

Gabriel Ajak Lat

Age: 27

Region: Bahr al Ghazal

The name of the village I am from is called Yirol. I have seven brothers and five sisters. My brothers are in Khartoum and my mom and sisters are in Juba. When I was ten years old, my mom told me that we had to leave home.

When I was traveling, I faced a lot of problems. There wasn't any medicine or food. I traveled with my relatives. I missed my family a lot. The most difficult thing was that I didn't know people and there were gangs in the forest. The gangs shot at us. I kept wondering if I would reach my destination. On my journey, I got sick from malaria.

I stayed in Panyido in Ethiopia. Then I went back to Sudan and stayed in Pochalla for about a year. I then stayed in Kakuma in Kenya for nine years and started school. In Kenya, I volunteered with the Red Cross and helped people send messages. The worst thing about Kakuma was the people outside the camp. They did not like us. You could here the sounds of guns at night. The best thing about the camps was the food, like maize and beans that we got from the UNHRC, and the education.

Before coming to America, my friends told me, "Gabriel, I just hope. You will come to America." Here in America, I can sleep well. I cannot sleep like that in Africa because I am always wide-awake. In Africa, when you are traveling, you have to sleep with everything. Everything here is cool. What surprises me most about the culture here is that people work together. People hold hands.

I earned my GED at Skyline and I now work for Coca Cola doing merchandising and stocking.

Life is good here. Education is free and you can learn what you want. I am proud to be from the U.S.