

## **Journey to the Land of the Free**

### **By Kuol Akech**

I was born on February 25, 2000, in Juba, Sudan, and I lived there for 8 years. After my eighth birthday, my mother told my family the great news of us going to the United States. I asked her “Rin jäl aye wut?”

She said, “Ke aköl le yän ye gäm keek piny abī yo dak yo keek.”

At the time that we were moving, my mother was pregnant with my younger brother. I felt excited for a couple of days until I realized that going to a new country meant that I had to say goodbye to all of my friends and relatives. I did not know anything about the United States, so adjusting there would probably be difficult.

A month after we were told about us moving, my family packed up all our belongings and someone who worked with immigration services drove us to the airport. When arriving at the airport, I felt nervous that an accident would happen because I had never flown in a plane before. The airport security guided us to the plane and helped us with our baggage.

When I first got on the plane, the flight attendant told us to put our belongings in the storage area above our seats and to take a seat. A couple of minutes after take-off, I felt airsickness. I told my mother that I felt like throwing up, so my mother waved her hand to one of the flight attendants and told him that I needed to use the restroom. The flight attendant told me, “Keep going. It’s on your first left.” I did not understand what she said because I didn’t know English. I stood there in confusion as the flight attendant repeated what she said. Once I found it, I sat next to the toilet until I didn’t feel like throwing up anymore. After I used the restroom I went back to my seat and slept for the rest of the flight.

We landed in Ethiopia, where my family lived for a couple of months. Soon enough we found ourselves on another plane headed to America. After the long flight, we landed in Dayton,

Ohio. I was surprised at how different America looked from Africa, especially how massive the architecture seemed. We lived in Ohio for 8 years and then moved to Fargo, North Dakota. I was unhappy when my mother told me that we had to move again, because I didn't want to have to start all over again in a new state. I was 15 when I moved to Fargo. I began my education in December as a freshman at Davies High School.

I learned about a new country and I learned about new and different people. I've made friends in America, and I've also gotten to experience living in a new country.

## **Dinka Language Glossary**

**“Ke aköl le ɣɛn ye gäm keek piny abï ɣo dak ɣo war.”**

“We cannot stay here any long because of war.”

**“Ma, Rin jäl aye wut?”**

“Mom, why are we moving?”

## **About The Author**

Kuol Akech was born on February 25, 2000. He lived in Juba, Sudan, until he was 7, then moved to the United States. Kuol mostly grew up in Dayton, Ohio. Growing up, he loved playing a lot of sports. Kuol began his education in second grade at Fairview Elementary School and then transferred to Pathway Middle School because he moved to a different home. He lived there for 8 years and then moved to Fargo, North Dakota, in 2015. Kuol is currently living in Fargo, but hopes to go back home to Ohio where he grew up.

