

James Mut

Age: 23

Region: Upper Nile

My mother, six brothers and five sisters are all alive and living in Sudan. I was 7 when the Northern Military started shooting people in my village. I ran with all the other people.

We walked for six months to Ethiopia. Sometimes we walked in water or had to swim through a river. If you couldn't swim, you died. We had no food. We slept on the road. We were often ambushed by bombs and guns. I lived three years in Ethiopia, but had to leave due to the government collapse and walked another seven months back to Sudan.

We arrived at the border town of Pochala where we lived for five months. We were attacked and chased and were chased to the Gilo River where they continued to ambush us. We had to swim across the river or be shot. Many people jumped in and drowned because the river was too fast. I survived and we went to another border town, Pertgeto, where we were ambushed again and walked nine more months to the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya.

I lived in Kakuma for nine years with my 14 year old cousin. I went to school in the camp and learned English. There was never enough food or water. There were refugees from many different countries. I built my own house and helped lots of people build their own houses.

I arrived in the U.S. on 9/11/2001. We could not land and had to go to Italy for two weeks before we could come back. American people are good people. I've learned a little about American culture. Everyone has freedom. I feel safer here. One of the things that surprises me is that you don't have to pay for a wife in America. In Africa you pay by giving cows to her family.

I've been working at the Boulders Resort Spa for three years. I also study journalism and photography at Phoenix College. I want to become a photojournalist and document the war. I'd like to work for the U.S. and take pictures.