 41 and 60 years of age	18.75% 3	68.75% 11	6.25% 1	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	16
Q3: Over age 60	50.00% 1	50.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2
Total Respondents	7	26	9	3	4	49

Q8 Do American cultural influences affect how Liberians can practice their own culture here in the U.S.?

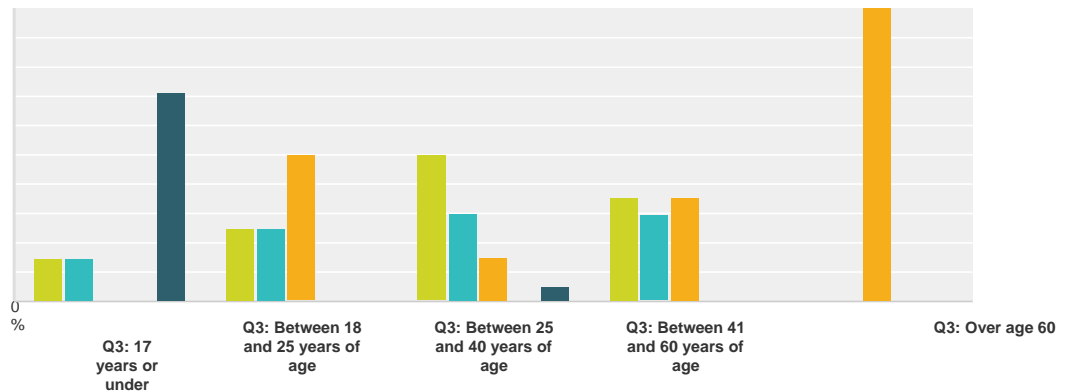
Answered: 50 Skipped: 3



	Yes, a lot.	Yes, quite a bit.	Sometimes, it depends of the situation.	Not very much.	Hardly at all.	Total
Q3: 17 years or under	50.00% 3	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	33.33% 2	0.00% 0	6
Q3: Between 18 and 25 years of age	40.00% 2	40.00% 2	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5
Q3: Between 25 and 40 years of age	40.00% 8	15.00% 3	30.00% 6	15.00% 3	0.00% 0	20
Q3: Between 41 and 60 years of age	47.06% 8	29.41% 5	23.53% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	17
Q3: Over age 60	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	50.00% 1	50.00% 1	2
Total Respondents	21	10	12	6	1	50

Q9 In thinking about my life in Liberia, and my life here in the U.S., I would say:

Answered: 50 Skipped: 3

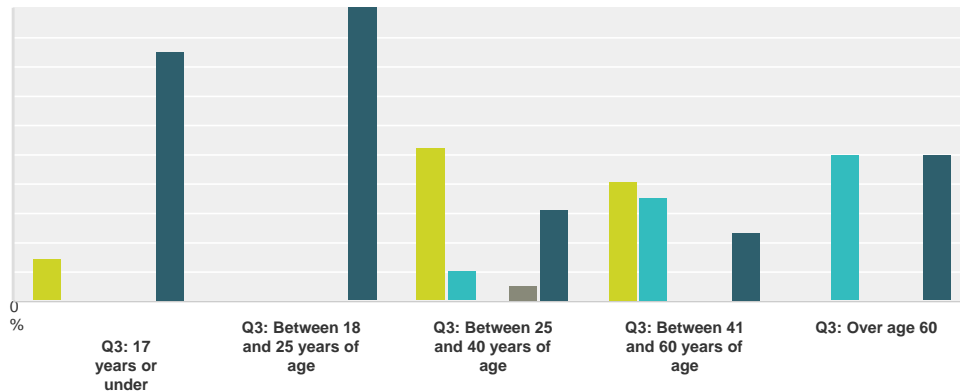


- Overall, my life in the U.S. is much better than my life was in Liberia.
- Overall, my life in the U.S. is usually better than my life in Liberia.
- Overall, my life here and my life in Liberia were both pretty much satisfactory.
- Overall, my life here in the U.S. is worse than my life was in Liberia.
- I have never lived in Liberia, or I left when I was very young.

	Overall, my life in the U.S. is much better than my life was in Liberia.	Overall, my life in the U.S. is usually better than my life in Liberia.	Overall, my life here and my life in Liberia were both pretty much satisfactory.	Overall, my life here in the U.S. is worse than my life was in Liberia.	I have never lived in Liberia, or I left when I was very young.	Total
Q3: 17 years or under	14.29% 1	14.29% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	71.43% 5	7
Q3: Between 18 and 25 years of age	25.00% 1	25.00% 1	50.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	4
Q3: Between 25 and 40 years of age	50.00% 10	30.00% 6	15.00% 3	0.00% 0	5.00% 1	20
Q3: Between 41 and 60 years of age	35.29% 6	29.41% 5	35.29% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	17
Q3: Over age 60	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2
Total Respondents	18	13	13	0	6	50

Q10 Please select from the following choices the one that best expresses your opinion.

Answered: 48 Skipped: 5



- If I am given the option of remaining in the U.S. as a legal resident, I would definitely ...
- If I am given the option of remaining in the U.S. as a legal resident, I would probably st...
- If it were just up to me, I'm not sure at this point that I would stay in the U.S. ev...
- If it were just up to me, I would want to return to Liberia.
- This question doesn't apply to my situation, OR I am already a U.S. citizen

	If I am given the option of remaining in the U.S. as a legal resident, I would definitely stay.	If I am given the option of remaining in the U.S. as a legal resident, I would probably stay.	If it were just up to me, I'm not sure at this point that I would stay in the U.S. even if I had the option to stay.	If it were just up to me, I would want to return to Liberia.	This question doesn't apply to my situation, OR I am already a U.S. citizen	Total
Q3: 17 years or under	14.29% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	85.71% 6	7
Q3: Between 18 and 25 years of age	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 3	3
Q3: Between 25 and 40 years of age	52.63% 10	10.53% 2	0.00% 0	5.26% 1	31.58% 6	19
Q3: Between 41 and 60 years of age	41.18% 7	35.29% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	23.53% 4	17
Q3: Over age 60	0.00% 0	50.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	50.00% 1	2
Total Respondents	18	9	0	1	20	48

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