

James Mading

Age: 25

Region: Upper Nile

The village that I come from is called Bor, in the Upper Nile region. There were seven children in my family, two girls and five boys. My youngest brother is currently attending boarding school in Kenya. When I left my home, I just ran out and went with my older brother. When we traveled, we slept on the ground and under bushes. Since I was small, I was always carried. We were constantly looking for food.

I was in Panyido until 1991. I lived in Group Three where they trained us to be soldiers. I ate corn, wheat, sorgum, and beans. My uncle told me to leave Panyido seventeen days before the war broke out. I went to the border of Sudan. After I left Panyido, I spent six months in Pochalla. The SPLA told the UN forces that we should leave Pochalla. I then went to Pokot, then Narus, and lastly in 1992, I arrived in Kakuma. I left Kakuma in November in 1993 and went to Lockichogio. Next, I spent two months in a small town between Narus and Kakuma where they trained me to be in the SPLA. In 1994, I joined the army. I fought the Arabs in Kapoeta. My older brother was a lieutenant in the SPLA and he talked to my boss and arranged to have me discharged from the army.

I spent ten years in Kakuma where I attended school from primary school to high school. I was a patrol leader for scouting. From 1996 to 1998, I was Head Boy for my school. I had a lot of responsibilities as Head Boy. I had to make certain that everyone was served breakfast and that the teachers arrived for work. I kept time for the school by ringing the bell.

I was excited to come to the United States. I hoped that I would be able to complete my education since I was only three months from finishing my high school degree. My high school in Kenya sent my final exam to the US and I passed it.

The most difficult thing about living here is that you have to work at the same time that you go to school. If you relax, you are not making good use of your time. People here are very helpful. They support you and encourage your education. It surprises me when some of the young kids don't respect their elders.

I started at Phoenix College in December 2003. I am studying Administration of Justice and I would like to either be a lawyer or a judge. I also work full time at HMS Host at the Phoenix Airport. I supervise and train people at the airport food court. I would like to go visit Sudan if I can save enough money.