

# OJULLO

**66** The ECAR members became like my family.

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# ARRIVAL

I didn't bring any other item with me other than my story.

I'm from Ethiopia. I fled my country in 2003, went to Sudan, stay[ed] in Sudan for 2 years, and then move[d] to Kenya. I spent 11 years in Kenya before resettling to the United States.

Life in the refugee camp . . . it was very challenging. We went through a lot of problems like shortage of food, insecurity. Life there was not good generally, but despite the difficult life we had in the camps. we also still have the positive [experiences]. In the camps, we have the school, primary to secondary school and the refugees who want to study would go, they would continue with their study up to secondary level. So I did my study there up to secondary level, but I didn't get [the] chance to go to higher education . . to go to college. Living there is not really bad, because that is when I start[ed] to know, to live with many people from different countries who don't share the same language with me, who don't have the same cultures so I learned a lot of things from [the refugee camp].

So now in my story chain, I leave the camps when I got the resettlement.





#### Interviewed in English by: BLAISE PASCAL

With the informed consent of participants, interview transcripts have been adapted here in narrative form for clarity and efficiency with a commitment to retaining the intended meaning.

everycampusarefuge.org

My first day here was a regret. I don't feel like I belong in the US. I asked myself [a] silent question: "why did I come to the US?" Maybe there is another US. I feel that the environment was very strange to me. I don't know the people, but the World Relief who receive[d] us really tried to support us. They dr[o]ve us around within the town, within Winston Salem. They also took us to many places like the store, and took us also to ESL classes. I would say they did everything for us to adapt to the environment.

In December, the strange weather came. By then I was taking [the] bus from home to Forsyth Tech, to take my ESL classes and back. So then I feel that the weather was very cold, so I immediately, then I decided to, to stop going to . .. classes.

Within that year, I still say "no." I wish I [did] not come here. I wish I [c]ould stay in the camp. I still feel like [a] homesickness. I feel that I miss some of my friends in the camps, and I also feel that I was not going to do anything here because when I came I had a plan that when I arrive in US, I would go to school, but within that year I feel that no, a school here is not going to be easy, so maybe I can work. But at the same time I also tell [myself] "no, no matter what, I have to go to school."

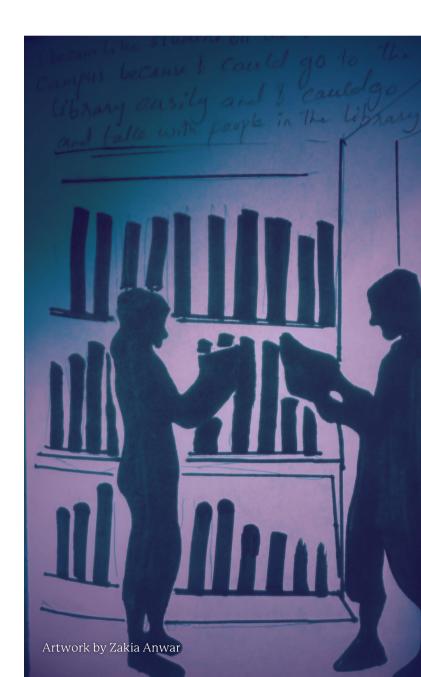
### SUPPORT ON CAMPUS

That is where I came to know ECAR. World Relief was aware that there is a program that was supporting the refugees. And in July 2019, I was called to Wake Forest University campus. I met with . . .Professor Michelle and [Professor] Barry. These are the members of the ECAR. They came and talked to us openly. We feel that we belong.

In August, they called me again, and they said: "we are going to tell you the date of when to move to the new house [on campus]." The first day on the campus was very nice. I also feel relief because on the lease they told me that ECAR is going to cover everything.

When I went to the campus, I did not worry. I didn't worry about the bill anymore, because ECAR has paid everything for me.

They paid all the bills, the rents, the electrics, wi-fi, then, and you know, sometime they [w]ould also bring food to us. And they also help us with many thing[s] like the transportation. I remember when I appl[ied] for my citizenship, they also dr[o]ve. They also help me to fill out the forms. And yeah, they did a lot of things."



## CREATING LASTING COMMUNITY

What the relationship [with ECAR members] is just goes beyond a friendship. The ECAR members became like my family.

Because ... when I have a problem I could just call them without making an appointment. I was very close to Professor Michelle. Even if I don't call her, she would ask me, "Ojullu, how w[ere] the classes? ... What subject, or what course are you facing? Are you having difficulty with it? If you need my help, please let us know or ... if you need some more connections, you have to let us know, so that we can connect you with different people." Usually what I do [is] mostly reading the books. That's what I did for the last 8 years . . I have been reading books every day. In addition to the academic, the school books, I still have some time to read the books outside of the school. I read 3 autobiography [books] within 3 months. Those are the story books you read about someone, maybe, who succeeded, who is, who has been struggling throughout his life, who ha[s] experienced a lot of problems, but in the end he succeeded, or she succeeded.

So those are the stor[ies] that I usually read and the reason why I read them. It always motivates me to focus on my study. It give[s] me encouragement. They inspired me to do more.

Life is good because it taught us a lot of things to be resilient, to persevere.

Artwork by Zakia Anwar