

William Mayom

Region: Upper Nile

Age: 20

When I was young, I used to play and I made cows from clay. I lived with my cousin, Peter Deng. When I was eight or ten, I left my village because of the war. I traveled with seven family members. My older cousin helped me. The trip to Ethiopia took ten to fifteen days. The trip was horrible because I had never been in this situation before. I was afraid and I didn't have parents. Along the way I slept on the savannah.

I stayed in Panyido in Ethiopia. The U.N. provided food, clothes, and shelter. I slept under a tarp in the camp until a real house was built. I went to school in Panyido and it was the first time I went to school.

In 1991 war broke out in Ethiopia and my family members and I left Panyido and went to Pochalla. We then traveled to Boma, Kapoeta, Narus, Lockichokio, and then arrived in Kakuma. The education in Kakuma was a bit better than in Ethiopia because we had better books and teachers. I was in the debate club at school and I competed against different zones.

When I was in sixteen and in high school, I left to come to the U.S. I was on the same plane as my cousin Peter and six other family members. One cousin and I lived with an American family for two years. I went to Tolleson Union High School for two years and graduated from Paradise Valley High School. I worked part time after school and Catholic Social Services helped support me. When I was in high school I was in track and ran the 200m and 400m. I was also in Cross Country. I liked running because I got to travel around the state. I met Jany Deng when he coached at Pinnacle High School. I would see him at meets.

The U.S. is a very different culture. American food is so different. It is too sweet. I like pizza, spaghetti, and barbeque, and donuts. I cook American food. I don't know how to cook Sudanese food because it takes a long process to make it. The most difficult thing about living here is that you miss your family and friends in Bor. When you are from outside, American culture seems so complicated. In American, you have a lot of opportunities and you can do whatever you want.