



OJULLO

“ 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.



Hosted by:

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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."



Artwork by Zakia Anwar

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

