

Spotlight on: Abraham Mun

Born the son of a tribal Chief, and with too many older brothers and sisters to count, Abraham Mun was only three years old when the Second Sudanese Civil War broke out. Because he was so young when the government-sponsored militia attacked his village of Dukeadit, his memory of the events of that day and those that followed is hazy. But, Abe's strength and ability to survive – even as little more than a baby – foretold his future successes.

It was 1983 when Abe was forced from Dukeadit, running from the murderous army with a group of his playmates, leaving no time for goodbyes with his family. Abe was swept into a group, now known as the Lost Boys, who began to walk, some traveling south towards Kenya, others branching off to the south-east towards Ethiopia. Abe joined the latter contingent, crossing the Ethiopian border some weeks after leaving his village, and settled down for the next four years in a United Nations sponsored refugee camp. There, Abe remembers a life of difficulty, mitigated slightly by presence of a nearby river which supplied the camp with fresh water for drinking and bathing. The availability of water was something which Abe later learned not to take for granted, when he was relocated to Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya in 1991.

In Kakuma, refugees had no choice but to rely on United Nations provisions; everything from water to food was carefully rationed, oftentimes resulting on the allocation of only one meal a day. But, scarcity of food and water were not the only difficulties residents of Kakuma faced. Abe remembers living in constant fear of attack by neighboring Kenyans, frustrated that the United Nations robbed them of their cattle-grazing land by establishing a refugee camp in their pastures. He recalls a high degree of regimentation, as two or three elders tried to maintain order in the group of orphaned children, living together in huts without close adult supervision. Abe also speaks of a general lack of hope that pervaded Kakuma, a sentiment that was regained when rumors began to spread of an opportunity to relocate to America.



Abe was amongst the first to participate in the immigration proceedings, facilitated by the United Nations. He went for interview after interview, medical check after medical check, and faithfully attended cultural orientation sessions, which often involved watching American movies. And finally, after nearly eight years in Kakuma, Abe's name was posted at 6pm on the list of those that would leave for the United States... the very next afternoon!

On November 29, 2000 – a cold and wet day unfamiliar to those who knew only the dry heat of East Africa - Abe flew to East Bridgewater, Massachusetts to meet his new family, the Nickersons, an older couple with extensive experience raising refugees from around the world. Abe lived with the Nickersons for the following three years, until he moved out on his own, first to attend community college, where he earned his associates degree, and then to Bridgewater State College, where Abe majored in social work and minored in sociology. While at Bridgewater State, Abe held multiple jobs. He continued to work part-time, as he had since his arrival in the United States, at a local supermarket, while also pursuing internship opportunities. As a junior, Abe interned with Catholic Charities, a national social services agency which works with local organizations to reduce poverty and support families in disadvantaged communities. During his senior year, he worked with Division of Youth Services (DYS), a partnership of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the YMCA, offering services and support to juvenile delinquents in Waltham. Abe proved to be such an asset at DHS that, after his college graduation in May 2007, he was offered a permanent position as a Youth Care Advocate, which he continues to hold today.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ABE ON HIS GRADUATION AND HIS
FLOURISHING CAREER!