

Another signal contribution of Grant's book to our understanding of Black freedom struggles during the Cold War is his remarkable ability to tell a truly transnational story. *Winning our Freedoms Together* is about what Black activists in both South Africa and the United States taught one another and learned from one another. It is about how Black activists in two countries sought to win their freedoms together. In Grant's telling, the United States is not an exemplar, but rather a country with its own history and struggles, some of which could be best illuminated through comparison with other struggles and other histories. Grant also highlights a key feature of the Black freedom struggles in both South Africa and the United States. As he states, 'the right to travel was central to ideas of black freedom in both countries' (90). For Black activists, freedom meant more than just political equality. It also meant the right to travel and to do so without hindrance. As Robeson explained in a passage that Grant cites: 'From the days of chattel slavery until today, the concept of *travel* has been inseparably linked in the minds of our people with the concept of *freedom*' (85). This understanding of freedom as mobility brings into sharp relief the tension between Black internationalism and white supremacy. Black activists understood that for them to forge transnational solidarities in order to win their freedoms together, they had to be able to move. Governments understood this principle and practice, too, and that is why they imposed all sorts of restrictions on Black mobility — from the United States government's seizure of Robeson's passport, to pass laws in South Africa, to the apartheid state's refusal to give countless South Africans passports with which they could leave the country.

This is an important book and it will add immeasurably to our understanding of the Cold War, of the transnational history of the civil rights and anti-apartheid struggles, and of the twentieth century.

JACOB DLAMINI
Princeton University

VIOLENCE, TRAUMA, AND THE POLITICAL IMAGINATION IN SIERRA LEONE

Out of War: Violence, Trauma and the Political Imagination in Sierra Leone.

By Mariane C. Ferme.

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In *Out of War: Violence, Trauma and the Political Imagination in Sierra Leone*, Marianne Ferme adopts a unique approach to analyzing Sierra Leone's civil war. Though monographic in structure, the book to some extent reflects the author's research trajectory. The author divides the civil war period into two distinct categories: the atrocious activities of belligerents and the sociopolitical role of 'diasporic communities'. Ferme conspicuously states that the end of the war was not merely the beginning of the rehabilitation and

demobilization process; it was also the first major step in examining the psychological damage victims of the war experienced. After the war, many victims and survivors who returned to their erstwhile communities faced rejection, resentment, and brazen animus; these events prolonged the process of closure for both perpetrators and victims.

Divided into eight chapters, plus an Introduction and Conclusion, the book illuminates the intricate course of the war. In Chapter One, the author rehashes the literature and debates on whether civil wars in Africa are triggered by ethnographic factors or by avaricious acquisitiveness. In deploying what she describes as 'belatedness', Ferme argues that victims of war give powerful and evocative narration of their traumatic experiences long after the end of hostilities (39–41). This argument is simplistic, as it fails to acknowledge memory lapses as well as the way that narrators of traumatic events may also embellish their stories. In Chapter Two, the book addresses the issue of rumor and its devastating role in generating suspicion about the activities of government forces and auxiliary militias, such as ethnic-based hunters and humanitarian agencies. In fact, the rumor mill prompted the use of neologisms such as 'Rebel Cross', which describes members of the Red Cross suspected of stealthily collaborating with anti-government forces, and 'sobels' (a portmanteau of 'soldier' and 'rebel'), which was used to describe government soldiers who, rather than fight against the rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), covertly connived with them. Another widely deployed neologism was 'junta collaborators', a reference to Sierra Leoneans who supported the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and the RUF junta that overthrew the government of President Kabbah in 1997. These terms penetrated mainstream culture and became commonplace expressions. Ferme also questions the political use of 'numbers [and] statistical samples' by government officials and humanitarian agencies in highlighting the death count and victims of amputations (102).

In Chapter Three, the book traces the history of hunters and other enigmatic militias that people organized to defend rural and urban communities. It specifically examines the role of the Kamajor, a band of Mende-speaking traditional hunters who earned the respect and disdain of victims and protagonists of the war. The Kamajor were valorized for their bravery in combating the RUF and AFRC rebels. In fact, through the support of Hinga Norman, the Minister of Defense, the Kamajor became a *de facto* paramilitary unit with an incandescent national profile. The elevation of the Kamajor to this plane pitted it against the government's Sierra Leone Armed Forces, which produced deleterious consequences (144). That is, the tension between the two groups undermined the government's ability to win the war. Ferme nonetheless argues that the Kamajor and other traditional militias should be 'thought of as outwardly oriented figures of modern technological experimentation' (144–5).

Chapters Four and Five outline the effect of the civil war on the institution of chieftaincies and 'diasporic publics' (176). The war led to a substantial increase in transcontinental immigration by Sierra Leoneans, including by paramount chiefs. The vacancies created by paramount chiefs who fled their chiefdoms during the war were filled by Sierra Leoneans who had returned home from abroad. Many of these Sierra Leoneans were refugees and legal and illegal immigrants in various countries. In brief, Ferme shows that diasporic Sierra Leoneans directly and indirectly influenced the peace process and socioeconomic development of postwar Sierra Leone. Some critics are less sanguine about the role of

this community; they claim that diasporic Sierra Leoneans contributed to the culture of corruption in the postwar state. The book's focus on these transcontinental immigrants, that is, Sierra Leoneans who returned to the country from Europe and the Americas, is commendable. While the diasporic community helped boost the economy through remittances, the state also provided them with certain privileges. But Ferme pays scant attention to the activities of intracontinental immigrants, that is, those immigrants who left for, and came back from, other West African countries, such as Guinea-Conakry, Ghana, and Liberia.

The vexatious topics of child soldiers and forced marriages are lucidly addressed in Chapters Six and Seven. Ferme's assessment of the complex dynamic between ex-child combatants and their erstwhile communities, a phenomenon she describes as 'ambivalent returns', is uniquely valuable (204). After the war, many communities were torn between accepting or rejecting demobilized former child soldiers. The Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) struggled to judge child combatants either as minors or adults given the dastardly nature of their war crimes. However, in contrast to the War Criminal Tribunal of Yugoslavia and International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the SCSL indicted those 'bearing the greatest responsibility' (210). Another execrable practice of the civil war was forced marriage, where women and girls were propelled into unions that subjected them to rape and sexual abuse. The SCSL appropriately regarded these acts as sex crimes and accordingly indicted many men for them. Conversely, female combatants and field commanders also carried out activities such as killing, looting, and burning buildings. Nonetheless, the author's claim that some forced marriages turned out to be 'better matches than the arranged marriages' is glibly specious (231–2). Forced marriages under any circumstance, particularly during the civil war, are abhorrent, and lending any modicum of credence to them is objectionable. As Ferme herself notes, many women who were forced to marry combatants were rejected by their communities in the postwar period and scarred with epithets such as 'bush wives'. Chapter Eight is overlong; it traces the history of Sino-Sierra Leone relations since the 1970s, when both countries established diplomatic relations. China's socioeconomic assistance to postwar Sierra Leone is notably irreproachable. But the chapter seems incongruent with the central argument of the book.

On the whole, the book spotlights the importance of implementing 'humanitarian experimentation' in fragile states such as Sierra Leone during insurgent conflicts. It trenchantly points out that the success of the international community's interventions in Sierra Leone should serve as an example. Using a combination of participant observation, empirical research, and an assortment of secondary sources, the book extends the frontier of our knowledge on the global dimension of Sierra Leone's civil war.

JOSEPH J. BANGURA
Kalamazoo College