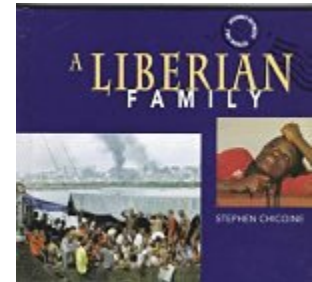


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Stephen Chicoine. *A Liberian Family*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 1997. 64 pp. \$8.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8225-9758-2; \$22.60 (library), ISBN 978-0-8225-3411-2.

Reviewed by Jo M. Sullivan (Federal Street School, Salem, Mass)  
Published on H-AfrTeach (October, 1998)



From a Lerner Publications series on refugees, "Journey Between Two Worlds," *A Liberian Family* is a straightforward presentation of a real family, the Millers, who were forced to leave Liberia in 1990, at the beginning of what was to become a seven year civil war. This brief book of non-fiction is appropriate for upper elementary and middle school students; it provides personal history, a good summary of Liberian history as a nation, recent history that led to the civil war and accurate but not salacious descriptions of the suffering of the war led by armed factions of children and young adult soldiers.

With that background, the book takes up the Millers' new life in Houston, Texas, living in an American urban neighborhood, adjusting to apartment living, isolation and low-wage jobs for the adults. The photographs provide a range of information and insight into the life of this family, from the historical photos of Liberia and the recent war, to Monrovia before 1990, and the daily life in Houston: dinner, school, soccer, holidays, Sunday church services, gatherings with friends, becoming part of the Houston community and the West African culture

within the larger community.

As the author notes at the end, their new life in the U.S. is bittersweet. This life is the painful lot of most refugees, safe from persecution but far from home, seeking the balance of a new life and Liberian values. The determination and faith of the Millers shines through the photos, with the Liberian values they have brought with them evident in the comments of the adults and the children: the importance of family, the church, and education. While these may seem typical of recent immigrants and many other refugees, the paucity of positive images of Africans in the U.S. or on the continent, makes this book unusual and highly recommended. The book includes a pronunciation key, and several books for further reading. Only 4 of the 8 titles listed are about Liberia; the others are generic folktales and are not helpful for understanding either Liberia or refugees in general.

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