

Muktar Mohammed Transcription

My name is Muktar Mohammed. I'm from Ethiopia.

My life was not in a city. I grew up in the countryside, so I don't know the city. Sometimes, I go to school there in the community learning Arabic language and the Quran. And then I supported my family. Everyone is [a] farmer there in the countryside.

In the 70s, there is war, and there is a problem with the government over there. A lot of people protested, mostly students. The government started punishing them and then most of them escaped and needed to go somewhere else. They went to- first and then Djibouti- a tiny country in the Mediterranean. I was with them too, with those group of students.

And then I stayed there for about two years and then we got opportunity to go somewhere. And they opened the office of the United Nations over there. And then we registered our name there, and then we got interviewed by people present in the United Nations office there. I got a chance to go [to] Egypt.

I stayed there in Egypt for about five, six years there, and then another opportunity arrived there with the students and people through the United Nations, their office over there helped the people over there. And then if you wanted to go somewhere in the West: America, Australia, you have to put the application and then you have to interview with the embassy that represents that country.

[I] went to American embassy in Egypt there and they interviewed me in Arabic. [I] answered all the questions over there and then finally, they said you're okay, and then, you can go America. I don't know the language. I never studied English in my country, so I don't know any English. I just interviewed in Arabic. Then we *[inaudible]* at that time and then they said they set up when we have to leave.

We decided to come to Minnesota. First state. I like Minnesota since the day- I mean, I haven't been to any [other] state. I've been in St. Paul for almost 20 some years. In St. Paul here, it is quiet, it's friendly, I mean it's not like Minneapolis... I fit in the community. I feel like we have been here for more than- I lived in Minnesota more than I lived in my own country.

There is at that time- we have two people, they called sponsors, sponsors. One is from Ethiopia, one is from America, here. They got me from the airport and then they gave me shelter, and they gave me food.

I started going to school over there. I didn't know any English, no, not even- none- not any word. So I started going to school there and English as a second language. This place called Hubbs Center. I went there, and then I finished there, I graduated from there. And then after a while I went to St. Paul College for two years. My program was LPN. It was very tough for me because I'm working, there's family there, and then I stopped going to school from that point until now so I could support my kids.

So my kids, most of them are in college so I have five of them, so five of them. I love my family, my kids, better than me. So all get educations to what they need to survive. They are- they are very smart kids, they are- I told them at the beginning, I'm poor man so I don't have much money to support you on to college. I can provide the food for you, and shelter for you finally, and then you have to work and then be smart.

Well, this is my story, my story it is, you know- this life story, it's is a lot, so it's not just enough for five minutes.