Kuot Mapeok

Interview date: February 10, 2001
Location of interview:
Country of origin: Sudan
Ethnic group/language group: Dinka
Religion: Non-practicing Roman Catholic
Profession: Social worker with Lutheran Children and Family Services; works with Sudanese refugee youth
Level of education: Masters in Public Administration from the American Univeristy in Cairo
Location of residence in Philadelphia:

Mr. Mapeok came to United States in September 1998. He moved to Philadelphia November, 2000 from New Jersey, where his sponsor was. He arrived in New Jersey from Kenya, where he had been a refugee for five years. Mr. Mapeok left Sudan in 1989 to go to graduate school in Egypt. He never returned to Northern Sudan for political reasons, but did work in the "liberated" areas of Southern Sudan. His wife and children left Egypt and were resettled as refugees in Canada, they still live there. He socializes mainly in Washington, DC with Southern Sudanese; they have an association there. There are few Southern Sudanese in Philadelphia, outside of the Sudanese refugee youth (the "Lost Boys") with whom he works.

Interviewer: Leigh Swigart (LS)

Interviewee: Kuot Mapeok (KM)

[START SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

LS: Give me your name please?

KM: My name is Kuot Mapeok.

LS: And you are from?

KM: I am from South Sudan, from Bahr al Ghazal region.

LS: What's your ethnic group?

KM: I am a Dinka.

LS: How many Dinka are there in Sudan?

KM: Well, population-wise it's over five million.

LS: Five million?

KM: Yes.

LS: And are they also in Kenya or another country?

KM: No, we are not in any other country, in any other neighboring country, no.

LS: And is your ethnic group related at all to the Nuer? Are the languages related at all, or is it a really distinct group?

KM: You mean, whether our language is completely distinguished, it's not related to --- ?

LS: Yes, if you're not mutually intelligible or --- ?

KM: No, we share. It's nearer to the other Nilotic group, like the Nuers, like the Shilluk, like the Luo. Like ( ).

LS: Oh, okay, okay. And your native language is Dinka?

KM: Yes.

LS: And how long have you been in the United States?

KM: I came to United States in September 1998. So now I don't know --- it's over two years.

LS: And you just recently came to Philadelphia, right?

KM: No, I came to New Jersey and Newark and then I just moved to Philadelphia this last year in October --- last year in November.

LS: In November 2000?

KM: Yeah.

LS: Why did you come to New Jersey?

KM: Well, I was, umm --- right away I was brought --- when I was brought in I was brought under the sponsorship of public community service in New Jersey, in Newark. So I came there. And usually when

you come in, you start where your sponsor is and then maybe later on you can move any other part of the USA.

LS: Where did you come from?

KM: I came from Kenya.

LS: And how long had you been in Kenya?

KM: I had been in Kenya over five years.

LS: And you were in a camp?

KM: Yeah, I used to go to the camp. And it was like on the camp and off the camp and it was like --- it was mobile. You can ---

LS: You were in Kakuma, the same one with the other ( )?

KM: Yeah, I was in Kakuma. I was based in Nairobi but I would always go to Kakuma to stay there for sometime.

LS: So when you were in the camp, you had the possibility of leaving and going to Nairobi or going to other places? You planned(or applied) to stay there?

KM: No, I was not ( ) because I was based in Nairobi. I was like this urban refugee. I was not a rural refugee.

LS: Oh, okay.

KM: So I would go to Kakuma optionally, just to visit relatives.

LS: Did you have a lot of relatives there?

KM: Yeah, a lot of them, a lot of them.

LS: How far away is Kakuma from Nairobi? Not too far?

KM: It's very far. It's over fifteen hours drive by land. You see, ( ) nearer to the border.

LS: And the roads are probably not great?

KM: Yeah, not that much great.

LS: So what would you take? Those kind of bush taxis thing? Or what kind of vehicle did you take?

KM: We take bus.

LS: You take a bus?

KM: Yeah, I take bus and then at certain point you shift from a bus to minibus and you enter in the camp in a minibus ( ).

LS: I bet it was dusty.

KM: Yeah, but it's okay, but except the roads between Nairobi and Kakuma, is tarmac.

LS: Oh, it is?

KM: Yes, it's tarmac. So it's --

LS: It's a little bit better.

KM: Yeah, it is better. Maybe because driving in mountains sometimes there is a risk of accident and --- but otherwise the roads are okay. [break in tape]

LS: Can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up in Sudan and what your education was like there?

KM: I grew up in my native town, Gogrial, and I went to school in Gogrial.

LS: How do you spell that?

KM: G-o-g-r-i-a-l, Gogrial.

LS: And you went to school there?

KM: Yeah, I went to school there. I did my elementary school there, that is primary education. I went to intermediary school in Kuajok. It's not very far from Gogrial. It's another town called Kuajok, K-u-a---K-u-a-j-o-k.

LS: And that's where you went to high school?

KM: No, no. That's where I did my --- what they call junior high. For that we also call it intermediary school.

LS: You did O-Levels or something?

KM: It's O-Level, yeah. And then I did my high school in Rumbek.

LS: Rumbek?

KM: R-u-m--- R-u-m-b-e-k.

LS: Was it a boarding school? Did you have to go board?

KM: Yeah. They are all boarding schools and boys' school and, um, Rumbek was the only secondary school in the south. Besides there was another one, but it was a commercial high school. So it was one commercial high school and one academic high school.

LS: They were private schools or public schools?

KM: They were pri --- public, no, public.

LS: They were public.

KM: Yeah..

LS: But there was school fees probably to pay?

KM: Yeah, yeah.

LS: So tell me --- when did everything start in Southern Sudan? What was it like growing up there? Were things really disrupted when you were growing up?

KM: Well, um, the problem actually started much earlier. And probably when we were so young, maybe before we were born. And then the problem started to brew and then later on resulted into a rebellion in 1955.

LS: 1955?

KM: That was the first rebellion, armed rebellion. It was a military, uhh, by southern Sudanese ----

LS: ( )

KM: Yeah --- within the Sudan Army. And then, after that, the rebellion went on and grew because in Southern there was too much injustice and so many things were not going well. So the rebellion started to get support from the grassroot and from the elite group and the war went on. Took arms for(?) close to the neighboring countries. They bought arms. And they waged a guerrilla war against the government.

LS: From the perception of the South, do you feel disenfranchised because of your religion or because of your race or because of your ethnicity or --- what's going on?

KM: It's a multifaceted type of problem in the sense that there are so many sides. There is a religious persecution. You have to be a Muslim. If you are not a Muslim, you lose so many of the rights you are suppose to get from your nation.

LS: And yet isn't the majority Christian?

KM: The majority in the North --- not in the North.

LS: In the North, I know it's Muslim, but in the South?

KM: But in the South, the majority are the Christians.

LS: But overall in the country, there are a lot of Christians?

KM: There are Christians, but, you know, that in what they call census or population politics. The number of Christians is laid down so in the records you find that it is very small, very small percentage.

LS: I see.

KM: But actually it's not small.

LS: So they undercount?

KM: Yeah, they undercount, what you call population politics.

LS: And then what about ethnicity ---

KM: Yeah ---

LS: --- language, or whatever?

KM: Yeah, that's one side. The other one is you are a Southern Sudanese, like for me I am a Dinka and then I am seen like being inferior to somebody who claim to be an Arab. So that is another side of it.

LS: And the Northern Sudanese really consider themselves Arabs?

KM: Well, most Sudanese consider themselves Arabs.

LS: Because of their language?

KM: Yeah, they say they are Arabs. They are not blacks. And they are Muslims. And then these are the two superior --- uhh, you know, ( ) you are a Muslim, you are an Arab. ( ) they make you more unique or more superior than any other who is a non-Muslim and who is a non-Arab. And, you know, all the affairs, all whatever ( ) in the country is being run based on this superiority, inferiority. You know, versus --- superiority versus inferior, you know.

LS: When you were growing up, did you feel like your life was highly influenced by these political tensions? Did you continue to continue to be have public schools funded or were there day-to-day kind of consequences of these conflicts?

KM: Well, you grow up with that because it becomes a struggle. Life, it start to be some sort of a struggle. You are like going uphill. You are a non-Muslim, you are a non-Arab, then you have to put in extra effort to close the gap. For example, in the whole Southern Sudan, you have only two high schools.

You either go to Rumbek or go to Commercial. Now, there are so many schools in the south, like intermediary schools, who will have to compete only for that ---

LS: One high school.

KM: --- one high school. And, you know, it is not even two extreme high school. It's only one and that is forty students. So you will have over two to three thousand kids sitting exam, competing only to be among forty.

LS: Wow. You must have been a good student. [**LS** laughs]

KM: Yeah, you have to. Or otherwise you don't make it, you see. So --- [pause] so that by itself, it makes life as a challenging thing,. You have always a lot of, like --- it is always a challenge. If you want to study, if you want to pursue an education, then it is a struggle. Because at a certain point, if you don't do well, then you don't go any further than that and you fall out.

LS: What's the educational background of your parents? Had they been able to go to school?

KM: No. My mother didn't go to school. My father didn't go to school. But my father was a policeman and he was well-acquainted, he knew what education means. So he was so much determined that he gave me all the necessary support.

LS: And do you have brothers and sisters who also --- ?

KM: I have only a sister, we are only two. I have only a sister. But my sister was not taken to school. Ahh, because you know Dinkas, ahh, they, they, they don't --- they haven't let girls to school. They don't like that. And, ahh, yeah, they ( ) to like girls leaving outside the house, no.

LS: Being in public and all that.

KM: Being in public and whatever. And far away from the house, no, they will not accept that. So that's why you find the education of girls among the Dinkas is very low. As compared even to other tribes who are Southern Sudanese like us. You see, so ---

LS: Has that changed at all or is it still pretty traditional?

KM: Well, it is changing. It is changing now gradually, especially, like, the elites take their girls, their daughters to school. And then also some others who have seen the benefits of education are also. You know, it's all the motivation. But the average Dinka family will not take their daughter to school.

LS: That will probably take generations to change, if it does change.

KM: Yeah. [**KM** laughs]

LS: So after you got out of high school, what did you do then?

KM: Well, when I went to high school, I studied to go to University of Khartoum. And by that time, that was the only university in the whole of the country.

LS: So you went to the University of Khartoum?

KM: Yeah, University of Khartoum. And that where I --- you know, that was the only university in the country and the kids all over from the North, from the East, from the West and the South meet. And there is a high competition. So, once you make it there, you have to pass and pass in order to get admitted to the university. That becomes an opportunity where we can meet with the other kids from other parts of Sudan, like Northerners, like Arabs, people from Western Sudan, from Eastern Sudan, and from Northern Sudan. Become, like, unifying factor.

LS: Were you apprehensive about going to the North, after having grown up in the South?

KM: Well, no. But then you have no choice, because that was the only university. If you want to get a university education, then you have to go to University of Khartoum.

LS: And what was it like to come together with all these ---

KM: With the Northerners?

LS: Mmm-hmm.

KM: Well, it was not that much ( ), because that was just suddenly meeting people, and you are already some preconceived ideas. Like the Northerners would always say Southerners are inferior type of people. So when you meet with them, you are being looked down like an inferior caliber. And then meanwhile, you are the Southerner, ( ) the Northerners, ( ), you want to prove to them that you --- you want to prove yourself that you are even far better than they, you know? So it is not that much harmony, but after some time, you know, Northerners, they decide to understand that after all, when you go to the classes, you take your exams. And they start to prove themselves wrong, that some of you are not inferior and instead maybe you should be better than them because our education in the South was English. It was English pattern, while theirs was Arabized in the North.

LS: Oh, I see.

KM: But in education --- the education inside the University was in English.

LS: So you had an advantage?

KM: We actually thought we were superior academically [**KM** laughs] than the Northerners.

LS: That's interesting. So the North never imposed the Arabization on the South?

KM: Well, they started of late. Especially, like those who were behind me, who are now --- their system of education in the South was turned into Arabic. So we were lucky ones who were allowed to continue on English pattern. Meanwhile, the other ones coming behind were all Arabic. Arabic pattern.

LS: Was there a lot of missionary influence in the South? What denominations?

KM: Yeah, you see in Bahr al Ghazal. It depends where you are. In Bahr al Ghazal, most of it was left to the Catholics.

LS: Catholics? Were they from Ireland or from --- ?

KM: No, they were from Italy. These were, they call, umm, Daniel Combonian(?) Fathers(?). These guys, surprisingly, they did better than the government. They had a lot of schools, very big schools.

LS: Okay, ( ) schools?

KM: Yeah, except they were not allowed to build secondary schools, high school. But they were only allowed by the government to build primary or elementary schools and that thing really help a lot of us. Because, you always, once you finish elementary school and the secondary school --- you don't go beyond that because there is only one high school. That is Rumbek.

LS: So you stop there.

KM: So you stop there.

LS: So there must be a lot of people in the South who are literate and can do some basic math and then that's about it.

KM: Yeah, yeah.

LS: Enough to do a business or something like that?

KM: Yeah.

LS: And still the girls won't tend to go, even to elementary level?

KM: They tried their best, they really tried their best, but still because of these cultural barrier, it was still resisted.

LS: So that's a traditional Dinka thing, not a Christian thing? It's like a pre-Christian belief?

KM: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, it is. It is completely, entirely Dinka.

LS: So did the missionaries tried to change that at all?

KM: No, the missionaries didn't try to change. And, actually, what made the missionaries more successful in the South than the Arabs. And even the British administration, the colonial administration, they didn't change --- they didn't try to impose their ( ) in the Southern Sudanese. No, they didn't do that. They let the Southerners stay the way they wanted to stay.

LS: The Catholics did?

KM: The Catholics, and even the government, the British administrators. They said you continue with the way you ( ), the way you settle your cases, it's up to you. They just only want, the government maybe just wanted the chiefs and the communities to comply with the government policies like building the roads voluntarily and some other --- collecting taxes, things like that.

LS: The Dinka, traditionally they herd cattle?

KM: Yeah.

LS: But they're sedentary? They're not, umm, they don't move around?

KM: We move around. And, okay, like in a family, a young man and a girl from a family will move the cattle around, especially during dry season. The grazing land, take them to grazing land, and take them to places where there is water. Because most of our land is ( ). The savanna and ( ) savanna. So, the young men, is their responsibility to continue moving with the cattle to where they would get grazing, where they will get enough water. Meanwhile, the family remains behind. Now, during the rainy season, when there is enough grass and there is enough water, then they come back home.

LS: So there is a permanent home and they go back and forth. They don't keep moving their home?

KM: No, no, no. There is a permanent home. They just go move around and then come back.

LS: I see. So boys start taking care of cattle pretty young?

KM: Yeah, we start --- that is part of life. Like myself, when I am not in the school, when I am on leave, despite the fact that my father was a policeman in the town, I would go in the village and stay in the village, and ( ), take care of the cattle and it's not an easy thing.

LS: I'm sure it's not.

KM: Because when you go take the cattle for grazing, sometimes there is rain, and you will never allow --- you will not abandon them and run home. No, is not allowed.

LS: Are there animals that prey on them? ( )?

KM: Yes, ooo, a lot of them! Lions, hyenas, wolves. You see.

LS: So you have to guard against them?

KM: Yeah, all these, you have to keep a watch, all the whole period, when they are going for grazing. Now there the worst side of it will come when there is rain. It's sometimes very heavy. You will hardly even see. But you are not allowed to abandon and run home, no.

LS: Do you have sling shots or something to scare off animals? Do you have any weapons?

KM: Yeah, we carry weapons. You carry spears. Yeah, a spear and a stick. And ( ). That is for your own defense and for the defense of the ---

LS: The cows.

KM: The cows. Yeah.

LS: Are they those big horns?

KM: Yes, they have big horns. There are big horns, there are medium horns. There are those without horn.

LS: And is milk a big part of the Dinka diet?

KM: Yeah, it is.

LS: Milk and meat?

KM: Yeah. No meat, no, no meat.

LS: No meat?

KM: You see, Dinkas will not voluntarily slaughter.

LS: So they do have yogurt and soured milk?

KM: Yeah, things like that. Whatever dairy products like milk is no problem, but a Dinka will not slaughter a cow voluntarily, unless there is an occasion, unless there is a guest(?), unless there is some sort of ceremonial occasion. Or you are offering to gods, like you slaughter to the grands, to the deceased grands, and some of the spirits. You know? So it is only on religious grounds or some other traditional occasions. Things like that. Or a guest(?).

LS: And are cows what people give for a dowry?

KM: Yes.

LS: Is it a bride wealth or is it a --- ?

KM: It is the man who pays.

LS: The man who pays, okay.

KM: It is the man who pays.

LS: Sometimes it is the woman will ---

KM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but for us it is the man who pays. And, well, in our area there is a lot of cattle and especially with veterinary, improved veterinary services, there were a lot. So there the dowry went up.

LS: I'm sure. It was an escalation? Dowry inflation? [both laugh]

KM: So you have to pay a lot and it depends also on the family you are marrying from. If it is a well-to-do family, they will say, okay, the dowry will be high. And you already know it, that that family the dowry will be much higher than in the other family. But sometimes if your choice falls in the other, that family, you have to pay them. [**KM** laughs]

LS: In what year did you go to university?

KM: I went to university in 1974.

LS: And how long were you there?

KM: Well, I spent four years. Four years and I graduated first degree in business, business administration. And I went to Southern Sudan, in Juba, where we had a local government.

LS: And you did work there?

KM: I worked there in the Department of Finance and Planning.

LS: Is the local government in the South dominated by the Northerners or Southerners?

KM: It was only Southerners. That government came as a result of an agreement that was made between the Khartoum government and the rebels who were fighting. So, in 1972, there was a peace agreement. And they used to call it Addis Ababa Agreement, because it was done in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. So that peace agreement brought in some sort of autonomous system of government in the South and that has to be run by Southerners themselves. So in that autonomous government, there was an executive side, and there is high executive council, and there was legislative side and there was the regional assembly, and some other units and whatever. So it was a government, but then also it depended on the North, it depended on the central government. In terms of finance, most of the finance came from the central government. Although we have also our system of finance, like we have our own local taxes, but still we were depending much on the central government. But I think it was done deliberately, by the Sudan government, by the Khartoum government, to make us more reliable the North. Some sort of a control, you know, that somebody gives you money, somebody controls you. Yeah.

LS: So how long did you work there?

KM: I worked there until --- 1978, when I graduated in 1978, I continued working --- well, I worked here and there internally in the South, but until the war broke out again in 1983. So I moved to the North and worked in the North for some time. Because we had some of our departments inside Khartoum, some sort of coordination. Coordinating institutions, coordinating between the regional government in the South and the central government in Khartoum. So I was went in those units. And, until I left in 1989, I went

for graduate studies. ( ) I fled(?) in 1989, and from there also I was so lucky to get a scholarship from Ford Foundation, in Egypt, in Cairo.

LS: Did you go to ( )?

KM: 1989. January, 1989.

LS: When was it?

KM: January, 1989. And that was, by then, the persecution of Southern Sudan, and particularly the elites, was very high. I remember there was the --- the Prime Minister was saying that there is what they call "fifth column", "fifth column", and that is that the rebels who are fighting the government, they had their agents inside here, who they call "fifth column." And that was enough to lynch the Southern elites. ( ) they say, this man was discovered that he was collaborating with the refugees, I mean with the rebels, then that is enough to warrant your death.

LS: And so you just were under a tremendous threat as an educated Southern Sudanese in the government?

KM: Yeah. So ---

LS: What was the Ford Foundation program? Was this for graduate students in Africa? Or something like that?

KM: Yeah, is mainly --- there was a program then to give graduate scholarships for graduate studies, scholarships for graduate studies, to Sudanese and Egyptians. But then the office --- they open an office, but they only deal with the universities. They don't deal with the individuals. But then I had to meet the head of the office in Khartoum and I explain to them that we don't get opportunities for graduate studies, despite the fact that some of us have good academic backgrounds that could qualify under Ford Foundation scholarship, to get the scholarship. So anyway ---

LS: But you wouldn't be considered because of the discrimination, you mean?

KM: Yeah.

LS: It will only go to the Northern Sudanese?

KM: Yeah, yeah. ( ) who will control it. Foreigners might just give it and say it is for the Sudanese all. But the way it is administered is entirely tilted towards --- to benefit the Northern Sudanese more than the Southern Sudanese. So, though by luck I got, I got --- that guy took my word seriously and he gave me a scholarship.

[END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

[START OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

LS: To go to Cairo, did you speak Arabic?

KM: Yeah.

LS: Now you had learned Arabic just being in Khartoum?

KM: As part of our education, we study Arabic.

LS: Oh, as a ---

KM: As a subject. Yeah, during our time we studied it as a subject. But those who came after us, it was all Arabic.

LS: It was the language of instruction.

KM: Yeah, language of instruction.

LS: I see. So what was it like to go to Cairo?

KM: Well, when I got the scholarship in Khartoum and I now preparing to move, I discovered that my name was among the lists in the airport on all the ports of departure. You --- I --- there are people whose names on the list, are listed, and they will never be allowed once they --- like, if your name is among those, in that list, and you come to the airport, you will be arrested in the airport because they will be checking the list. once they get your name there, you are arrested immediately and taken to prison.

LS: But how did you discover you are on it?

KM: Well, we had good connections also within the security system, some of my friends, some who studied with me in the University of Khartoum, were in the security system of the government. And here and there, I was able to sense that there was something going on. So when I went around, I discovered that my name was within the list.

LS: So what did you do?

KM: Because I was branded like somebody collaborating with the rebels from within. Like he's their agent inside Khartoum. That is a very dangerous accusation. Very dangerous.

LS: Was it true?

KM: Well, you see, sometimes, you know, well, you have to give services. There are times, when you believe in the --- because I believe that their rebellion was genuine, and I was a supporter. Actually, I worked for them inside Khartoum, and I was discovered, and they blacklisted me and --- yeah.

LS: So what did you do?

KM: I went. Still I left through the help of the security friends, within the security system. So, you know, it depends whom you know, see.

LS: Were you afraid that you might be not allowed back in Sudan once you left?

KM: No, I didn't want to come back to Sudan.

LS: When you left, you thought, "This is it"?

KM: That's it. Because, it's like, having escaped, the risk --- you don't come back.

LS: So you end up going --- you did go to Cairo?

KM: I went to Egypt. I studied, I finished my graduate studies. I got Masters in Public Administration. Then, luckily enough ---

LS: When did you finish?

KM: I finished in 1993. Luckily enough, I got a scholarship also --- I mean, I got a good job with the UNHCR and was taken to Saudi Arabia to deal with the Iraqi refugees. Those, you remember those who crossed during the Gulf War into Saudi Arabia from Iraq.

LS: So you got your job while you were still in Cairo?

KM: Yeah. So I now became, like, based in Cairo.

LS: And how long did you do that with the UNHCR?

KM: With the UNHCR I worked for about ten months in Saudi Arabia. It was a temporary job. So I came back. After that, I left for Kenya. Because if you want to enter Southern Sudan ---because, now, when you look to Sudan now, you are looking to Sudan in terms of Liberated Sudan, that is part of the South, which is liberated. It's not under the Sudan Government control. And you cannot get to that area, unless you go to Kenya and come through Kenya.

LS: Was your hometown in that liberated area?

KM: Yes.

LS: I didn't realize it ever was liberated. I thought they were always trying, but they never got actually ---

KM: It is liberated. Gorial(?) is liberated. Tonye(?) is liberated. Rumbek is liberated. Urel(?) is liberated. The whole of western equatorial, Yambuyo(?), Tambura(?), it's all liberated.

LS: And they are still are?

KM: They are still are.

LS: So you went through Kenya to come back ---

KM: I came back to our area. These liberated areas, we call them New Sudan.

LS: You call them what?

KM: New Sudan. So I came to New Sudan, through Kenya, and I stayed there.

LS: And your family was still all there?

KM: Was there in Egypt. I left my family in Cairo, in Egypt.

LS: Now wait a minute --- by this time, are you married?

KM: At that time, I was married, yeah.

LS: You were married and had children?

KM: Yeah, I had children.

LS: Okay. So your wife is Sudanese?

KM: Yeah, my wife is Sudanese, and a Dinka.

LS: ( )?

KM: Yeah. [pause]

LS: And then the same time, your parents and your sister are still in Southern Sudan?

KM: Yes.

LS: Okay, so you went back to ---

KM: To the liberated areas and I served there, I worked for the NGOs. I worked for what they call Save the Children Fund – UK.

LS: And what did your family --- what did your wife and children do in Cairo?

KM: They were just staying like ---

LS: Because it was safe?

KM: Well, of course, in Egypt we were not considered as refugees, because Egypt say, the Egyptian government says that Sudanese cannot be refugees in Egypt. But Sudanese can be like in their second country in Egypt, when they are in Egypt.

LS: So you don't have to have a work permit? You don't have to have all that?

KM: Yeah, you don't get a work permit, but you work. But the whole thing is that the economy of Egypt is so bad, so you will not hardly find a job.

LS: So your wife was just living there?

KM: She was just living, and when I was living there, I used to send them money and the churches also help us a lot. Yeah, there were a couple of church help us a lot. And, like give us food, and they took our kids into school, and things like that.

LS: So what happens then?

KM: Then after that, I stayed in the South and after some --- became active with participating in building the civil administration in the liberated areas and after that my family got a resettlement offer from Canadian government. So they got resettled in Canada.

LS: So your wife and children moved to Canada?

KM: They moved from Egypt to Canada. They are now in Canada.

LS: As refugees?

KM: Yes. Now in Canada they call them, they call them, uhh, "landed migrants."

LS: Landed migrants? What does that mean?

KM: Landed migrant is like a green card holder in the USA.

LS: Oh, "landed" meaning "settled", kind of.

KM: Yeah, yeah. But theirs is, like, once they accept you to resettle in Canada, the moment you enter Canada, you are considered like a green card holder here in USA. Immediately, you are considered as a landed migrant.

LS: So you don't have to go through the whole process?

KM: No, no, no.

LS: Where in Canada did they go?

KM: They are in Calgary, in Alberta. West. Very far.

LS: That's cold up there.

KM: Very, very.

LS: How did your wife react to that?

KM: Yeah, but now they are okay, they adjust. It is me. When I go, it is me who is in trouble.

LS: So they're still in Calgary?

KM: Yeah, they are in Calgary. Then after that I moved to Nairobi, when I discovered that my kids were now in Canada.

LS: So you didn't even know?

KM: I discovered late, after about three months later. So when I came to Nairobi, they call, made a telephone call, and that's the time I discovered that they were there.

LS: So your wife just decided that this was an offer that she had to take and it was the best thing to do?

KM: That was the best thing she can do because there wasn't any other alternative. For they cannot go back.

LS: They can't go back to ( )?

KM: Yeah. And at that time the persecution, especially of Christians, it was escalating and it was now a full-swing Islamic state. And that was the time when all the terrorism in the world move into Sudan under these Bin Laden(?) Muslims. The president of Khartoum government, Omar Al-bashir declared that any Muslim is allowed to come to Sudan, he is considered as a national. Any Muslim in the world. Once you are a Muslim, you go to Sudan you are considered as a national. And so people were flocking.

LS: Why didn't you go to Canada? Did you have the right to rejoin your family?

KM: Well, before I could start the reunion process, I got an opportunity to come to the USA through JVA.

LS: Through what?

KM: JVA, what they call Joint Voluntary Agency.

LS: Oh, okay.

KM: It's the agency which makes process, deal with refugees.

LS: A Joint Voluntary Agency.

KM: Yes, it's like they make the interviews, they prepare whatever that there is for the refugees, and then the immigration personnel will then take decisions based on the interviews they have done. Like you will be interviewed by the JVA, and the INS from the American Embassy will come and reinterview you, once they find that you are qualified for resettlement as a refugee in USA, then they --- plus they take a decision as to whether to come here or not. So this like an arm for the INS for the immigration. They do the rest of the paper work for the immigration.

LS: So that time you were in Nairobi and ---

KM: Yeah, by then I was in Nairobi, and actually they gave me a job, a temporary job. I worked for them. I was translating for those whom they interview. And then from there I presented my case to them, they studied it, and I qualified to resettle in the USA.

LS: That was in 1998.

KM: 1998, yeah. Now, that was before the process could start of reunion. But it was said if I could come here, it would be much easier to reunite, either to bring them here or I move to them.

LS: Oh, okay. But so far you haven't made been able to or it's --- ?

KM: So far I have started the reunion, the process now, to reunite, to come here.

LS: And you will have your family come here? You won't go there?

KM: I used to go there.

LS: I mean, would you like them to settle here?

KM: Yeah, I would like them to settle here. Because they are already now qualifying to be Canadian citizen. It is after three years, you become a citizen. Once you enter Canada, you are a good citizen, after three years, they give you citizenship.

LS: So it would be better if they became citizens before they come here? Is that the deal?

KM: Well, the process --- I've already started the process she's not yet even --- it is still under process. So it ( ) is also ( ) qualifying them ( ) citizens.

LS: How old are your children?

KM: The youngest was born 1990. So he is now eleven years. That is the youngest.

LS: So they have been in Canada now for how many years?

KM: They went there in February and I came here in September. There was a gap of six months. So they went there in February 1998. So three years --- next year they will qualify.

LS: How are they doing there?

KM: Well, you see ---

LS: Are they adapting? Do they like Canada?

KM: Yeah, they like Canada. That is my main problem now. You know? ( ) resist it. Because they start to like that place. And, you know, also the media is not also fair with America. You know, a lot of media, America is a bad place, terrorist, like this Columbine thing, the media overemphasize it, so it's like it is a not a safe place.

LS: So they have a feeling that it's better to be in Canada?

KM: Yeah, like America is not a safe place. And this is a safe place.

LS: Well, Canada has better social services. It's a much more benevolent government.

KM: Yeah. So that is also one of my main problems. They say we want to be here. So that's why I've said, "Okay, if you can qualify to be citizens, then from that end you have no problem. You can come to the USA. Anytime you want to go, you go. You want to go back to Canada ---

LS: Right, so it will be advantageous for them ---

KM: Yeah, it would be advantageous for them.

LS: Because then they have a Canadian passport; they can go anywhere.

KM: Yeah, they can go anywhere.

LS: You're not an American citizen?

KM: No, I am not.

LS: So do you have a child in high school, too?

KM: Yes, yes, I have a child who came with me from South Sudan.

LS: Okay.

KM: He is now in North Carolina. He has finished high school. He is supposed to be going to the college now.

LS: That's a lot of disruption to put children into.

KM: Terribly, terrible.

LS: I can imagine. And then when kids get some place, they don't want to leave. It's very hard for them.

KM: Yeah, yeah, because they have been mobile for quite a long time. So once they settle, it's like, "Okay, now we don't want to move again."

LS: When you came, you were resettled in New Jersey and you worked there in New Jersey?

KM: Yes, I worked there. I worked in Peapack. Peapack is a forty-five minutes drive west of Newark. It's a small town.

LS: What did you do there? I think I have seen signs for it while driving by.

KM: Okay, okay. It is called Metheny(?) School and Hospital. You see, that hospital is a school and hospital for disabled, physically disabled kids. So I worked there as a personal assistant. Personal care assistant, yeah, PCA, yeah.

LS: Yeah. And then you moved to Philadelphia to work with Lutheran Children and Family Services? How did they find out about you?

KM: They contacted the Sudanese community here, and they informed that we had kids who would be coming into this country, but they are minors. Most of them are minors. So we wanted Sudanese community to help us get advice from them as to how to deal with them. So they organized some sort of "come together" with the Sudanese community.

LS: Last summer?

KM: Last summer, yeah.

LS: I remember that.

KM: So we came. During discussions, because I knew Kakuma [Refugee Camp] and I knew the kids. Some of them, I know them personally. So I knew their situation there and it seems I was more informed.

LS: So people in the Sudanese Community Association here already knew you?

KM: Yeah, they know me. Some of them are my colleagues. Even Northerners, who we studied at the University of Khartoum.

LS: Did you know Siddiq?

KM: Siddiq, yeah. We studied in the University of Khartoum. I met him in university and I met --- uhh, Siddiq and Ali. Ali Dinar. These are my colleagues. We studied together.

LS: So you were all there at the same time?

KM: Yeah, we were there in the university at the same time.

LS: So, that's kind of interesting, because I think a lot of people look at Siddiq and Ali think they're from Southern Sudan.

KM: Yeah!

LS: But they're from --- I know Ali's from the West of Sudan.

KM: Yeah, and Siddiq is a Southern Sudanese who grew up in the North.

LS: Oh, that's right. He is from the South. But they speak Arabic?

KM: Yes, they speak it fluent. Fluent. They study in Arabic. These are guys we met in the university, we came under the English system, they came under the Arab system. And, uhh, we met them, you know. Well, you see, you see, when you go to Sudan --- people you will classify here you as a --- as blacks.

LS: Yes.

KM: But maybe when they are in Sudan, they're not blacks. And they want to make the problem more complicated.

LS: But, I mean, that's the thing. Ali and Siddiq are culturally more Arab, because they have that language ---

KM: Yes.

LS: But ---

KM: They are Arabized. They are Arabized.

LS: But --- they're Arabized. So how do they --- are they in a more difficult position than you are in a way? Because ---

KM: Well, because those people are intellectuals, are elites, they know the, the, the core of the problem, what it is. And whatever. But, like, Siddiq, if he were not educated, he will say he's an Arab.

LS: He would say he was an Arab.

KM: Ali, if he were not educated, he would say he's Arab.

LS: You know, Siddiq told me something interesting once. He said it was when he went to the Middle East to work that he realized that he wasn't Arab. Because he went to these countries, and they didn't consider him an Arab, and all of a sudden he realized that he was something else.

KM: Yes. That's it. And that's what makes our problem very complicated. You even know our president of Khartoum government, called Omar Bashir ( ) --- now when he goes to African --- to meet with the other heads of the states in Africa --- like what they call OAU, Organization of African Union --- well, of course he feels that he's white or lighter, then he's an Arab. Now when he goes there, he finds others who are even lighter than him. Maybe they're not Arabs. Like, for example, Jesse Jackson in Sudan would completely --- would not be a black person.

LS: Well, I know. A lot of African Americans --- what is it that the Sudanese boy said? He said they're no black people here, they're all brown.

KM: Yeah, when they came, they said, "No, these are not blacks. These are brown." Because there, the brown people are Arabs. [both laugh] Yeah, so, that is it. So, those guys are the guys we met in the university together and we studied. But then, the university education was helpful to them. At least to some extent.

LS: The what education?

KM: It was helpful to them, to some extent. At least, these were the Southern Sudanese you think were inferior were not inferior. Because we were superior actually, because we didn't have difficulties, because we study in English all through. And the system of --- the medium of instruction in University of Khartoum was English.

LM: Well, the other thing is, because of the competition, you probably ended up having absolutely the best students, and they had people who were more mediocre.

KM: Yeah, that's it. So we were standing up, all of ( ), and it was a puzzle to some of the Northern Sudanese to discover this.

LS: That must have been a big threat to them.

KM: We really enjoyed it, anyway. ( ) we really enjoyed it, because sometimes when you are at the top, sometimes it is good.

LS: In the university, how did people socialize? Did they tend to socialize with their own group? Did the Southern Sudanese tend to socialize with each other or was there more mixing at the university?

KM: No, there was not much mixing.

LS: There was not much mixing?

KM: There was not much mixing. Because we have all this at the back of the mind.

LS: But did you socialize with Siddiq and Ali?

KM: Well, to some extent, like you are classmates. We discuss. Sometimes, we share. But being so close, you know. And you know, sometime more together around, no. But then, he is right, when we graduate and they go to their Arab world, this is the time they start to discover that they are not. So they have to go back to their roots. And that helps a lot now. The way I meet Siddiq here and Ali, is nice. Is much easier for me now to deal with them here than when we used to be students. You see.

LS: Because you are outside of that context?

KM: Yeah, outside of that context, and there is like a coming back to the roots on their side.

LS: What do you speak together, English or Arabic?

KM: Arabic, Arabic, and sometimes English.

LS: Do you think in general --- I know that that's been a big issue with these kids coming in, but LCFS wondered if they should actually have the Northern Sudanese, the Community Association taking care of these kids and I know that it ended up being quite a ---

KM: Well, you see, I didn't advise, I was against that. I said, at least for the time being. ( )

LS: You were against them?

KM: Northerners taking some of the kids to stay with them. Like, ( ).

LS: And you thought that it would be upsetting to the kids?

KM: It was not good for the kids, at least for the time being. Yeah. But they stay here, they will start now to know that brown people here are blacks, and gradually they will start to understand the American system. And slowly, slowly they will start to understand some of the parameters of the socialization and cultural interaction.

LS: Do any of them --- I went to that thing the other day, that [Kakuma Camp] get-together, and I saw some of the families who had kids --- and I saw mostly --- looked like middle-class white families who had kids. And then I saw one Sudanese woman who said she had eight kids. But are there African American families who have taken Sudanese kids.

KM: Yeah.

LS: There are.

KM: There are African Americans who came up forward to take the kids. Some are doing well.

LS: And are they mostly --- did they find out through the churches or --- where do these families come from?

KM: Okay, these families, some of them, qualify already, I think they've been licensed as foster parents.

LS: As foster parents? So they are already in the system.

KM: Yeah, already. And actually some of them are doing very well.

LS: And then most of these families have taken more than one.

KM: Yeah, more than one. Because when the kids come, if they come, if they were living together, then we bring them and let them also stay together here. So three kids coming together, then we give them to a family together. So it is --- the family, it is their choice, either to accept them together or don't take them. You take them together or you don't take them.

LS: Yeah, so that was a condition from the start.

KM: Yeah, yeah.

LS: Well, let me just go back a little. The LCFS then hired you as a --- what's your title?

KM: I'm a social worker.

LS: A social worker with these kids. And is this a temporary job until they get settled or are you permanently on the staff now?

KM: Well, I am a member of the staff now. Maybe, until maybe at such a time that they might not be dealing anymore.

LS: But that's going to take them awhile for all of them to get settled.

KM: I don't know exactly how long it will take.

LS: Do you like working there?

KM: I enjoy it. You see, it's like --- it's like it is my duty to serve these kids.

LS: So it's your duty *and* then you get paid for it?

KM: Yes, paid for it, but extra, more and more, I feel like I am doing a service to the people, to my people back at home.

LS: That's very satisfying.

KM: Yeah, I enjoy it. I like it.

LS: These kids, are they --- ( ) was saying that they can't be legally adopted because nobody really knows where their families are. The families haven't given up ---

KM: Yeah, they have not given up them, because you see there is a situation. Sometimes a kid might have lost their parents, because when people run out of fear, you know, you lose kids and then you lose track of the parents and you find yourself in a different place.

LS: Do you think some of the parents fled too or most of the parents are probably back in Sudan?

KM: Some died, some fled and some went to different direction, are in different place.

LS: And the kids just got separated?

KM: Yeah, and they don't know exactly the whereabouts. Some might be alive. But where are they? It's not known.

LS: So how do these kids deal with this? What impact does that have when they grow up and they haven't lived with their parents for years and they don't know where they are? Do you find that they are psychologically kind of fragile?

KM: Yeah, it is always there. But, you know, the system, the cultural system, is that the child is the responsibility of the community to take care of the child. For that thing at least fill a gap to some extent and the child is coached here and there by everybody in the community and that thing also helps. So when the kids came to the camp, a child would be attached, if not to an immediate relative, then at least to somebody from his community or from in the village. Yeah, like that. So is at least to fill a gap to some extent.

LS: If they have been separated when they had gotten here, that would have been really a very hard thing to do for these kids, because that was people who became their emotion kind of base?

KM: Yeah. And the most difficult side is, they know that it is the Northern Sudanese who are responsible for all this situations, and they grew up with that. And that is where I was advising LCFS that they should

keep the Northerners away for sometime. I'm not segregating against them, but it's because to say it's the kids, because they grew up with that, and that thing will not go away easily. It takes time. And the American system will be useful, will be helpful to them in that they will be seeing everybody, different cultures mixed up and living together. So here gradual, gradual, they will start ( ) yesterday, maybe there is also a chance to understand, to talk with each other.

LS: But the other day, there were a lot of Northern Sudanese at that get-together and they seemed comfortable with the Northern Sudanese now?

KM: Better now. Better now, than when they came in. Like when they came to the country. Like myself, when I first came, when I left Nairobi, landed in New York and then took a car to New Jersey, I was supposed to be received in the airport, Newark airport, by a staff member of Catholic Community Services. Now, I was told that I have to wait until somebody comes. So I waited. Then, after some time, somebody came in, and he was a Northerner employed by Catholic Community Service. So he came and he stood and he knew that I was a Sudanese, of course. He said, "Arah, arah(?)," like, "Let us go." I said, "Who are you?" He said, "I am a Sudanese." For me, it was so shocking. I just left Northern Sudanese there in Sudan and they are responsible for all this. And then you come to USA, only to be received by a Northern Sudanese.

LS: And did you go with him or were you frightened or ---

KM: We had to argue. He had to prove to me that he was a staff member from the Catholic Community Service and he showed me his card. I read it. He was a staff member and the van he was driving was written "Catholic Community Service." I was with my son, so I said, "Okay, let's go." And my intention was to complain, to let them give me another person to deal with me and not this person. So, during the time when we were moving from the airport to where we were supposed to be staying, we were hardly talking.

LS: You were hardly talking?

KM: Yeah, we were hardly talking. So you could see the impact it can have on you, especially when you come immediately to USA at that particular period of time, and you get a Northern Sudanese in front of you. He might be there for good intentions. It's not for bad intentions. But you see, you don't receive it well.

LS: This man must understood what was going through your head.

KM: He knows.

LS: But he didn't try to explain ---

KM: Yeah, he was trying to explain. He was, in fact, trying to normalize and let me feel at home. But still I could not receive it. And later on, we became friends, after some time. So I was saying that it is not bad that they integrate with Northern Sudanese, but it's the time period, you see. And these are kids and look at me, you know? Someone who had been living and studying with them, and I stayed with them, it was still a shock. So for the child it will be more difficult.

LS: It also must be a little bit hard for the Northern Sudanese to accept, because I know a lot of them are here also because they don't agree with the government.

KM: Yes, I know! I know! I know!

LS: People like Siddiq is an asylee.

KM: A lot of these guys here are the opposition. I know, I know.

LS: But that doesn't mean that the child understands that.

KM: A child will not understand all these details. But I understand. I've been with Siddiq now.

LS: Well, that's hard. You know, I'm an anthropologist and in anthropology people say your identity is very situational in the sense that the Nigerians are very fragmented ethnically but once they go to another country, the fact that they are all Nigerian becomes much more important to them.

KM: You are right.

LS: And I wonder if that happens here.

KM: Ours is different. Ours is entirely different. Simply because there has been too much damage. Too much damage has been done. Actual fact, there have always been chances for peace and coexistence, but they have always been blown. There is no ---

[END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

[START OF SIDE 1, TAPE 2]

KM: So the problem is that the leaders, the leadership of Sudan, didn't define a direction where the country should moving to. Like, what makes America unique is that the founding fathers described the direction of the country they would like their kids to live in, in the future. Now in the case of Sudan, it is not there. I remember, one time the prime minister of Sudan said, "You know, there are five steps by which Southern Sudanese will be Arabized and Islamized." Now, look, he is the prime minister who is leading the country. He is only broke(?) down as to how Southern Sudanese will be Arabized and Islamized.

LS: And he really thinks it will happen? It can happen like that?

KM: Yeah. But you could see how he is so much caught up with that. Now that thing doesn't help the country. You should be talking about big things, about the future, about the vision, as to how the country should look after some period of time. He is now talking about, oh the best ways of Islamizing Southern Sudan and Arabizing them. But the issue is that, okay, after you have Arabized or Islamized, what do you do next? Because --- take Western Sudan. Is Arabized and Islamized. Take Eastern Sudan, Northern Sudan. All right? Is all Islamized and Arabized, but developmental-wise is not. They are not getting services. They are still considered blacks. And nobody cares about whether that man is a Muslim or a --- it doesn't help. I mean, Arabization and Islam --- it doesn't ---

LS: They think that Arabization will make you all equal, but you know that it won't.

KM: It won't, because it has not made the others equal with the North. And you could see that with Siddiq. ( ) but still is a black. He is Arabized, he is a Muslim, but still --- he's a black man after all. According to the standards of Sudan. [**KM** laughs] So, there is no vision. There is no vision. The country's not moving in any direction.

LS: Is there an economic thing? I imagine the South of Sudan must be a lot more fertile than the North?

KM: Yes.

LS: Do they want to hang on to it also for economic reasons?

KM: Yes. That's is one side of it. Because I remember when they exploited the oil in Southern Sudan --- and the war is still going on there now --- the first thing the president said was, "This oil is Arab oil." Instead of saying this oil is Sudanese oil, he was saying, "Arab oil." So people have some sort of mental problem about Arabization and you will find the leaders would always be talking "Arab union," "Arab nation," which is not there. You could read about Arab nations in the paper, but practically it's not there. Because even when we went to Egypt, in Egypt, the Egyptians would be dealing with Sudanese not because they are Arabs. They will be dealing with Sudanese because they are Sudanese.

LS: So what was your reception like in Cairo, compared to Khartoum?

KM: In Cairo, as compared to Khartoum, in Cairo we were treated as one group by the Egyptians.

LS: All the Sudanese?

KM: All the Sudanese. North, South, West.

LS: Do they in turn consider the Sudanese inferior?

KM: Yes, of course, they say the Sudanese are blacks.

LS: Even the Northerners?

KM: Even the Northerners who were not blacks in Sudan were blacks in Egypt.

LS: That probably really bothers them.

KM: So what Siddiq said is right, because when you going outside Sudan you start to understand so many things. So those who are not blacks in Sudan, when they come to Egypt are blacks. We are treated as one group without segregation based on color, no.

LS: So what was your wife's experience living there alone? Was that hard on her to live in Cairo?

KM: It was hard, it was hard. But we are supported by the Christian community there. A very small community, but they were very supportive.

LS: Are you Catholic?

KM: Yeah, I am a Catholic.

LS: What is your experience been like in the United States compared to being a foreigner in Cairo or even a foreigner in ---

KM: Noooo --- you can't compare the United States with Egypt or my experience in Egypt and in ---

LS: Why not?

KM: Because in America here, is far better than any other place I have lived in. Because, first of all, what counts where myself is, is what I am. Is not my color. And I am very comfortable with that. I like that. As compared to the situation I had in Sudan and the situation I had in Egypt. So it is by far better.

LS: So, no matter what the racial problems here, you still think that they are slight compared to Sudan and Egypt?

KM: Oh, much slight.

LS: What about being in Kenya?

KM: Oh, I was so comfortable. Also because those people there --- we have some of our ethnic groups there, also. You will always be part of Kenya. Even, people will say you are a Kenyan and the argument would be that, "No, I am not a Kenyan." They say, "No, you are a Kenyan. Why should you deny yourself?" You don't look unique, you are the same, you are ---

LS: ( )

KM: Yeah, I was more comfortable in Kenya than when I was in Northern Sudan.

LS: But you never considered just settling in Kenya? Things are just economically hard there, too?

KM: No, because I didn't also want to be a ( ) father. I want to go home to be together with my family. Yeah. I wouldn't even mind to stay in Southern Sudan with my kids, but then their education also comes in. Because if they stay in the Southern Sudan, they will not get education.

LS: Do you have a daughter?

KM: Yeah, I have two daughters.

LS: You have two daughters. And you don't have any traditional Dinka feelings about their education.

KM: No, I want to educate them. I don't have any problems about that.

LS: And is your wife educated?

KM: Yeah, she is educated. I don't have any problem with the education of girls, because I know how good it is, supportive it is. It is good for the child, for the future of the child and for the future of the community. Is good. I am different from the other Dinka in the village. You know, in the village, if I were in the village, maybe my views would have been different.

LS: Is your sister and parents still in Southern Sudan?

KM: Yeah, they are in Southern Sudan.

LS: Do you support them?

KM: Yeah.

LS: It's not hard to get ---

KM: There are a lot of people there --- no, it's not hard, because there are good people there. You send the money, they take it to them.

LS: Do you send it Western Union?

KM: Yes, Western Union through Kenya. And then people from Kenya will move it to New Sudan.

LS: And your family is safe and ---

KM: Well, they are not much that safe. At times, you know, there is this aerial bombardment can come anytime. Yeah.

LS: Your sister has more of a traditional Dinka life? Is she married and a mother?

KM: Yeah, she's married to a Dinka. Yeah. She's married.

LS: What's your wife --- I mean, Calgary --- the difference between Calgary and Philadelphia is big. I mean, first of all this is a mostly black environment ---

KM: Oh, okay.

LS: What's the difference like between being here and being in Canada? Being in Calgary?

KM: To be frank, to be honest, it's very --- it's different. For example, the attitude of people, It's entirely different there. Like when I used to leave Newark Airport and I land in Calgary Airport, it's completely different.

LS: In what way?

KM: Well, in the sense that the population of blacks is very small there, but it's still the attitude of people is good.

LS: They are very open?

KM: They're very good and nobody bothers you and people are even kind. The language of dealing, the public communication is nice, it is more diplomatic than here.

LS: So your wife and your children feel very accepted there?

KM: They feel very accepted and they are okay. And that is my problem now. They don't want to move out of that place.

LS: What about your daughters? Even to the extent that, can they date boys there?

KM: Nah. They don't have that.

LS: But that's because you don't want it, right?

KM: No, yeah. But the system within the family has to be imposed to take care of that. See, like, like your daughter cannot go out if she is not going to a school. If she is not going to a school, then she cannot go out. If she is going out, we are pretty sure that there is a genuine reason to go out.

LS: But, uhh – well, I don't mean any kind of ---

KM: I know, I know.

LS: I just wondered if she fit in socially and --- I mean, do your daughters have friends? Do they go to their houses and are they mixed in with ---

KM: Mmm, no. Like, for example, there was a case when I was there, they were invited by a family, her colleague, classmate, she had a birthday party. And, uh, and, uh, and it was very difficult for me to allow --- I didn't --- I don't --- I was not against her attending that one, but then I have to be sure, also. The timing and when she is supposed to be back and things like that. And then later on --- yeah.

LS: So you are still really raising them ---

KM: I'm conservative on that.

LS: --- in a very conservative way?

KM: Very, yeah, because I was raised from that background, with conservative background, and then also with my education and my --- so --- I used to be a regular Catholic ---

LS: A Dinka patriarch.

KM: Dinka --- and then plus the Catholic attitude towards some ---

LS: It all adds up to conservatism.

KM: It adds up to very, very conservative.

LS: But your children were born in Sudan right?

KM: Yeah. One was born in Egypt.

LS: So they don't really have too much experience growing up in Sudan?

KM: No, no, not too much experience, because when we left Sudan they were so small. They didn't know much of the ---

LS: So what is their identity? Do they consider themselves Sudanese or how do they think of themselves?

KM: First of all, they consider themselves as Dinkas and maybe South Sudanese.

LS: So you and your wife are both really trying to transmit a very Dinka way of ---

KM: Yeah, like when I am at home, I don't speak English. When I am dealing with them at home, I talk to them in Dinka.

LS: And their Dinka's good?

KM: Yeah, they are good. Because right away from the beginning, when I am home, I talk Dinka, so at least --- because English, they will get it outside there. In the street, in the schools, everywhere.

LS: And their English is good?

KM: Yeah, basically. It's improved a lot. Although, when they came from Egypt it was not so much, because the medium of communication in Egypt is Arabic.

LS: So do they still have their Arabic?

KM: Yeah. They have this Egyptian Arabic, colloquial. But I think also they don't --- they are not practicing it and they are not that much --- maybe it is going away.

LS: I know it's down the line, but how do you see your children --- I mean, they are growing up in Canada. Maybe they'll be here, but --- are you going to accept that they marry an American?

KM: Well, I don't know that --- [**KM** laughs] I don't know! I don't know that and that is also --- these are the difficult parts of resettlement in another community. They are difficult, I know. It's very difficult. I don't know, I don't know.

LS: Are there any other Dinkas or Sudanese even in Calgary?

KM: Yeah, there are, there are. The community is growing. The community is growing.

LS: So your wife is in that ---

KM: Yeah, it's very good community. It is growing.

LS: And she works there?

KM: Yeah. She works there. Yeah, she works. And they are already now attuned to live and adjusted to life in Canada.

LS: So your wife probably already has a little bit of life that she wouldn't have had if you had stayed in Sudan?

KM: Yeah, well, in Sudan, yeah, we are far better off. Although when I was working for the Department of Finance, I was also okay. My pay, my job was good and I really had some of the few things, you know, which I missed when I moved to Egypt. But then we are now trying to come back, at least try to --- things like that. But is good, also, because here, it depends on how you organize yourself, how you work towards your plans. Yeah. It helps a lot here and it helps us because you can --- if you have good clear plan, then, it is a matter of time when you can make it.

LS: What about your social life here? Do you tend to socialize with more Sudanese or more Southern Sudanese here?

KM: There are no Southern Sudanese here.

LS: Except for the boys.

KM: Yeah, the small boys. And also the age comes in, also. I don't much enjoy, you know. I just deal with them as an elder. That is different. So sometimes I just go to Washington. Frequently, every weekend, I used go to Washington. There is our group there and ---

LS: So there's quite a few Southern Sudanese there?

KM: Yeah.

LS: Now, when you are in the United States, do Southern Sudanese tend to socialize across ethnic lines? Do you also socialize with the Nuer?

KM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LS: So you're kind of more Southern Sudanese as a group?

KM: That's where you are --- the concept you were talking about. See, we have conflicts there, back home, between the Dinkas and the Nuers, but when we come here we brush aside and become one. So is like the case of Nigeria, which you cited.

LS: Do they have an association there?

KM: They have communities, yeah. There is an association, Southern Sudanese ( ), I don't know how they call it anyway, but it is --- it is a group that brings them together.

LS: And they have events and parties and ---

KM: Yeah, they have occasions. Yeah, they have parties, like, they have occasions like marriage. Marriage there and sometimes they have birthday party in a particular family and then other families will be invited.

LS: Do they tend to go to the same church?

KM: No.

LS: Are you active in a church?

KM: Myself?

LS: Uh-huh.

KM: When I came to Philadelphia, [**KM** lowers voice] I don't go to church. I don't go to church. [**KM** resumes normal tone] Although I am still --- Because, you see, the situation you get here is different from

what we had. Like here, you have your church where you go to. Sometimes when you go then, you are new, then people they start to see as if --- [**KM** laughs] But it's not there with us in Sudan. Any nearest church we get on Sunday, you can go to. If you want to go, you want to go. And you will not be like, like somebody's new among people, like attracting attention, it's not ---

LS: You know the Archdiocese has started an African Mass once a month here. Do you know that?

KM: No.

LS: Do you know there is a Catholic Church right down --- Saint Cyprian?

KM: Yeah? Saint Cyprian?

LS: You keep going down 64 then it turns into Cobbs Creek Parkway. So it's maybe 4 blocks past Spruce Street.

KM: Ah, okay.

LS: On your left, there's a big church called Saint Cyprian.

KM: Oh, yes! I saw it, I saw it.

KM: And once a month now, the last Sunday of every month, at 2pm there's a Catholic Mass --- an African Mass. So there's people from Guinea and Nigeria ---

KM: Okay.

LS: --- and all over the place, and it's just starting and actually the priest there --- he's a Monsignor --- and he's half --- his father is Cape Verdean. So he's half-African. So it may be something that your boys might be interested.

KM: Yeah! Yeah, I will find out. I'll find out. Because ---

LS: The next one is going to be on the 25th of February.

KM: Okay. Oh, that's good.

LS: At 2pm. And they're just trying to figure out how to make it feel more African. And it is also a very beautiful church.

KM: No, I will think about that because I was even planning to talk to Sister Berita ---

LS: She was the one who was there. She played the piano and the guitar. And she's been very instrumental with Father Tom Betz. He's the head of the --- umm, I think it's called the Catholic, umm, Immigrant and Refugee Ministry ---

KM: Something like that, yeah.

LS: And they also have what they call the office of the Black Catholics.

KM: Oh, okay, yeah, ( ).

LS: Because you know it's a minority religion among African Americans. But there are some. And I think that's actually a black Church. I mean, I think it's always kind of been an African American Catholic church. So anyway ---

KM: No, that's good, because we have agreed to talk. Because I told her I wanted advisement ---

LS: Yeah, she's the one who told me about this thing, so ---

KM: Yeah, that's wonderful.

LS: It's kind of neat. And they are waiting to see if there is interest, so that they can continue.

KM: Okay, okay. That's good news.

LS: It wasn't very --- I went to the first one and there was nothing particularly African about it, but, I mean, as Father Betz said, "The Catholic Mass --- anywhere you go, it's the same."

KM: It's the same, yes.

LS: And so I think they were thinking maybe they could introduce some music or they could do something so that people would feel like it was ---

KM: Yeah, we enjoy introducing music into the ---

LS: Yeah.

KM: Yeah. [**KM** laughs]

LS: It seemed like a very nice group of people.

KM: Okay.

LS: Okay. When you came to Newark, what was it like to come to the United States? Was it hard to adapt?

KM: It was not easy. Because, first of all, the system, American system is entirely different from our system.

LS: In what way?

KM: Like, the way things happen. How to process something. It is entirely different. Like for here, for example, if I want something from Social Security, for example, it always finishes through a telephone. For us, there, you have to go there first and they talk to the --- you know? It's not here. Most of it is through the telephone, even the banking system.

LS: So it is not very personalized?

KM: Isn't personal, but it's efficient. And I think what makes America unique from the other is because the system works. For us, there, this is the system, this is what the system says. But you don't follow it, you do something else. [**KM** laughs]

LS: Oh, I know what it's like. For example, you should be able to get some money or something or even paid, and you go to the office and you are thinking, "Maybe it will work." If I stand there for four hours --- like, there's no guarantee. And here, if you are supposed to get something --- you get it. And it works

KM: Yeah. Exactly.

LS: And it works.

KM: Yeah, it works. The system works. And that's what makes it different. And that's what you first get --- the first impression you get when you come to USA: the system works. Yeah. For us there, it doesn't. Because the system is beautiful when you see it on the paper, very beautiful, but it doesn't work. [**LS** laughs]

LS: When you came and you were a refugee, you were able to get assistance? For a number of months?

KM: Yeah, a number of months, about three months. In our case, it was three months. And then we got a job. I got a job and started relying on myself. Yeah.

LS: Was that hard?

KM: It was hard, it was hard. Because you are starting from nothing. And the support we got was so minimal. It didn't carry us very far. It was like starting from new. You need so many things, that should have been there. It was not easy.

LS: What was it like to come from a place where you had a certain standing or a certain status and you were recognized as well-educated and important --- what was it like to come here?

KM: It was at times also degrading in the sense that, like, you discover that all the education you have didn't mean anything, doesn't mean anything here. So, is also --- it is a shock.

LS: All the degrees you have, that fact that they are from the University of Khartoum, and in Cairo --- are they recognized?

KM: The American University --- yeah, they recognize them. The American University in Cairo, that's where I did my Masters.

LS: Oh, it was the American University in Cairo. So that's probably a little bit easier because people ---

KM: Yeah, it was easier, easier to understand. Yeah, they recognize it.

LS: What about the University of Khartoum? I mean, I've heard some Africans say that ---

KM: Other universities, they don't ( ).

LS: --- they went to the University of Ouagadougou, or something like that. And they say, well ---

KM: Yeah, Americans don't do that. They don't --- it doesn't mean much to them unless it is their system. Well, you see, they are justified to some extent also. Because sometimes, in some universities in some other countries, there are --- like even University of Khartoum now, it has *dropped* with this Islamic government in Khartoum. It has dropped to almost like a high school.

LS: So ---

KM: So they are right.

LS: It's really not the equivalent.

KM: Yeah, it's not the equivalent. It's not --- so sometime you might come with a degree from a certain university, which might not be necessarily a degree, to some standards. So as for me, I am not against that. But --- it's part of life. You have to prove it. If you are educated, you have to prove it. You have the opportunity to prove it. I am not against that.

LS: So when you look at your own professional future, do you like the social work you are doing now? Is that something you'd like to continue?

KM: In future? Well, in future I have always had a dream to be a businessman.

LS: You mean an entrepreneur?

KM: Entrepreneur, yeah, entrepreneur. That has always been my dream.

LS: You know, Siddiq and those guys are starting an association called the Sudanese American Business Association. Do you know about that?

KM: Yeah, he talked to me about it. In actual fact, we are closer now. We used to talk frequently.

LS: Siddiq is very dynamic.

KM: He is a nice person. He is a nice person. And this is --- and you know, American system also helps. Once you come here, also, you go back to your roots and that is good. Because sometimes when you go

away from the roots, you start to be fictitious and that is the problem with most of the Northern Sudanese. Now when they came here, they start to discover a lot of things. And then their attitude is completely changed. When the other day, when they came to us in the office and they met with us there, their attitude was completely different.

LS: What was completely different?

KM: Their attitude. Like, they will be talking about being Sudanese, which it is not there. It doesn't used to be there.

LS: You mean there's no sense of being Sudanese?

KM: From the beginning, it was Arab.

LS: So you think they have been transformed?

KM: They have been transformed a lot. And American system have helped a lot.

LS: So even when you see some of those people who look extremely Arab, do you automatically feel like you have, umm --- like Bakash(?), you know the guy who ---

KM: Yeah, Bakash(?) I know.

LS: Which he always looks very Arab to me.

KM: Yeah.

LS: But do you relate to each other as fellow Sudanese now or do you have to kind of ---

KM: No, I don't know him, I don't know him very much. But I am close to both Siddiq and Ali, because I know their views. Because I like politics. I like, I like their politics. And most of the time, my time was taken --- you know even American elections? I really followed up. I know every bit of it. I like it. I like politics. So, I know the views of Ali. I know the views of Siddiq. But I don't know his views. So is --- uhh, yeah.

LS: Did you have any problem with your English? Did you find that American English was hard to understand or that people had trouble understanding you?

KM: Sometimes, it depends on who you are talking to you. Like, if you are talking to a black Americans, I hardly understand. When I first came ---

LS: In the beginning?

KM: Yeah. I didn't understand. Because the accent. It's completely different. When I talk with the whites, is that they are fast. I can hear, I can cope up with them, but is very fast. [**KM** laughs] But now, is a lot of improvement now. Yeah.

LS: What kind of food do you eat? Do you eat traditional Sudanese food?

KM: Well, I don't get it here. But I ---

LS: And you don't cook it?

KM: I cook it. I cook it and I like it. And that is what I mostly eat. Because I'm a married man and I'm used to cooking on my wife, and so when I come to, like, McDonalds, I don't eat it, I don't enjoy it.

LS: So you cook ---

KM: I cook alone.

LS: --- food for yourself?

KM: Yeah, I enjoy cooking. And eating what I ---

LS: In Sudan, you probably wouldn't cook?

KM: I wouldn't, because as a Dinka, you are not raised --- you are raised to be a warrior. That is the bottom line of the Dinka life. Men who means being prepared as a warrior. So things --- there are certain things that men would not do, like going to kitchen. They don't go to the kitchen.

LS: Did you learn to cook the food yourself in Kenya or ---

KM: I learnt in Kenya.

LS: In Kenya.

KM: Because one time when we were working with some fellow staff at LCF, people cook in turn, you know. So it came my turn and I don't know. So they were looking at me, what do I, I said, "I don't know." So a certain lady, Sudanese lady, help. She understood my position. So she will come always when it is my turn, to come and help me out and we do it together.

LS: Oh, that's nice.

KM: But the Kenyans were surprised and said, "How can you be at this age and you don't know how to cook?" I said, "Well, you know, I was raised to be a warrior." You know? [**KM** laughs]

LS: Fouzia tells me that they're teaching the Sudanese boys to cook(?).

KM: Yeah, because these guys, who stayed in the camp, they can cook because the life in the camp is imposing, you have to.

LS: So they already have ---

KM: They already have. Maybe to cook different types, different types of food and whatever, is what they got to be taught. But otherwise, basically, the bottom line is that they can cook things like collard green, just boil it. That's it. That's what the Kenyans eat.

LS: With rice or something like that?

KM: With rice. And then with porridge, hot porridge. Is African, this food.

LS: Made out of what grain? Millet?

KM: Maize. ( ) we have millet and maize. But the best side of --- what I enjoy much is when I go to Calgary.

LS: Uh-huh. And your wife ---

KM: I will tell her that I am coming tomorrow, I want this for ( ).

LS: And she can get all the ingredients that she needs?

KM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, They are there. So ---

LS: How often do you go to Canada?

KM: Well, I was there in November and I plan to go there in March. Maybe by mid-March. ( )

LS: It seems like a long time, but I run into immigrants all the time, you know --- they don't have their visas and so they haven't gone home in years, because they will never be able to come back. So they haven't seen their kids in seven, eight years.

KM: Yeah, yeah. yeah.

LS: So, well, that's really a hardship.

KM: Yeah, but when I applied for a traveling document, it was approved by the INS.

LS: So now you have no problems?

KM: I can go, I don't --- what I have to do, is to renew it when it expires.

LS: What do you think about your future here? Do you think you will become a citizen? Or do you have an idea of what you are going to do?

KM: Well, if I become a citizen, if I qualify for it, I will take it. But then if the peace come back home, I will also go home. It's, like, I will have three homes, like. We have home in Canada, home in USA, and home back home.

LS: What do you think chances of that are in the near future?

KM: Getting peace?

LS: Yes.

KM: Well, you see, I don't see the --- there are no immediate prospects so far. Because the Western World is coming into the Sudan because oil. And oil --- the interest in oil is overriding the principles the Westerners believe in, in the human rights, democracy.

LS: So you don't think the Sudanese government will ever accept a succession of ---

KM: Of South Sudan?

LS: Mmm-hmm.

KM: Yes, they wouldn't, unless if we also have ( ).

LS: It's too valuable.

KM: Yeah, for them, it's too much. Yeah. But then it will have to happen, because --- how long it might take? It will have to happen. Because what I know of Southerners, will not give up. They will not.

LS: So if you wanted to move back, do you imagine that your children will stay here and become Americans or ---

KM: No, this is like you are an American, you are Canadian, you are a South Sudanese.

LS: You can be everything.

KM: Yeah, it doesn't harm.

[END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 2]

[START OF SIDE 2, TAPE 2]

LS: Do people that you know in Southern Sudan ever ask you to help them get to the United States or to Canada? They really have to come as a refugee? Is that the only way that people will come in?

KM: Well, the only people come here only as refugees. There is not any other way.

LS: There is also the diversity lottery, right?

KM: There's lottery, but for them, they have not been much involved in this lottery.

LS: Oh, they haven't.

KM: Yeah, they haven't. Because they are there in the camp. They hardly come to Nairobi. Because moving out of the camp is not easy. And coming to Nairobi also without documents is also not easy.

LS: So if they leave and let's say they walk into Kenya, then they are not necessarily accepted into a camp?

KM: No, when you come out of Sudan, you are accepted in the camp, but you can not be allowed to go out of the camp, because when you go out of the camp you have to given papers, showing that you are refugee, you are going for a certain period of time, you will be coming back. So that the Kenyan security knows. Then they don't give that. So you will always be in the camp. And being in the camp all the time, you will be missing other opportunities like this lotteries.

LS: Oh, so you can't go out. Are the camps safe?

KM: To some extent, but not very much, because Kenya itself is not safe.

LS: What about for girls? Is that risky for a young woman to be in a camp?

KM: Well, inside --- yeah, no, inside the camp, within among the Sudanese, it's safe. Like, it's not --- it's hard for the Sudanese to have a rape case between Sudanese lady and a man. No. I mean, like, there can be a shoot out all over the town anytime, because Kenya is not that much secure.

LS: But there are also a lot of Eritreans and Somalis ---

KM: In the camp? Yeah.

LS: And what are the relations like between them?

KM: Well, from the beginning, it was not good because the Somalis, when they came to encounter the South Sudanese inside the camp, from the first days it was not easy. Because the Somalis they have this attitude of being a Muslim and once they make that as a very big issue, then they will definitely get resistance on the side of Southern Sudanese.

LS: And also Ethiopians?

KM: And the Ethiopians, yeah. ( ). So that thing didn't help much, that attitude, so in the end I think maybe they understood that it didn't mean much. They shouldn't operate besides you. So, things I learned --- there were even fights between Somalis and South Sudanese, yeah. But now I think things are calming because the Somalis are changing their attitude now. 'Cause the issue, when you mention issue of Islam, the Southern Sudanese in the camp ---

LS: They've already lived through that, they don't even ---

KM: It's a very big thing.

LS: That's a huge camp. How many people there, 17,000?

KM: No, because you know what the Kenyans did, they closed down the other camps and they brought them to Kakuma.

LS: So how many people are there?

KM: According to what I had, I am not sure, but it is over 80 --- 80,000.

LS: *80,000*?

KM: Somalis --- nobody remained in Somalia. Somalis, they have moved to Kenya. And what is the deal with Somalis that all of them want to come to USA.

LS: They all want to come to USA?

KM: They all want to come to USA.

LS: Are there other countries? Do people go to Australia? Do they go to France?

KM: Yeah, there is Australia --- well, Europe, Europe is, is playing it down. They are scaling it down, you know.

LS: So does the US still want to take ---

KM: It is only US and Canada, but Canada is also not taking many, especially Somalis. Those who came, who went to Canada, didn't do well. So the Canadian government is not much interest to bring in more. The same thing in Sweden.

LS: I know that they're not taking as many refugees now?

KM: They are not. They are not. But especially the Somalis. What is going on now, even the Americans, they have already stopped the Somalis' resettlement. What is going on now is family reunion.

LS: Yes. But they are not taking ( ) cases?

KM: ( ) Although they were taking Bantu Somalis, people who are originally Bantus.

LS: If somebody asked you, if they're in Kakuma and they have a chance either go to Canada or the United States, where would you recommend they go?

KM: People would prefer to come into USA.

LS: You think so. Why?

KM: Because they say there are higher prospects of getting a job and working harder, you are hard worker, you come up.

LS: Siddiq's wife told me that she saw a lot of Sudanese in Canada, but they're all on assistance because there are no jobs. They are educated, but they really are almost --- have enforced unemployment.

KM: Yeah. That's ---

LS: And it's very demoralizing.

KM: Yeah, this is not --- well, of course, you know, the economy of Canada is not that much like that USA. Although I'm also worried now, the economy seems to be slowing down also here. Although, there is too much exaggeration about it. So the whole thing is economy. The economy is not that much vibrant like that of USA, so the jobs are minimal. But those who want to work, they also get jobs. It also depends on whether you are ( ). And what is good here, even with the whites, ( ), a good job here is a job which pays well. It's not what it is. But it is how much do you get from it. The majority of people. Now, all the people don't have that. The Sudanese will be, like, selective. "No, I want this, no, I don't want that." And if you don't want this and that, you will end up without getting nothing.

LS: I've seen that a little bit --- well, I certainly saw that when I lived in Senegal, that people who come from a certain background --- you know, the United States, just to ( ) you'll do anything. I mean, I used to clean houses and I used to do farm work, and I've done all kinds of things. But --- and I don't think that people have a sense that there's some work that's just not ( ) --- I worked in restaurants ( ). You know, if you are older in the United States and you're still doing that work, that's a little bit of a class thing, but not when you're young. But I would see people in Dakar who would prefer to be unemployed than to sell bread.

KM: Yes.

LS: ( ) their families, they couldn't do that.

KM: Exactly.

LS: And that's a very different attitude than people have here.

KM: This attitude --- this is the attitude. So, with that attitude, you go to Canada, you hardly get a job of your choice, but then why should you get a job of your choice when you just came in, and you didn't even spend so much time, to build friendship, to build public relations, here and there. So that you know

people, because sometimes what you get depends on who you know. They don't do that. So, some end up without getting jobs. But in that town, what I told my community when I went to Calgary, I said a good job is a job that you get higher pay. And it make you work hard, to compensate for all these ( ) you have lost, staying idle in Egypt and like that. So you have to work hard. Our people now, ummm, they have taken up jobs, they are doing well. They are different from when they came.

LS: It's interesting. Ali Dinar's brother came about a year and a half ago, on the green card lottery with his wife and child. I met his brother once and ever since then he works every night at a grocery store stocking --- I have never seen him since then. I have never seen him. He works overtime, he does ---

KM: Exactly. That's it. So others --- it depends on attitude of each individual.

LS: Well, what's it like for the boys who just came from the camp, the Sudanese boys who are over 18? They probably never had a chance to work in their lives?

KM: Yeah.

LS: So what's it like for them to suddenly get a job?

KM: They are very anxious now. They come to me all the time. They ( ), they say, "We want jobs."

LS: They want jobs?

KM: Yeah.

LS: So they are willing to work ---

KM: They are really willing to work. Because we are telling them, I'm telling them, "Work. Buy a car. And study. So you will be working and study at the same time. You do two things. Two things --- easy. And this is how the Americans do their education after high school. You work, you study."

LS: Yeah. And they are willing to do that?

KM: They are willing to, and they are all the time they say, "I want to work, I want to work."

LS: Would some of them prefer to drop out of school and work? Is that what they're ---

KM: No, no. No, no. They don't want to do that. They want to work and study.

LS: Overall, are these kids doing well?

KM; Yes. Well, it's --- some are even outstanding. Like one case in --- a guy --- ( ) I took him --- I started, got out the Social Security, I took for a ( ), and I took him to Martin Luther King High School. Well, when we went there, the situation was not encouraging, you know the behavior in public schools, always is a lot of gangs and whatever.

LS: He was surprised by that?

KM: Yeah, he was surprised. Oh my, surprise. Because our schools there are highly disciplined ---

LS: What about in the refugee camp?

KM: Very disciplined.

LS: They were disciplined there, too?

KM: They were disciplined. Because the schools are open inside the camp, mainly are Sudanese are the teaching staff, not the Kenyans. Yeah. So the discipline is there. And is like the discipline you will get here in private schools. If a child is not doing well, he can be dismissed from a primary school, there.

LS: Like in the Catholic schools here? They're very ---

KM Yes, so discipline is number one. So when we went there, he was shocked. So they thought that maybe he is coming from ( ), he is not that much good or whatever. When he went to the class, he puzzled them, he ( ), he puzzled them. So the teacher said, "What do you want to study in future? You are good in mathematics." He said, "I want to study engineering." I said, "Okay. Then this is not a good place. I will take you to what they call Central High School." So that was the case of a good student. He did very well and the teacher was impressed instantly.

LS: So is Central High School a magnet school?

KM: Yeah, it is, like, especially for kids who are aiming at engineering.

LS: Oh, kind of a math and science school?

KM: Yeah, math, science, or ( ) school. So, it's under process, if they transfer him, because the counselor four courses for this semester. And I told him, "Do this. And once you finish that, then now you are well to enter the American system. You will be transferred with your --- things, and you go to a better school." So, he's doing well.

LS: And is he living alone or ---

KM: No, no, he is living with a foster parent.

LS: And are the kids who are living in the semi-independent stuff, are they able to do their homework? Are they disciplined enough to do it?

KM: Yeah, yeah. Well, they are attached --- most of the semi-independents, we attach them to churches. The churches find out, they work out the group of people who will be supporting them.

LS: So one church will sort of take a group of boys?

KM: Yes.

LS: Oh, I see.

KM: They will be living semi-independent, but the church is the mentor.

LS: And so do the church members take turns?

KM: Yeah, yeah, a lot of them.

LS: That's a very good system.

KM: Yeah, it's nice. It's nice. So those kids who will really stick to education, without changing their minds, they will do well, the way I look at it. But some, of course, it's time, also. Some might also not like. They might drop out of here and there.

LS: Well, sure. They have the whole range of --- they can't all be brilliant.

KM: That's true. They can't be brilliant, all of them.

LS: And what about the young kids, are they able to kind of show an attachment to their foster parents?

KM: Yeah, yeah, you see, it's still, it's still, there is, this is still a game. It's a cultural game. There, umm, like in a case --- there was a case --- the kid --- they couldn't communicate well with their foster parents, and that also created a lot of tension, a lot of misunderstanding. So is not very smooth, the entire thing. There are times they do well. It also depends also on the family. There are certain parents who are really doing very well and some are not. So everything also still boils down to personality issue.

LS: Do you ever get phone calls, crisis phone calls, at night?

KM: Yeah, yeah. Not at night, but during the day --- oh! I'm flooded with a lot.

LS: What happened when the boy got arrested the other day? They let him go?

KM: Yeah, they let him go. You know that man wept, the officer, he really understood ( ) and he got him out and then we took him home. He was shocked, he was shocked, when he came out.

LS: Was he very upset?

KM: Upset, so much upset.

LS: Oh, that poor ---

KM: So I have to, you know, persuade him, talk with him, and I told Peter and said, "Let me talk with him in Dinka language and --- yes."

LS: Oh, that poor boy.

KM: So I was telling him, "This is kind of man's life." In the Dinka life, as a man, you are expected to experience a lot of difficulties, here and there. So I said, "It is part of your growth. It's normal. Don't let it get into your nerves."

LS: So you kind of took it like a traditional Dinka ---

KM: Yeah, yeah, that it is a man's ---

LS: Did it help him?

KM: Yeah, it helps. The man, he is expected to experience hardships, difficult things and ---

LS: So was it so unexpected that he just was in shock?

KM: He was shocked, because he didn't expect that it would cause that --- it was not deliberate.

LS: Was it a razor?

KM: Yeah, a razor. You know this? Okay, you know long time ---

LS: Oh, a blade?

KM: A blade. It is a blade. You take out of a envelope, put it into the machine, and then you do.

LS: Yeah, of course.

KM: With three holes in it.

LS: Yes, exactly.

KM: Yeah, that's it. That what he had. He brought it from Africa. He used it to cut the nails and sometimes sharpen his pencils. [**KM** laughs] And he didn't know that he was doing a crime, committing ---

LS: And he didn't remember that in the orientation, they have been told never to take anything sharp [to school]? He probably didn't absorb it, right?

KM: Yeah, he didn't take it much, yeah. Because you see also the difficulty is that when they come, we give them a lot of information at the same time. It's a difficult thing. "You do like this, no, it is here, it is like this." So there's too many information being poured into their minds and they can't get it all.

LS: Now is there a way that you can take his case and tell other boys, just as kind of a cautionary tale.

KM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LS: Well, that poor --- I mean I've just thought about him as just --- that must have been hard. That's probably the hardest thing that's happened yet, right? [**KM** laughs]

KM: Yeah. It's okay. It's also part of the experience of American life. Is okay. For me, since we were able to get him out without getting to his records, that is good.

LS: Yes, of course.

KM: That was very good. I told him that there is nothing, this didn't get to your records.

LS: Was he also feeling ashamed?

KM: Yeah! He was so much ashamed. And he said when he went to the --- inside the cell, he was there with people he didn't like(?). You know, the ( ). So he was shocked. He said he was ( ) like this at the time. He didn't do anything intentionally to break the law.

LS: Oh, I'm sure ---

KM: It was a real nightmare.

LS: That poor boy. Well, I'm glad it all worked out.

[END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 2]