

Melek Deng

Age: 28

Region: Bahr al Ghazal

I was seven years old when I left my home because our village was attacked. I waited for my family, but when I didn't see them. I joined a group of children traveling around. In 1987, we walked to a camp called Panyido in Ethiopia where we stayed for four years. The best thing about Ethiopia was that no one was shooting people and were safe.

In 1991, we came back to Pochalla for six months. We stayed in a group house that was as bright as a flower. The best thing about the house was when we would get together and talk and support one another. There was not a lot of food, so when we talked together, it helped us forget about food. After we left the house in Pochella, we walked to a jungle called Buma. We slept on grasses in the forest just to rest for twenty minutes. Then we had to get back up and walk. We walked every day for three months. Every day, the enemies hunted for us in helicopters so we walked at night so they couldn't find us.

After we left the jungle, we walked to a small town called Magos. Militia attacked us and killed two boys and injured six. We stayed there overnight and then we started walking again in the morning toward Kapoeta. Two hours before we got to Kapoeta, we thought we had actually arrived in Kapoeta, but we weren't. The Sudanese government started bombing the city we were in. We rested in Kapoeta for two hours and then we went to Narus, where we stayed for three months. The enemy captured Kapoeta so we left Narus, where we stayed for three months. The enemy captured Kapoeta so we left Narus and went to Lockichokio. We stayed there for two months. Then, in August, we moved to Kakuma and stayed in the refugee camp.

In Kakuma, I applied to the UN to come to the U.S. We started the process in 1997. In 2000, they opened my case and I had to be interviewed. On August 28, 2001, I came to Phoenix. I went to ITT Tech where I studied to be a Medical Assistant. Then I went to College America where I studied Medical Technology. I graduated and now I work for St. Joseph Hospital. I am currently a student at Grand Canyon University studying nursing.

Last year, I met with my mom. It was one of the happiest moments of my life because I had not seen her in twenty years.