

Deng Atem

Age: 27

Region: Bahr al Ghazal

I was seven years old when militia came into our village and started to take our cattle. When the militia came, they burned down our town. They started killing men and boys. My sister and little brother were captured by the militia and taken as slaves. Many years later, my father paid the militia to get them back.

When I traveled, my cousin and I were together, but unfortunately, he died along the way. There was very little water, and you would stop when you found some. All the traveling was done at night to avoid the heat and the animals. When we passed villages, we asked the chiefs of the area for food. Sometimes they gave us goats, cows, and corn, depending on how many people there were in our group. I was not used to walking such a distance. My feet were all bloody and I tied my shirt around them for protection. Crossing the rivers was difficult.

I stayed in a camp in Ethiopia until 1991, when the government of Ethiopia was overthrown and the rebels forced us out. I then went to Pochalla, Pokot, Boma, Kapoeta, Narus and Lockichokia in Sudan. Eventually, I made it to Kakuma and stayed there from August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1992 to April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1994. After staying with family members in Nairobi and in a camp in Ipo, I was able to arrange to come to the United States on September 27, 1995.

Since I was only seventeen, I stayed with two different families in foster care when I came to the U.S. I graduated from Horizon High School and I'm in my final year studying political science at ASU. I am pre-law student and I am taking Arabic Classes, as well as studying for the LSAT. I would like to be a lawyer or a diplomat and perhaps attend Georgetown University.

I work at Wal-Mart as a stocker and Cashier since November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Before that, I worked at Circle K and Bank of America. The thing I like most about living here is the health care that's available and that there is a lot of respect for other people. Here, I feel safe.