

Mark Nyerere Bilieu

Age: 26

Region: Upper Nile

I am twenty six years old and I am from Bentiu, in the Unity State. My father has fifteen wives, thirty-five sons, and twenty daughters. My mother has two boys and two girls. Some of us lived in a city and others lived in a village. I don't remember exactly how old I was when I left home. I think I was six years old.

I used to live with my uncle in Torit. He was a governor. When he was sent to Juba to go to war, I stayed with his wife. I walked to Ethiopia with everyone, young and old people. I haven't spoken with my aunt since she left Ethiopia.

I remember the traveling. When someone dies in front of you, it is very terrible. I want to get food. I want to have water. You had to go to a village and use force to get food. You had to steal food or get food by force from someone. In Ethiopia, we ate corn and shared food. You keep the food until the next food comes. You have to save up food.

I was in Dimma camp in Ethiopia. It was good. I was taken to military training. In military camp they encourage me to be a man. I was shot in my right leg when I was ten. I was in Sudan in a military camp and someone shot me. There was a group of people that came into the camp at night and attacked us. I pulled a gun and I was shot.

After my leg healed, I went to refugee camp in Kakuma. The UN gave us good school in Kakuma, but we still had a storage of food.

I came to the U.S. on March 28, 2001. I wanted education. I told myself that I will depend on myself and work like an American person works. If you want to go to school, you will have an opportunity. You can earn money and support your family.

My father passed away in 2005. If I was in Africa, I wouldn't have the money to pay for his funeral. My brothers at home don't have jobs. I am helping my mom. My mom contributes the money to everyone. Only my nephew and I are in the U.S.

I thought it would be hard for me to get a job in the U.S. The agency will get a job for you the first time. If I want to get another job, I have to find it. I worked at McDonalds and PetSmart. I worked in the PetSmart Warehouse for two and a half years and Delta Airlines for two years. I scan the mail. I really enjoy my job at the airport.