MS. GREENE: I hope that everyone's bellies are full. I think dessert is coming. But as you are served your dessert, I'd just like to say, first of all, thank you. There have been a lot of positive comments about the film. But the person who knows most about this film is the person who produced it, and it's my distinct pleasure to introduce Abigail Disney. I said to her a few minutes ago I think she's someone I should have met 20 years ago. She and I are both fellow Columbians and were on the campus during the time of troubles in South Africa, and I'm sure we sat on those steps together and didn't know it. But 20 years later we meet at the table.

It's such a pleasure to have you here, dedicated to peace and justice in the world, and we're just so blessed to have you here.

So without further ado, the producer of Pray the Devil Back to Hell, Abigail Disney.

MS. DISNEY: Thank you. I have a quick question. That is: When all the principals get together for a convention, is there a class clown? And does anybody get into trouble? And if so, who punishes them?

I brought one copy of the film, the educational version, and I'm going to pass this around in case you want to see it. So you can let it make its way around. That's a discussion guide that I wrote along with Ellen Levine from Teachers College at Columbia. And it was really, all along, as we made the film, something that was really important to me that we give some thought to getting it into schools, because American kids don't know a great deal about Africa or Africans, especially African women, and they certainly don't hear African women speak for themselves un-moderated or unmediated by a narrator.

But also, when they do think about Africa, they don't get the opportunity to think about Africa as their own best resources. You know, if I could take one word out of the vocabulary of the way we talk about social justice and service and so forth, in the way we talk to kids about it, I would love to take the word "save" out of our vocabulary. Sometimes people aren't their own best resources and that we're going to come riding in on a white stallion and fix it all for them, and I would love to rethink all that.

So I actually am more interested in hearing your questions more than I am in my own answers, but I'm going to answer the question everybody asked me first, and then I'm going to let you go ahead and ask me whatever you're interested in. But everybody does tend to start with this question of: What was Abigail Disney doing in Monrovia, and what's a nice girl like you doing in a bar with the diamond merchants and the weapons traders?

And so I'll answer that question. I had gone to Liberia about three months after President Sirleaf was inaugurated there, as a person who's worked for a lot of years around women's issues and particularly women's political leadership, and I'd have to say that her election was incredibly exciting. And I thought about the way we vote in this country, and how, if we show up at all, we sort of show up and say, "Oh, well, this one will be less bad," and so forth, and it struck me that in Liberia, after all those years of the war, they had made an inspirational choice. That is an extraordinary thing, and I wanted to know more about it.

So when I was asked to go on this delegation to Liberia with a group of women, it was just literally as dumb as this: We just wanted to see if we could help President Sirleaf in any way. We went. And while I was there, literally in the air, there was this story. I was chatting with this one woman and she said something in passing like, "You know, when we were all sitting on the field," and blah, blah, blah and I thought, what?

And so I picked up these little shards from conversations with different people over the course of the week that I was there, and I started to kind of piece together the story a little bit like you put a jigsaw puzzle together but you're missing a few of the pieces.

And kind of out of the mist, I started to understand that something really interesting and extraordinary had happened there. And on my very last night there, I met this very, very, very average guy, Geoffrey Rudd, from England, who was there with the EU and had been at the peace talks. And the reason I say that he was an

average guy, he was a little pudgy, and he had a couple of scotches, and was red in the face. And I asked him what had happened at the peace talks, and he said, "Oh, yes, and, in fact, there's CNN footage of me climbing out the window."

And I couldn't help thinking about Winnie the Poo and trying to get out of the -- but anyway, I thought, well, this is very interesting. This is a guy who might be very invested in telling me that this very unconventional thing had not occurred. That's generally how it happens. And it did. And he went to on to say, "We wouldn't be sitting here today with peace in Liberia if it hadn't been for those women."

And I thought, well, there's a very interesting thing and a verification for my inner producer -- this is the first film I had ever made, but I had an inner producer -- and I came home a little haunted by the story. What I realized as I got home was that there was a reason that the story was in shards, you know, that we all, especially as we work with girls, try to resurrect the stories of Sacajawea and we try to resurrect the stories of the women who are invisible to us because we recognize the importance of us being visible to ourselves, knowing who came before us and who did these things. But we know that there are patterns that really line up, and they accomplish and then they recede back the other way again and they're invisible again.

And I thought, this is what it looks like. A moment at which it's being erased must look like this in every case, this little ebbing from consciousness of the reality of what occurred. And when I started to realize that, first of all, it made me angry. It made me really angry on behalf of these women. And second of all, it made me really excited, because what I saw was that we had the opportunity, that I'm right at this moment of it sitting on the edge of the abyss it was possible to pull it back.

And not only that, you know, the way that authority works in our world is, if you just put the right frame around anything, you know, people will accept it as the authoritative version. And I thought, if we make this film and we use high, high production values and we bring it to theaters and we show it on television, people will say, "Oh, well, that happened in Liberia."

And it seems possible to infiltrate the historical record in a way that we have never really been successful in doing so in the past. So that was really the impetus to get started. I lucked into -- I had never made a film before. I came from a filmmaking family, obviously, but I had never made one before, had no intention of making one. But I happened to resume an old friendship right in this moment with a woman who was a director, and had been for years, and had made films about Rwandan women. There she was. She just kind of fell back into my life at this moment and was in between projects.

And so we got started and she just, by serendipity, happened to be the best possible partner I could ever have asked for. So off we went to the races. And one of the first and most critical aspects of what we had to do in order to do this -- and people always ask me where we got all the footage. It was finding archival footage. We were coming back in 2006 and reconstructing a story that had occurred in 2003. So obviously, we had to go back and find ways to visualize what had occurred.

You know, I'm sure we've all seen the talking-heads documentaries boring you out of your mind. You've got to be able to visualize things. So obviously, when Leymah told us that CNN and Sky News and BBC had all been there in Ghana on the day that they took the peace talks, we went straight to CNN and Sky News and BBC and we said, "This is the date, these are the women, this is what occurred. Please look through your records. Please look through your archives."

And you know what? Not one of them had an inch of footage of any of these happenings. You know, again, at an intellectual level, I understood the process of erasure, and the conditions that women struggle against in order to be part of the record. And you know, it's very different to understand something intellectually than to understand it viscerally. But boy, did that deliver a dismal message to me about what we're up against. They

were there and Leymah tells me that she went to the top person, the cameraman from those places, and said, "Don't go away. We're going to do something really big today." And still there was no footage.

And on top of that, we were very scrappy and we scoured high heaven to find the footage. All the footage of the women came from private individuals who happened to be there with video cameras. The footage of the women on the fields, the footage of the women at the peace talks, and the footage of the women confronting Charles Taylor in that incredible sea of white was taken by a guy who was employed by the presidential palace from 1978 until Ellen was elected, and she downsized him out of his job, and he went home, with all of his masters. I met him in the bar of the Mamba Point Hotel and he happened to have that footage.

So it's more than just frustrating. It goes directly to the question of what do we see and why do we see it and how do we understand how the world works? Because the fact is that everything we think we know about the world, or much of everything we think we know, comes from television, comes from the news, and we do enormously trust these news sources. And what we had were hours, even days, of footage of combat. We had days of footage of guys shooting each other, blood and gore and things that I can't even describe to you that I sat through and watched because they were so horrible.

And what I came to understand was that there was almost a prurient, lurid quality to that footage, that there were mostly men -- not all men, but mostly men -- who went to the combat. You know, where everybody else was running away from it, because that's the sensible thing, they were going toward it with their HD cameras and they were working on spec or as stringers, or whatever, and what they needed to deliver was the most spectacular footage. If you have 20 stringers in Liberia and NBC is going to buy ten seconds of footage from somebody, they're going to buy the most interesting footage. And by "interesting," what I mean is, you know, how horrible can it be?

So what we get on the news is very much not the way it works. And we have come to shape our vision of the nature of the people who live in these places very much on an incredibly select sliver of their reality, because standing just outside a frame, in every case, there were these women, and they were sitting there quietly, praying and singing and fighting for peace.

So it's important to me that we make sure that we raise vigilant and very aggressively critical consumers of media, because this is something that will get worse before it gets better.

And the other thing is that it's such a natural film for girls, for girls' schools, and we've shown it in a lot of girls' schools and it gets such an incredible reaction, and I love that more than anything. I get girls crying and hugging me, and it's the best thing on earth.

But you know the other place, the best screening maybe I have ever had was at Regis High School in Harlem, which is an all boys' school, and they wanted it, they asked us to bring it there, and I had maybe one of the best community sessions I have ever had in my life.

One of the most important things these boys asked me, 16-, 17-, 18-year-old African-American boys from highly stressed environments who were high-achieving, incredible boys, had great influences in their lives -- was: "Where are the good men in the film? I don't see any good men in the film."

And I had to say it was important to us that we made a film that was from the women's eyes, and very much their influence. You know, there was a remediative quality to that, because the rest of the world represented the other side quite well, and more than enough. It seemed important to at least in this one case see it from their eyes.

So it wasn't really something that was on our radar screen very much to think about who the men were and how they were represented, but what I think is really interesting is that, as far as I'm concerned, there are tons of

good men in the film. You know, they're carrying out the dead, they're carrying their grandmothers on their backs in that incredible moment; they're carrying babies. There are plenty of good men in this film. Actually, there's General Abubakar, who says, "If you were a real man, you wouldn't be killing your people."

And so what I tried to push back on them is, you know, if there were good men in the film, why didn't you see them? Why didn't you notice them? What was it about them that made them invisible to you?

I think that that is the greater question and, you know, analogous with the work that we do with girls. It's a tough century that we're headed into. I think we have an enormous amount of work to do around the notion of masculinity and the notion of masculinity is a kind of social bludgeon that implies an operator, and I don't know who the operator is, but nevertheless that has the effect of forcing men into positions that they're not necessarily wanting to take on, either; forcing them to be half of themselves, forcing them to lose access to entire aspects of their personality in order to seem like they count, in order to seem like they matter; and that the room where the peace talks were taking place, which was filled with men, I think it's important to remember wasn't filled with all kinds of men any more than it was filled with the women who should have been there, too. The men in that room represented a certain kind of man, and the men I love and the men in my life weren't there any more than my friends, those women.

So if we want to change the world, and change its faces, we need to make them accessible to people who do not place on aggression the only legitimate way of making the way into peace talks, making a way into to power, making a way into really mattering in the world.

So I guess I'll just leave it there, and let anybody who has a question ask it.

SPEAKER FROM THE FLOOR: Mr. Taylor is frightening on many levels. Can you give us a snapshot of his evolution into that position?

MS. DISNEY: He's a really interesting character. In an earlier edit of the film it was a little bit the Charles Taylor show because he was so interesting. It was difficult not to make a film about him in some ways. He was American-Liberian, which means he was descended from slaves who went back in the 1820s, which made him part of the elite, so he was reasonably well-educated and finished his education in the United States.

He worked under the Doe administration. Doe is the guy who conducted the first coup in 1979 and was a brutal, brutal dictator. And he had been sort of a mid-level Army procurement officer, which in those days was a great way to make a lot of money in that corrupt government. So he was brought up on charges of embezzlement against the country, and eventually he was arrested and kept in a jail in Massachusetts, from which, when the Reagan Administration decided that Doe was becoming a bit of a liability, somehow coincidentally he escaped from prison in Massachusetts and found his way back to Liberia and started the war with support from mysterious places. There were elements of the Palestinian Liberation Army siding with him, Qadhafi supported him, but also the United States through surrogates also supported him. So he just would take whatever he could take from wherever he could take it. And actually, with Doe assassinated -- the whole thing was filmed by a videographer that Yasser Arafat had sent, because Doe had been so supportive of Israel.

It's all very strange. It's just a mishmash of people's motivations, and part of the problem here was that we had a very clear Cold War objective in the area until the Cold War was over, and then we had no plan, and we had no idea who we were going to support, and we didn't really make much of an effort. So what ended up happening was this kind of no-policy policy. And so we would just support whoever seemed to be winning or whoever seemed like they might have a good chance of winning against somebody we didn't like, and that was sort of Charles Taylor.

He went to Nigeria after he was ousted and he was offered exile and impunity. That shifted after Ellen was elected, and there was a lot of movement toward arresting him, which they eventually did. And he's now in The

Hague being tried for war crimes for his actions around the Sierra Leone conflict. He's not on trial for anything he did in Liberia. There's some fear that he will not be found guilty, but I think they're preparing a case against him for Liberia in case he's not found guilty.

But actually, my theory is that what we do with war criminals is, we take them to The Hague and then bore them to death. It's been like two years or something. Questions?

SPEAKER FROM THE FLOOR: What's happening in Liberia now? Where are we since Ellen? Is there progress?

MS. DISNEY: My first trip there was in early 2006, three months after Ellen was inaugurated and my last trip was last December, this past December. In that space of time there has been enormous progress in terms of the city getting pulled together and reconciliation happening. Their resources are very tight. I mean, there isn't money for things like reconciliation and reintegration for the boys. There aren't enough schools, there aren't enough jobs. They have the same problems with the economic recession that everybody else has. So that's problematic, but they have had 8 percent economic growth every year, but that's 8 percent over nothing. So there's a really long way to have to go.

But Ellen is a miraculous president. She really is, and not necessarily because she's a woman. And I want to be on record actually as saying that part of the reason for making the film was because women do have a special relationship to peace. But it's not the one that we have a tendency in our kind of flabby-mindedness sometimes to think of. And I don't think it's because we're all soft and gushy and we breast-feed our babies and everything. I just don't think that that's the way it is. It doesn't come on the second X chromosome, and it's not automatic, and there are plenty of women who will kick your rear end if you get between them and their babies. So it's not like we don't fight.

But I do believe that there isn't a culture on this earth where we don't specialize in birth and death and illness and the home and the heart and education and the feeding and all the rest of that stuff. There's just nowhere on the planet where you can find a place where we don't do that as a matter of course.

And I believe that in order to do that well, peace is a pretty good mission, and so we do have a special relationship to peace because we do bring an urgency about ideas and issues that tend to get brushed aside in peace negotiations. You know, "But you're raping my children" is the sort of thing you don't say at peace negotiations, and seeming kind of naive and beside the point and not even collegial. "How dare you accuse me of such a thing?"

And that was the effect of the women, that they were never really willing to put aside that genuine and immediate appeal to what we like to call life and the things that make life happen.

So Ellen is a remarkable president because she's skilled and she's gifted and she knows her way around the World Bank and she knows her way around bureaucracy, but also because she's good at occasionally and in the right time invoking herself as a mother or a grandmother. And I have seen her in meetings with ex-combatants where they're sitting very straight in their chairs, thank you very much, and she's a very stern and loving grandmother who can really get them to kind of find their better self.

SPEAKER FROM THE FLOOR: Were the women interviewed at risk for talking with you?

MS. DISNEY: Not really at all. And it was actually those ex-combatants who say, "They're our mothers." That's how everybody in Liberia feels about them still today. There's an incredible reverence for these women and what they did, and gratitude for what they did. Really, they were the only people who had the moxie to stand up. And Charles Taylor wasn't kidding. He said, "My own mother goes out there, I'll imprison her." And they did it anyway. So I don't think anybody wants to mess with them.

SPEAKER FROM THE FLOOR: Those kids that were conscripted into the Army -- were they able to repatriate themselves into society?

MS. DISNEY: It's a really rough situation, and that's probably the biggest risk for Liberia right now, because they represent a huge segment of the youth. The youth minister said to me that she thinks that 25 percent of everybody between 15 and 25 have perpetrated some kind of atrocity. And I have heard stories from women of 9-, 10-, 11-year-old rapists, and really it's just monstrous.

There just aren't the resources. Not in terms of money, but in terms of people and programs. UNICEF does an enormous amount of work around repatriating, reconciling, rehabilitating boy soldiers, but I think if you give them truth serum, they're not really sure that they're succeeding, and they're not really sure if they can succeed.

So that's the great risk. It's going to be, in the long run, about jobs and school. Everybody's working as fast and hard as they can. If anybody here wants to help them, the Liberian Education Trust is building schools across the country as fast as they can and training teachers.

SPEAKER FROM THE FLOOR: Tell us about your next project.

MS. DISNEY: Thank you for that. Well, while we were in the process of finishing the film up, we got into a conversation with WNET, our PBS station in New York, and ended up signing a deal to produce an additional four hours of programming on women and war around the world. And that will be on the air a year from now, in March, and it will be a special prime time series. I'm thrilled about it because, you know, we made the film in part because I knew from my work that women do this around the world all the time and nobody knows about it. And there's this very special role that women play that we have a tendency to just not notice, because we attach this idea that it's trivial to everything that they do. You know, the dishes and the laundry, the children and the education. We call it all trivial, but that's the stuff that matters.

So a woman's point of view about war we've never spent any time on. I wrote my dissertation on war novels. I have given this a lot of thought. If you think about everything you think you understand about war, you have mostly gotten it from novels, from plays, from movies and the rest of it. Give yourself a minute to try to imagine one single war narrative that ever took place from a woman's point of view. And I guarantee you can't think of one. Or maybe you can think of one, but it's the exception that proves the rule. And that's for the reason that we have conceived of war as basically a man's domain, and it's simply not that, it never has been. If Attila raped and pillaged his way across Europe, there were women there. If we fought house to house in every war, then there were women there.

So it has never been a clearly delineated battlefield with two armies and uniforms, clear sides, fighting it out. And we use the word "collateral" to almost imply a physical sideline. There is no collateral damage. It's all right there in the center, and every war seems like a war; everybody fights the one war that matters, the one war that needs to be fought.

But if you go around the world and you ask women about war, it's the same thing everywhere you go. So it seems to me if we turn the camera around and look at it from a woman's point of view, it's like that perceptual diagram we all studied in Psych 101 where the vase projects a woman's face. It's a simple perceptual shift that changes our reality completely because if you look at war from a woman's point of view, all of a sudden all the calculations about risk and benefits start to change.

SPEAKER FROM THE FLOOR: I was very interested in the coming together of Muslim and Christian women, and I was wondering how that's going today.

MS. DISNEY: Those are still relationships. You know, there was a lot of archival footage, but we also brought the women out to the field, and they hadn't been out there for a while, and hadn't seen each other. So a lot of the hugging you saw and the dancing and the laughing was people who hadn't seen each other in a while who really love each other and had really developed strong intense bonds. And none of those bonds existed before they did that work. But it wasn't easy for them to do that. They were suspicious of each other from the beginning, and Leymah, who is the lead woman in the film, and is an extraordinarily woman, made the decision that they needed to do some work.

They took the leadership of those communities outside of Monrovia for three days. They spent one day where the Muslim women got to say anything they wanted about the Christian women, and then the Christian women were not allowed to talk back. And then they had a second day where the Christian women talked about the Muslim women. And they had the third day where they worked it out.

And they knew if there were any fault lines in those relationships, they could be exploited. And if you'll notice when you watch the film, when someone says, "Move it forward with the Muslim women," and there's all this whooping and hollering from the women in church. Actually, if you really notice, there's two rows of men in the front of the church, and they have their arms crossed and they are not looking pleased at all. They were working against everything, to be doing that.

And so they continue to work on it. And they get out there and they protest frequently. They don't let Ellen off the hook.

SPEAKER FROM THE FLOOR: So did anything happen -- that woman who was such a star. Does she have a role in the government? What is she doing?

MS. DISNEY: She doesn't, because she chose not to. She moved to Ghana, because Ghana is a little bit easier to get around from, because she wants to play a role continentally. So she has been asked by the government of Chad to go work in Chad with women in refugee camps. She's worked in the Niger delta, she's worked in Zimbabwe, she's worked all over Africa with women on organizing. She and I are making a trip to Congo in May to work with a group of women there.

So her work is very much ongoing, and I'm delighted, because the film has really played a part in increasing her currency and capacity to get out there and her profile. Desmond Tutu nominated her for the Nobel Prize, which she lost out to Barack Obama on, but I guess that's all right. But she's been re-nominated this year, and you know, I know that they take her candidacy very seriously.

She also won the Kennedy Profiles in Courage Award, and actually I think we might have her acceptance speech on here. If we don't, it's on the website. She made the most extraordinary acceptance speech for that award.

I'll tell you something about how African women get marginalized. There were three women who won the awards this year, and Caroline Kennedy presented each of them with the award. Sheila Bair and Brooksley Born, who are women who were sort of whistle-blowers in the financial crisis, and so are white middle-class American women, each got up and gave their speech. It was very nice. And then Caroline Kennedy got up and presented Leymah with the prize. She gave this unbelievably stirring speech, really. Everybody was moved, and there was a huge, spontaneous standing ovation for her. And the newsman came over to me after it was all over and told me AP and Reuters crews were packing up the whole time she was speaking.

But she's a force, and she's out there.

SPEAKER FROM THE FLOOR: We're hearing a lot of big issues in the Congo. Where do you see women? I have got a friend who's done a lot of filming for the UN, and it sounds like it's bigger than Liberia.

MS. DISNEY: It's so much larger a country, and so the one thing that's very clear is whatever the movement is, you have to take the shape of the country it comes from. So like Liberia's movement looks like Liberia, and Congo is going to have to look like Congo. And one of the problems that women in Congo face is that they're physically very spread out. Kinshasa is a long way from Eastern Congo, and cities are really far apart, so they have trouble organizing. We did a scout a month ago, to see if they wanted us to bring the film. So we just brought the film to a few places and showed to it to a few groups, and their reaction was, "Oh, my God, please, when can we have it? When can we have it?"

So we're trying to pull a trip together. Because was they said was, "We just have difficulty working together as women's organizations. You know, there are big international NGOs there, and they get big pots of money which they then dole out in tiny little smidges to the local, and what they set up is a fight for territory instead of an air of collegiality, and so they're trying to help with that a little bit.

SPEAKER FROM THE FLOOR: I was on the program committee and we were going to show this film, Abigail, whether or not you joined us. But your commenting and providing us with this context about the erasure of women and the perceptual shifts involved is exactly why we come here to have this kind of mind-opening experience. And I know I speak on behalf of everybody that we're incredibly grateful to you for this.

MR. GALBRAITH: I affirm that. Thank you very much.

Breakfast is at 8:00, and tomorrow morning is "Meet the Lawyer" at quarter past 8:00. Everything is all right in this room, all the time we're here.

Thank you. Good night.