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PARKER: This is Nealin Parker and I'm here with James Wallace at the National Elections Commission in Monrovia, Liberia.

If we could just begin by discussing briefly what your role was in the 2005 elections and what your background is?

WALLACE: *Well specifically in the 2005 elections, I held and continue to hold the position of Director of Training. As the Director of Training of the National Elections Commission of Liberia, my basic responsibilities were to organize training programs related to the electoral activities that we were to embark upon, and to design implementable frameworks by which those training programs could be implemented, to make substantive follow-ups on those training programs in terms of their delivery, and then finally to evaluate basic lessons learned from those trainings that were delivered that were relevant to the electoral activities that were being planned.*

So, in summary, those were my activities in the 2005 elections.

PARKER: Wonderful. I'm going to ask you just a little bit about a couple of the parts of the election, beginning with registration. Could you describe how registration of voters took place in 2005?

WALLACE: *Well, the registration for elections in 2005 was quite an interesting process. First of all, the registration took place in June of that year, and they stretched for a little over a month or so. At the policy level of the Commission, which is the sector that is constituted by the members of the Board of Commissioners, policies were being developed. Those policies are actually basic reflections of their general administrative and supervisory understanding of what it is needed to design the regulatory framework for the conduct of elections, especially in a post-war context.*

Those elections were under specific circumstances—special elections. Reasons being that certain provisions of the statutory laws of our own country, as well as the constitution, were suspended in order to provide for the holding of those elections within the context of the complicated legal regime that was operating, and the impossibility of doing anything further given those constraints.

My responsibility as it related to the voter registration exercise was to collaborate with international partners, specifically people from the United Nations Electoral Division, to formulate electoral procedures as they related to elections. First of all, my responsibility was identifying the specific kind of methodology in terms of the implementation of the registration exercises that needed to be introduced, and then developing applicable procedures and regulations, which could then be drafted into what I call Electoral Registration Manuals. And those manuals were sent to the Board and subsequently approved by the Board. Basic regulations within the manuals were taught to a couple of subordinate hired as non-permanent but essential electoral workers. Those electoral workers subsequently, in a cascade training exercises, provided training to other subordinate members within the electoral pyramid, and then subsequently, it got down to the those people who were supposed to operate the centers that were responsible for voter registration.

There were very critical issues that came up in the voters' registration. The issue of providing identification cards for the electorate, understanding the fact that we had emerged from war, and did not have a substantive databank in terms of civil registration of the electorate in the country. So, what was it that was needed, in terms of getting involved with registering the voters? We developed a couple of indicative procedures. Some of them targeted the introduction by an electorate of a passport—a Liberian passport. In certain instances, the submission of a National Identification Card, and in other cases, the submission of a birth certificate. We had these as requirements. But these minimal criteria could not even suffice for the exercise, because the entire idea of documentation was in disarray as far as our emergence from the war was concerned.

And so we managed to train the registration workers to, first of all, identify the language culture of the registrant as the mode for authentication as to whether the person was a Liberian. Because, you understand, Liberians speak like Liberians—there is a particular culture above our language exercise, even in the Liberian English that we speak. So basically that was the first entry requirement in that. Then when there was a contestation as it related to citizenship or—contestation meaning there was then the need for the submission of the documentation that I named earlier in order to authenticate.

In rural areas we envisioned complications and we did actually experience them, especially in areas that had porous borders with our neighboring countries. It was quite a difficult thing to identify who was actually a Liberian, given migration here and there as a result of the civil hostilities in the country. But then, we enshrined within the registration procedure a requirement that we call a vouching exercise. Meaning some traditional leader—a member of the traditional leadership structure within a particular area will vouch for that particular person as a witness and that they can verify that this person is a resident of the area; that they are in fact citizens of that particular area.

In that particular scenario, that registration was done, but done on specific reservations. Then at the appropriate time those reservations were cleared having submitted substantive documentation and other proofs as to your citizenship, and that was during the claims and counterclaims period for admission or rejection of a particular registrant in the exercise.

So basically, it's a whole litany of things in that arrangement. But primarily, those were the key things as they related to voter registration that I can instantly remember.

PARKER: Also during this period, was there allocation to polls and constituencies during the registration period?

WALLACE: *Actually, the registration exercise in 2005, if my memory serves me right, the registration databank functioned in two capacities. The first capacity was for it to function as a data-pool for the total number of registered voters who could be processed through the electoral process. The second one was to establish a tentative census report as to the total number of eligible voters and to use that registration databank as a sort of a beginning statistical benchmark for the demarcation of constituencies in electoral districts. So basically, because census had been not conducted as a result of the war in Liberia, the registration*

information, or databank, constituted that indicative information that the electoral commission used.

After the completion of the voter registration exercise, we got involved with the constituency delimitation exercise, and then the constituency delimitation exercise was the result of the development of a quota system. And that particular quota system placed certain registered voters in a particular electoral district in order to determine the total number of electoral districts that we had in the entire electoral cycle for the elections in 2005. As a result of that, based on the delimitation exercise, we had 64 electoral districts across Liberia. And then there was—for the senatorial category, by statutory provision, we had two Senators for each of the counties, and so that went through. And that quota was factored across the entire country, and so you have areas that had a substantive population increase or had a higher number of seats in Parliament as a result of that. So basically, that's how the electoral registration databank informed the electoral exercise.

PARKER: What controls were developed to prevent multiple, false, or erroneous registrations? Were any technologies used?

WALLACE: *Oh yes, to the best of my knowledge, there was an IT (information technology) system—I'm not—I don't have sufficient proficiency in IT activities, but there was a tracking system within the IT setup in information technology and data collection systems that could track multiple registration in a way. Also, our registration workers were trained to identify persons who came out to register twice on the basis of the information provided in the early stages. And secondly, as a result of using special kinds of ink on the cuticles of the thumb of the registrants, in order to be able to—the ink, as per our understanding, lasted for a particular period of time as a security feature in order to give information to the registration workers to understand that the person might have gone through one form of registration in a first instant, and things like that.*

When the data is collected—data are collected from the field and are sent down to the data processing center, it also—multiple voting or similar phenomenon, also speaks out through the capturing of the photographs of those individuals from what we call the optical mark recognition forms, which were scanned and then taken for the development of what we call a provisional voters roll. Yes, so, these were sifting measures in place.

There was a specific regulatory—legal—regimentation of the exercise. When you were caught in the process through civic sensitization, there was information that you would be prosecuted through the criminal justice system, because multiple registrations were classified as an electoral offense. I remember instances—one or two instances where a number of persons, particularly when an elderly woman got involved with multiple registration. I understand she had over six registration cards because she moved from one point to another. I did not personally follow up the case, but information received from those who followed up the case indicated that she, in fact, did not have substantive information. She did not have sufficient information, nor did she have substantive information as to what the entire exercise of electioneering was. She saw the electoral process as a food-ration distribution, card-taking process. So, she felt that her involvement at multiple levels placed her at an advantage point to be able to scoop out more

food from the food basket. Those were situations that we heard of and that some other persons made some follow-ups on, and we got these feedbacks.

PARKER: Were there steps taken to prevent local leaders from dictating who could register?

WALLACE: *Yes, there were steps taken to prevent local authorities from hampering constituents from participating in the registration process. First of all, emerging from the war situation, we had a period of stability of about two years, after the signing of the comprehensive peace accord in Ghana. There was a transitional government in place for two years, and as a result of that transitional process, there was some level of sanity within the society.*

So, we did not immediately project from the war into elections. We projected from the war into a period of “temporary normalcy” where there was substantive civic education, both by civil society organizations and the Electoral Commission as well as the government, to disabuse people’s minds of the concept of acting in contexts that were not appropriate for a decent and civilized society. So, there was a bit of an improvement in that arrangement.

There were also consultations held across the country and that was one of the most manifested tools that was used by the policy structure of the Elections Commission in terms of the improvement of the sample space of electorates—for participation in an electoral exercise—especially for local leadership. Local leaders were met with in consultation from time to time. They were told what their responsibilities were, or what their responsibilities should have been in the exercises. The electorate was also educated through our civic sensitization initiative as to what was expected of them, what should not influence their vote or their decision or their mindset with respect to this exercise. So basically these were civil as well as policy and strategic initiatives that were set in place in order to help the electorate, as well as the local leadership, to observe specific rules of thumb in terms of how they should adapt themselves to an electoral exercise.

PARKER: How was the integrity of the registration lists safeguarded after the lists were compiled?

WALLACE: *Well, after the provisional registration process was completed—that is the period of collecting information from electorate in the field and then compiling into a general roll— that particular listing was subsequently sent out during a period called the exhibition period. I think the exhibition period was an integrity-building period for the provisional voters’ roll, as well. Because the information was publicized, there was sensitization surrounding that information as to how the public should respond to it. The public went out to view their information to establish authenticity with respect to the spelling of their names, their ages, their photographs’ placement. That period was also used as a period to be able to spot out persons that they knew were not qualified under the regulatory regime that had been set up as part of the provisional roll, so that in the finale they would not be reflected in what we recalled as the final voters’ roll. And so, all of these things supported the integrity of the process for the provisional voters roll.*

PARKER: Could you describe the features of the registration card?

WALLACE: *Well, the registration card—I might not remember everything about it, but just to put you through a part of that—it had a serial number. There was an electoral*

district number for specific electoral districts, and there was a registration center number. There was a name of the registrant. The photograph of the registrant was reflected. The voter identification number was also reflected. There was a space on the OMR (optical mark recognition) form, which the registrant had to sign or place a thumb-mark within, in order to indicate that they are the valid person entitled to that particular card and the rest of that. And then it was laminated to insulate it from spoilage in the short-term. Those are the—and your sex was also indicated as well—your sex was also indicated. And I think a number of other things I might not be able to recall.

PARKER: What logistical and operational obstacles were encountered in conducting voter registration and how did you overcome them?

WALLACE: *Well, at the level of training, the logistical constraints that I think we had were basically the cameras that we were using—some of the cameras were actually not state of the art equipment. Some of them were nearly obsolete. In fact, I understand the Polaroid cameras are not in use anymore. And so, that created some complications.*

Going along with that, were the cells, the dry cells batteries that were used in the cameras. And then the exposure effect for using those cameras in certain areas that were not clear, gave it poor sophistication and things like that.

The second complication that was associated, in terms of logistical arrangement, was transportation. Transportation—the easy transportation of registration and poll workers. In a lot of instances, poll—registration workers had to travel great distances across rivers and streams and huge bodies of waters. They had to go over natural features like hills, and travel through jungles and forests to get to certain ends to be able to conduct their exercises.

And then the issue of communication also was a serious barrier, because in certain cases—in certain areas, there were no cellular phone communication extensions. There were no HF (high frequency) radio systems. There were no telephone systems, and the rest of that. So, it was like complicated to police or supervise them easily in those areas, or to reach those areas to be able to do a particular thing.

But I must say, given our collaboration with the UNMIL (United Nations Mission in Liberia) Electoral Division, most of these problems were taken care of. Most of these problems were handled through their superior logistical powers and their intervention. But there were some ends that were still far without the stretch of their intervention, so these were complications.

Another thing that happened was that, preceding the voter registration exercise was what we referred to as the mapping exercise of the different registration zones. The mapping exercises were supposed to take into consideration certain—some distances in terms of allowing an electorate to have easy access to voting facilities such as registration centers and the rest of that, but that was not the case in certain situations. So, a large number of administrative districts appeared to move into certain areas—to move into certain areas. And movement into these areas was quite a challenge for a number of people who could not have easily traveled those distances to access the registration points and the registration centers. So technically, some individuals got disenfranchised as a

result of the logistical constraints that we experienced. We still do receive some feedback, some queries as to why they did not participate, even three, two or three years after the elections to date. We still do receive those kinds of feedbacks, you know, where we get out for other initiatives and they understand this is an electoral commission—"Well, you people did not reach us the last time, we didn't participate" and the rest of that.

In Grand Bassa County, there was one such concern a couple of months back when we had some programs there. So, these are common things that we all experience and sort of those are the—but I'm sure those in logistics can speak in detail about logistical planning.

PARKER: Speaking of the operations on polling day, would you describe the system of the polling centers and stations in terms of their set-up, and how well you think that worked?

WALLACE: Yes, the polling centers—did I understand you say polling center or registration centers?

PARKER: We've moved onto voting day.

WALLACE: *Okay, strategy of polling centers. Well, the polling centers were well set up. First of all, in a training exercise, we always develop a flow-plan—a training flow-plan. That training flow-plan includes a planning arrangement that reflects sitting arrangements for the poll workers—the sitting arrangement for the poll workers. And that way, it reinforces easy access to the electoral facilities that were there for polling day activities. And then we also developed the information in training in a way that we allow for the poll workers to set up a very free route for the flow of voters on voting day.*

So, to give you an imaginary description of what an ideal polling center was, we had one—we had a Precinct Queue Controller. The precinct is a combination of different polling centers, so from one to, say, six polling centers constituted a voting precinct. And within that voting precinct were a number of poll workers. And the polling center was headed by what we refer to—was headed by a Presiding Officer—a polling place Presiding Officer. So it was like the polling place Presiding Officer was assisted by the Queue Controller. In several instances we had what we call the Precinct Queue Controller. The Precinct Queue Controller was positioned outside of a precinct and then there was a queue of voters outside of the polling center. The precinct queue controller would see the identification card—the voter's registration card of that particular voter, and then direct the voter to a polling place queue. From the polling precinct queue to the polling place were queues. That's a specific queue for polling place one, two, three, four, five, whatever the case might have been in 2005.

And so, the polling precinct—in the polling place—the voter will be met by another Queue Controller who represents the polling place and who is standing out for the polling place. And that person will process that voter through the voting process by going to the Voter Identification Officer. The Voter Identification Officer was the custodian of the final voters' roll, and within that final voters' roll was the photograph of the voter and there was supposed to be a correspondence between the photograph in the voter registration card and that which is found in the final registration roll.

Having established the consistency between those two photographs, that particular voter was cleared—with the consistency between the photographs and other information as it related to those on the card and in the registration roll, that voter was advised to move to the Ballot Paper Issuer—the Ballot Paper Issuer was another officer assisting the Presiding Officer to operate the poll. Then the Ballot Paper Issuer would pre-fold a ballot, educate the voter on how to apply the ballot, and then the voter would be advised to go and do the marking of the ballot behind the voting screen, and having marked the ballot, cast the ballot, then goes out to the Inker. And at the—because there were three different elections being run in 2005, that's the presidential and the legislative election, which was in two components: the election for the upper and lower House, as well as the Senate and the Representative version of election.

So, there were three boxes and those three boxes were used. There was a Ballot Box Controller who was positioned closer to those three boxes and directed which of the boxes would take which ballot, and the rest of that. So after that was done, the voter moves to the Inker who puts on them the mark of identification to indicate that they had gone through the voting process for that day, and then they exited the polling center. So basically that's a description of what it was.

PARKER: Very thorough. How many voters were polling stations configured to serve?

WALLACE: *Well, each polling place was configured to serve five hundred voters. Five hundred voters—that was the maximum.*

PARKER: And, approximately, it looks like there were seven people per station—poll workers?

WALLACE: *Yes, seven people per station. I wouldn't remember the exact number off hand, but I'm sure it was in the category of seven persons per station. Yes.*

PARKER: Were there any concerns about the use of some facilities because of a history of the building or its ownership?

WALLACE: *Oh, yes, a couple of issues and they were—usually public facilities were used, such as public schools, clinics, administrative centers, administrative buildings within districts and communities, and things like that. In certain cases, the village palapa huts were used as polling centers. And then in extreme cases, private residences were used as polling centers with the provision of some compensation to those people who had those private facilities. Even for the public facilities, in certain instances some small compensation had to be provided for sanitation and maintenance work within those areas. So, basically those were the arrangements.*

In very few cases, a shade under a big tree could be used for a polling center, especially when the weather condition was quite favorable and not threatening any of the electoral materials that were being sent in the field—yes.

PARKER: Were there any ballot security measures put in place at polling stations to inhibit vote fraud by election officials or put of contestants?

WALLACE: *Yes, certainly there were. There were ballot security measures put in place that were handled by the logistical section and then the printing press. In fact, the ballots were printed outside of the country to provide additional security measures. The ballots were not given to the poll workers in advance, but were delivered by our electoral supervisors on the day of the elections. We had procedures in place where there were reconciliatory processes in our procedures for very fine—what quantity of ballots were given you in the first place, what quantity went into the casting exercise, what quantity remained in stock as unused ballots, and then what the correlations were between and amongst all of these different different phases of the ballots that were issued out. And so, we could track and determine exactly how many ballots we did put in the field at certain points, and how many came out, what the differential was with respect to what we put out and what did come out.*

And then there were inquiry procedures in places where there were discrepancies, and then the particular poll worker could be identified based on the quoting system, and then the identification system as well. And then you will face investigation as it relates to your handling of the ballots and what have you. So there was sufficient—in my mind, sufficient security measures and features put in place.

And I also understand that the ballot itself—there's a distinction between what a ballot paper is and what a ballot is actually. The ballot paper is that special kind of paper, which doesn't carry the photograph of the candidates and the contestants and what have you, but that contained basic security features that are used for the printing of ballots. So these guidelines were put in place. What the specific features were, were not at my level to be able to determine.

PARKER: Did you experience family voting at any point, where one family member would tell the others how to vote? And how did people try to address this problem if it occurred?

WALLACE: *Yes. Well, at a polling center there was a no-campaign regulation. So, it was a little difficult when we were doing our outreach supervision on polling day to determine actually whether there was this family voting arrangement. But from the campaigning exercise, in homes there were bitter debates and arguments among families as to which candidates were the best candidates, as it happens in all elections all across the world. So, these kinds of influences and counter-influences were swinging between and amongst family members as it related to what choice to make. With respect to them influencing the decision of a voter at the voting station—I can't remember those incidences very well.*

PARKER: Were the ballots counted at the polling station or shipped to a regional center?

WALLACE: *Yes, yes, yes, they were counted at the polling center. There were counted in the polling place immediately after all of the votes were cast at 6:00 p.m. That was the time set for counting the ballots. They were counted instantly. Then there was what we call the "record of the count," which is a compilation of the votes attracted by all of the candidates, contestants in the process, as well as other information pertaining to the operation of the poll for that day, was published immediately outside of the polling place. And so every party, every candidate knew exactly how many votes they got, how many votes did not get cast, and then how many persons "participated" in the exercise.*

PARKER: Returning to your position specifically—.

WALLACE: *Right.*

PARKER: Do you have any recommendations for someone who is doing your work in a context that is similar to this?

WALLACE: *Yes, first of all, to find yourself in electoral training you must be a team worker. Secondly, you must be able to work within an intense environment, which is politically charged as well as logistically disarranged in certain temporary instances. You must also be able to have a working knowledge of the electoral regulations and laws that govern the particular jurisdiction in which you are operating an electoral process—you must have that. You must also have knowledge of what it is to be a person providing critical information to a wide range of people who will control a process that operates at the nerve center of the interests of the state in a politically charged environment, as well as in a transitional society, you have must have had working knowledge of that.*

You must be open to criticism and you must also be hard working. You must be in a position to expose whatever difficulties you encounter immediately when they come your way, because exposure will lead to the process of finding a solution immediately for that particular situation or that particular problem. So, you must be able to expose whatever problem comes your way immediately.

You must be able to take instructions very well—you must be able to take instructions very well. You must also be able to transcribe regulations into implementable procedures, because what the poll workers and voter registers do in the field are basically an implementation of procedures that were developed from the regulations, transcribed into implementable—or strategies for affecting a particular process. So you must be able to have that critical comprehensible skill to transcribe from one abstract kind of pool of instruction to something that will physically affect a particular environment. There's a bit of creativity that goes into doing that. And you must be able to have the reflex to adjust immediately when there's a change on one side or the other. So basically, these are simple recommendations to anyone who cooperates in those areas.

PARKER: Mr. Wallace, thank you so much for your time.

WALLACE: *Thank you, thank you, Nealin.*