

# LOST BOY: Student returns to homeland in Sudan

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besides his family waiting for him, he also found cattle. Cattle, as Amol explained, is used to greet people in happiness, as a welcome present.

"It is used to celebrate and feast with our families and community," said Amol. "I didn't want to come back when it was time to leave. My family was crying."

Amol's experience as a Lost Boy has been one that he will never forget, he said.

He recalled: "My job was to look after the goats and the cows when I was still living at home and one evening our village was attacked and many of us weren't with our parents and so we just had to run away to save ourselves," said Amol.

Many escaped with just the clothes on their back, while others managed to gather a few of their belongings, according to Amol. And like Amol, many ran without their parents with them because it was risky to go home and find them. But, several people at least had relatives to get support from during the escape.

For food, there were some people who had hunting experience, so they killed small animals and cooked them over an open fire that the runaways created. They also gathered food from villages they passed by. One of life's most essential foods, water, ran out very soon.

But they all had to be careful to remain out of sight from any attackers wandering their route.

"The elders decided that it was best to walk long distances overnight because it was cooler, and then seven in the morning we looked for places with big trees

to sleep," stated Amol. "We sat down during the day as a group to also protect kids," he added.

The escape took 27 days by foot. Their destination was Ethiopia because it was the closest border they had access to in distance.

"We were led by some people who already went there before," Amol said.

The group started out with just 100 people, but by the time they reached Ethiopia, there were probably close to 10,000 people from different tribes. But many had also died because of the conditions they were living in.

"We all spoke to each other in Arabic because it was the only language we all knew," said Amol. There were also different dialects that everyone spoke to those from their own village."

Upon their arrival to Ethiopia, the United Nations began to help. The Red Cross used letters to track parents of missing family members to let them know of their whereabouts and wellbeing. Amol learned that his family was OK. After living there for five years, he moved to Kenya with the support of the International Organization of Migration that helped him to attend school until 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

"IOM decided to help and where to settle us and the United States then decided to keep us for education and better life," Amol said.

Still, he was unable to visit his parents because of all that was going on in finding a place for him to settle. But he was able to stay in contact by telephone.

Several years later, in 2000, he was called to Mississippi through a charity that provided Amol, who was then 17 years old, and

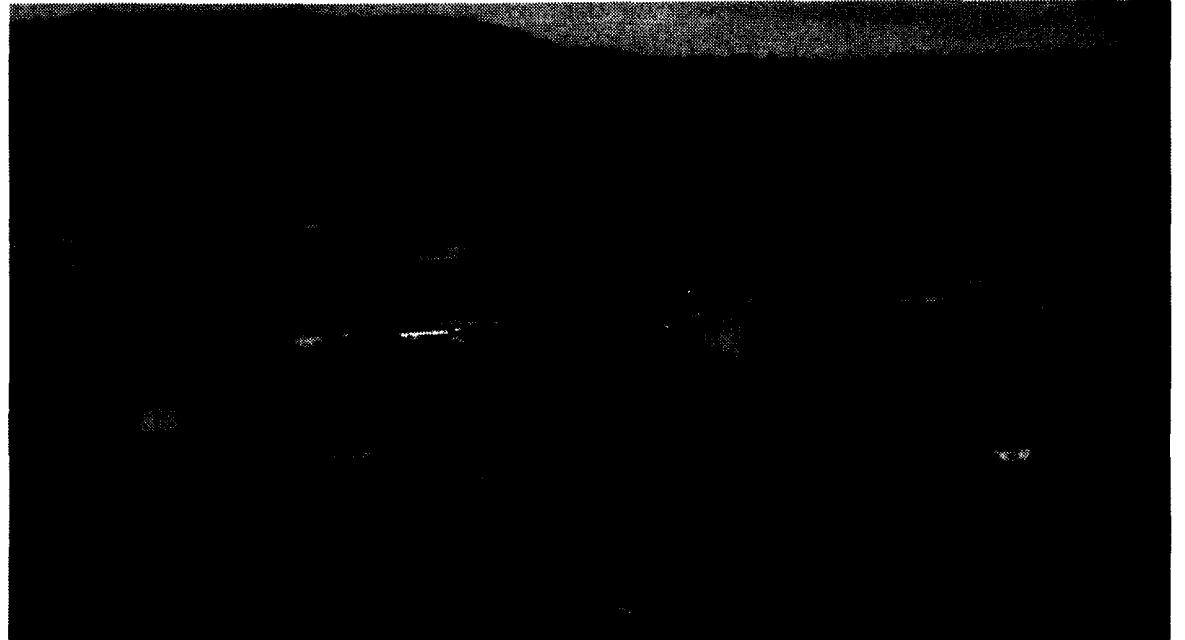


Photo courtesy of DOR AMOL

The city of Kaya at the border of Sudan and Uganda.

other Lost Boys the opportunity to live with a temporary family. He has only nice things to say for this opportunity.

"I am very grateful to the United States government for doing a nice thing for me by supporting me to live here when I first came," said Amol. "I've been through a lot in my life," he added.

There are many differences between Africa and the United States.

"We are able to have a better education or better life [here] and there was insecurities and shootings there at night," Amol explained. "There is not much entertainment here and most of the hospitals and clinics were too far away, too."

Upon being welcomed to the US, Amol and other Lost Boys were trained in working and learned how to speak English as a second language to help them with their lives in the states, said Amol. He

also learned English when he schooled in Kenya.

Amol attended a community college in Mississippi and two years later moved to Harrisburg, Pa because he has a lot of relatives here. Soon after, he began attending Penn State Harrisburg because it was the closest to his home and was already familiar with it having a cousin graduate from here as well. He wishes to attain his bachelor's degree in accounting. He hopes to be done soon since he only needs 33 more credits to graduate.

This semester, however, he had to withdraw from classes because of his May trip to Sudan after 21 years to visit his family. Because of some trouble with paperwork in coming back to the United States, he was a month late in arriving and decided that it would be best to work his night job

fulltime and resume with classes next semester.

Amol has big goals for his future.

He explains: "I just hope for my life to continue. I didn't achieve [my] goal yet of graduating, so school is my goal and to finish my degree and get a job, either over here, or in Sudan. I want to help people in Africa. There is a lot of people who live tough lives there. I would like to help people as a government agent or help in schools. I've been there and have seen what they need and they really need a lot of help like better highways, roads and houses.

His hobbies include playing soccer, which he has limited time for because of work and school. He also played in the campuses intramural volleyball team. Additionally, Amol likes to watch basketball and football.



Photo courtesy of DOR AMOL

Dor Amol (far left) with his uncle's family on his father's side.

## The Lost Boys of Sudan

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mostly of black Christians and Animists, who practice their own traditions.

The Lost Boys of Sudan were separated from their families after civil war attacks on their villages in the 1980s. They walked as groups to refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya.

In 2001, The United States granted refugee status to about 3,800 Lost Boys.

The Civil War in Sudan that resulted in the separated families began in 1955 after the Islamic North gained control of the country. The North attacked the South, which was made up

Southerners were raped and killed at random and surviving women and children were often captured as slaves.

Many Lost Boys died on the journeys to refuge, but many who survived now reside in The United States and are seeking education at universities all across America.

Sources: ACIG; Alliance for the Lost Boys of Sudan (<http://www.alliancefortheLostBoys.com>); and PBS