

Finding My New Home

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I was born into a refugee camp in a small town in Kenya named, Kakuma. Living in the camps was a nightmare. I don't remember anything from my life in Africa, through family stories I could only imagine how horrendous it was. You could barely sleep at night, knowing the violence and starvation was like no other. Not knowing if you'd even be on the next list to flee to the states.

Getting on the list was hard. Sometimes you'd get separated from your family and get thrown into a different state. In our last camp and first camp ever in Kenya, where I was born was our final stop. We were dying to see our names on that board. In April of 2004, when I was 8 months old, we got to come within the U.S. It wasn't easy living here: learning a language you have no knowledge of, and not knowing a single person. School was always hard, but ESL helped a lot. I've done it from pre-k all the way to 8th grade.

A few years pass, and I finally start to feel as if I found my voice. I was in the Amnesty Club, and I was asked to write a story for our hunger banquet. It took place in our school's cafeteria, with brick walls, lots of tables, and decorations. There was a quartet near the entrance, which played various combinations of songs. When it came time to read my story, I got really nervous. I had practiced my deliverance with our club sponsor, Ms. Horne. When it came down to delivery, I felt vulnerable. My hands were shaking while I was holding the paper and my voice quivered. As I was reading, my pace got quicker, nervous! My heart beat was faster and my breathing became shallow which made it even harder to stay calm.

Throughout that evening till now, I started to see a different perspective of myself. One that others saw in me, that I couldn't recognize at first. From then on, I still struggled with writing, but I took it more seriously. All the way from, research papers in class, speeches in public speaking, all the way to making a commencement speech at my own graduation. I asked

myself, “if those around you can see your potential as a writer, what's stopping you from seeing it in yourself?”

Within my story I wanted to grab the audience's attention. I started off with the events my family had gone through. My family has been in a lot of different refugee camps. We've been to about three in Somalia. It all started in the midst of a genocide. That's when we all had to flee. There were unpleasant moments. Camps were horrible, but what else did we have? In the midst of everything, life within the camps were tragic, specifically when it came down to necessities and safety. The fences weren't all that protective, you'd see animals at night inside the camps. You'd get portions of food. One bag of rice, 2 gallons of oil, some beans, and 2 gallons of water, which wasn't always clean. Everyone had the same amount no matter how big your family is. My mother would give up her food to let us eat.

My sister worked as a maid and only made 300 shillings which is about 3 dollars in American currency. My father would go out job hunting with my brothers to get hardworking jobs. My mother would stay at home and be a housewife like other mothers. She would cook food and take care of the house, kids, and herself. We only had one choice of making food which was with fire. We had to pay the turkana people who were the tribe in that region, for logs of wood because they own everything in that region.

My parents didn't let us see how much we struggled, but we knew. You could also go to school, learn different languages from that region and basic studies. Everyone could go to school, even the girls, which isn't normal in some countries. It wasn't in the ones we were in, but it was in the camps. My parents, they didn't get much educational knowledge, but they were homeschooled. I wish they had more knowledge.

In conclusion, I gained trust with this whole experience. Trusting the process of which you are in, knowing you'll become better for it and get growth. Ms. Horne would make us say, “I am someone, I have something to say, you should listen to me, you'll be better for it.” That

stayed with me throughout all my years of highschool. I hope that someday my story will inspire more. America isn't the best, but it is better than what my family and I have had in the past!