

Philip Chol Gai

Age: 26

Region: Upper Nile

I escaped in 1987, before the war reached my village. One evening, when I was twelve years old, I was looking after my cows and goats. I was bring them back from the forest to the bush when I saw smoke and fire from the war.

I traveled with other people and I experienced hunger and thirst. I didn't have water or a container to carry the water. We had to travel at night. We dug up roots to eat. Since I didn't have shoes I, had to travel on bare feet. My feet become cut, blistered, and swollen.

I walked to Ethiopia and stayed in Dimma for four years, until 1991. I eventually ended up in Kakuma in Kenya. The best thing about the camp was going to school. It is the most important thing I gained. I completed my elementary and high school in Kakuma. They taught us basic education. I attended a peace education workshop in Kakuma. There was a lot of conflict in refugee camps.

The bad thing about living in the refugee camp is that you are dependent on the U.N. and that makes it hard for people to live. The camp was in a desert and you couldn't travel outside the camps.

I came to the U.S. in August 28, 2001. I knew that the U.S. was the best country in the world and it had a lot of opportunities. I wanted to be independent and to be able to help someone else.

I'm taking a correspondence course with B.U. I'm studying medical transcription and psychology. I wanted to go to ASU. I think I want to study applied science and see wherever I can fit in.

The way people communicate in Sudan and America is different. Here it is more advanced. Where I grew up, people work with their hands instead of using machines. There's nothing that I don't like about living here. I like being here.