

Valentino Dut

Age: 24

Region: Bahr al Ghazal

I left my village by Yiroll when I was six. I worried about my family. I went to Dimma in Ethiopia with other refugees. I went to school there for a few months, but the war interfered. I stayed in Dimma for four years. When the civil war happened in Ethiopia, I was sad, so I went to the border of Sudan and Ethiopia with a group of boys. I ran away to be safe. The teachers, children, and everyone ran away.

I fled to Kakuma, in Kenya and stayed there from 1991 until 2001. The U.N. said, "Look, you are very strong, very smart, and you're going to be responsible. Come to the United States and support yourself." They paid for part of the trip. I came to Phoenix of April 3, 2001.

I like to work and support myself. When I have a job, I feel responsible. I worked for security at Sky Harbor Airport. I also worked for 7 Up, Subway, Fry's, and Wal-Mart for two years, but they didn't pay me well. I tried school before, but when I worked at 7-Up, I had to get up at two a.m. I didn't have time for school because I was tired. One week ago I started a new job at ULTA. The benefits are good there and they pay well. They told me that if I have a wife, my wife would get a discount. I want a lot of children. I want to go to school and get a GED.

I have three sisters who died and three brothers. I want to see my brothers before they die. I love my dad, but he died three months ago. God takes care of my dad. My mom is in Sudan. I want to go there to visit, but I don't have a green card. They will be surprised to see me if I can visit. My mom will try to hold me, but I will be too heavy. I want to try and bring my mom and brothers to the U.S., but my mom said, "Son, I'm too old. I want to die where I was born."