

Samuel Oshimi-John

Age: 30

Region: Upper Nile

I was nine years old when we left our village because of the fighting and bombing around us. My parents, three sisters and three brothers joined relatives in the city of Malakal because it was safer. We stayed in the city from 1983-1989. Life was good. I was in school and my father worked for the government driving a boat. In 1989, at the age of 15, I moved by myself to Khartoum and stayed with an Uncle. I finished high school and later left Sudan in 1997 to go to Syria because otherwise I had to join the military and I couldn't go to University. I worked in building construction for 1.5 years and then moved to Lebanon for better job opportunities and because they paid with American dollars. I had a car and worked in the restaurant business cooking for five years. But, I had no documents and was always watching my side because I could be sent back to Sudan or put in jail. I was living in an Anglican Church with twenty people protected from the police.

Eventually, I moved to the U.S. on July 9, 2002. It was the best day! I will never forget it. I was relieved that I would not have to join the militia and fight against my own people. The first month was really hard. I knew British English. But it was still hard to understand Americans. I thought I could make a better future for myself in this country and I had some friends who lived in the U.S. I feel safe here. You can pursue what you want unlike Lebanon, but if you don't work, you will be homeless.

I work at Sky Harbor fueling airplanes. I like Arizona. The desert is hard and hot like Sudan. I'm studying computer science at Phoenix College and want to work in that field.