

Daniel Jau Maper

Age: 27

Region: Upper Nile

I assume I am 27, but I don't really know. I believe I was born in 1978. I am from a village called Panyang.

When I was 8 years old, I was herding cattle with my cousin, Karbino Jam. Arabs attacked our village. We heard the sound of guns and we were afraid we might get killed, so we ran away. I spent five days looking for my parents in the bush. I could not find them, so I went with my cousin and with other people that I did not know.

The journey to Ethiopia took two months. I traveled with my feet. Along the way, I ate roots, wild fruit, and leaves of the trees. Sometimes I had a shortage of fresh water. When I lived with my parents, before our village was attacked, I had plenty of meat, milk, butter, and cheese to eat. The most difficult part of the journey was not being with my parents and not having enough food and water. Along the way I saw many wild animals that I was scared of, such as lions, tigers, elephants, and crocodiles.

I stayed in a refugee camp in Itang, Ethiopia. When the war broke out in Ethiopia in 1991, I stayed in a camp in Panyido, Ethiopia for four years. After I left the camp, I eventually arrived in Kakuma, in Kenya in 1992. The best thing about Panyido and Kakuma was the opportunity to go to school. When I lived in my motherland, I just looked after cows and goats, but I didn't know about education. When I lived in Panyido and Kakuma, I saw different people. I saw a lot of white people. I learned they are a different color, but I saw they are just like me.

I came to the United States because I am with people. America is a country of freedom and human rights. I don't have much time to go to school because I work so much, but I am studying ESL. Knowledge is better than money. Money can go away. I would like to learn and get good at knowledge and teach children. I have knowledge, I can teach others.