



My name is...

stories & art by  
young refugees in  
Minnesota schools

A project of  
the Center for Victims  
of Torture

Over a six-year period the Minnesota Schools Project of the Center for Victims of Torture provided training to more than 6,000 educators who work with refugee youth.

The lives of many of these youth have been deeply affected by political violence and the trauma of war. Some students want to share their stories; others find that they must keep their memories private. Only the work of those students comfortable in making their stories public is included here.

In these stories and pictures you will learn of life before war and during it; of flight and loss; of journeys to a new continent and a new way of life. These writers and artists are students in your classrooms. They are survivors, not just victims, and they have not only a past, but a future. Developing awareness and bridging understanding of one another will enhance your school and create greater capacities for all to learn and develop.

#### Acknowledgements

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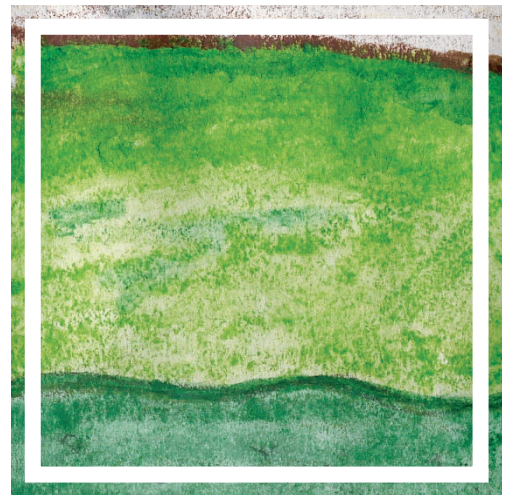
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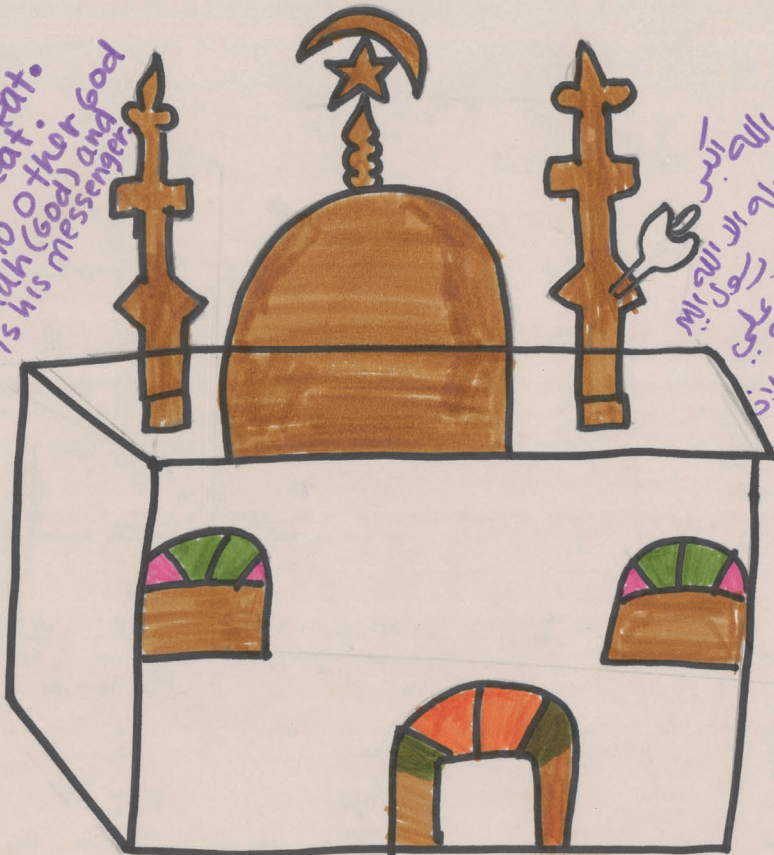


“MOSQUE (MasJid) is Muslim holy place where prayers are performed.”

The leader of the mosque is called Imam.

God is Great.  
There is no other god  
but Allah (God) and  
Muhammed is his messenger.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ  
الشَّهيد بن لاله الإله أكبر  
وأنشود ان محمد رسول علي  
حي علي الصلاة حيث علي  
ود فامك فلاح ©  
اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ الإله أكبر  
للاه الإله



Hodan Abdibudal Khalif

When I was five years old, my family owned a big house and I went to a school for young girls to learn the Koran. As I was growing up, I learned more about my culture. One of my favorite holidays was Eid, a holiday for Muslims. We would get money and lots of sweets and clothes. Our parents loved to see us happy and full of joy.

Soon the happy and joyful days ended when the war broke out in Somalia. I hated sneaking from building to building trying to survive during these hateful acts between two clans. For a long time we were away from our family and relatives and friends. During the war we could only pack important things, such as clothes and food, nothing else. I dread remembering certain things, such as the poor people lying in the street dead, or with a body part missing, or trying to survive a gunshot wound.

After the war we left Somalia and went to Kenya hoping to bring our life back to normal, but things were much harder. In Kenya the police officers were very brutal and mean. If you hurt or killed someone, they would kill you. They don't just shoot you, they make sure your death is long and very painful. Once I saw a man get burned to death in front of the town. The streets were very dirty, and the houses had rats, ants, cockroaches, spiders and other creepy small insects and animals.

In Somalia we were treated with respect because we had money, but people looked down on us in Kenya. Sometimes, late at night, a robber would be caught and every kid would come out and start throwing rocks at him until he was knocked down and arrested. We were robbed once, but the robber was caught and bleeding from all the rocks that hit him, mostly on the head.

Soon we left Kenya and came to the U.S. Everything was different here. There were nice cars and clean streets. It took me a while to get used to the stereos, microwaves, big TVs and DVDs. I had never seen things like that.

I didn't go to school in Kenya, so I forgot how schools looked. I was surprised when I saw Century High School. I never thought that people would spend so much on a school for teenagers to learn in. I found out that here in the United States kids are the future, and their future depends on their learning skills.

When I came here I knew very few sentences and words to say in English, but I gradually got used to it and began learning the language. So far I think that I'm back to my normal schedule, like the one back in Somalia. I hope to learn more and never forget my language or my religion, but learn to comprehend the people from this country.

Sadia Salad Farah

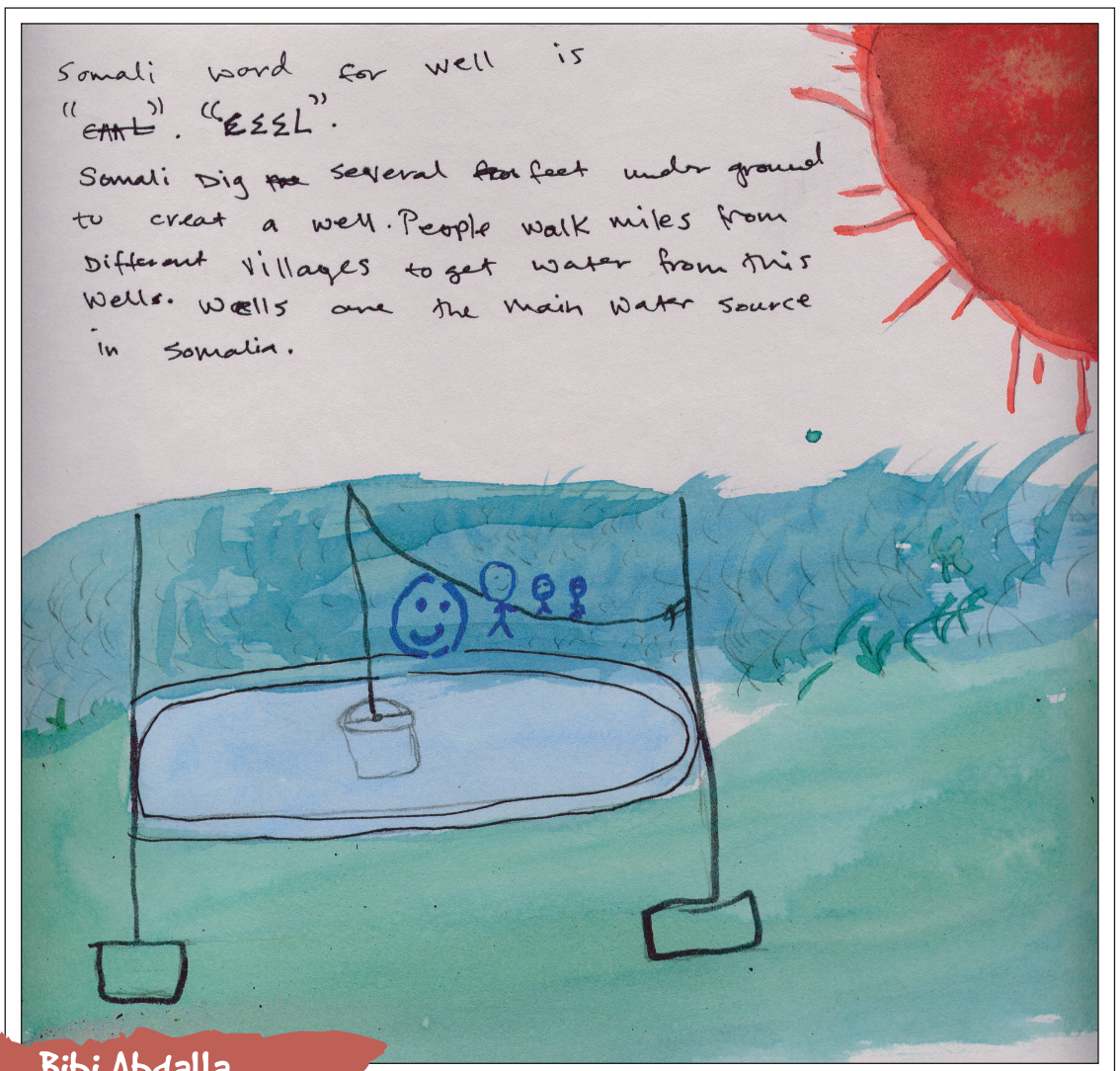
My name is Adam Mohamud. I was born in Somalia. I come from a big family. I have ten sisters and eight brothers, most of them are older than I. Before the civil war in Somalia, I lived with my family. I used to go to school and to *dugsi*. *Dugsi* is where the Qu'ran, or holy book of Islam, is taught to the kids. I also used to play soccer with my friends and go swimming every Friday. We would go to Jaziira or Halane beach, which are on the Indian Ocean. I lived a happy life and didn't know what was happening anywhere else. Although the war had been raging in other areas in Somalia for many years, we didn't expect it to arrive on our doorstep so soon.

The war started in Mogadishu on December 29, 1990. It was Sunday and we were dismissed from school that day. At that time I was 10 years old and in the fifth grade. Unlike here, our weekend was Thursday and Friday. On Monday my dad wouldn't let me go to school, but on Tuesday I told my dad that I really had to go because that day there were first semester exams. On Tuesday morning my friends and I took two city buses to arrive at school. When we got to school, we were laughing and talking. Suddenly two soldiers jumped out and ordered us to stop. They asked us where we were going, although they saw our uniforms. We said that we were going to this

school. They said there was no school today and to go back to our homes.

We didn't go home. We hung around. After about 30 minutes of walking, my friends and I started seeing dead bodies. The men were lying on the street outside of the police station. I didn't know who they were, but I knew that they were government supporters because of their military dress. At first I didn't believe that they were dead, but as I got closer, I noticed that the closest man had part of his skull blown off.

I started sweating, and my heart started pounding faster and faster. My breath got shorter and shorter. I immediately left and started walking back to my house. On the way I saw soldiers who had just come and were preparing to fight. They stopped and asked us what we saw, or if



Bibi Abdalla

we had seen rebels in the area we had just come from. We lied to them and told them we saw nothing, because we didn't want to be held back for more questions. They let us go. When I got home I told my father nothing, because he would have been very angry at me for going there in the first place, to a place of gunfire.

The war got worse and worse. We moved from Mogadishu to Marka, and from Marka to Byullo Mareer. We stayed for two months with a friend of my father's who had a farm and then moved back to Mogadishu. Mogadishu wasn't a peaceful place, but my father decided that we would not move away again. We lived in our house in Mogadishu until one day that I will never forget.

It was March 28, 1992, at 6:15 p.m. A gunman came to our house and asked us for money or anything valuable. My father told him no, and asked him to leave the house with his gun, and said that he should not have a gun around the children. The gunman made his demand again and my father didn't give in. Finally, the gunman took his gun and shot three times, two into my father's chest, one in his neck. My father fell down and collapsed. I came close to see what had happened to him, and still the gunman was standing in the front door of our house. I saw that my father was seriously injured. I went through the back of the house and jumped into the back yard to get help from the neighbors. The gunman left and didn't take anything else. We took our father to the hospital, and he died one hour later.

We lived in our house in Medina, Mogadishu, until May 1994. Then the war started in our area and we moved to Bullo Hubey, Mogadishu. From that time on we didn't go back to our house because they looted everything so badly. They took the roof and doors off our house and destroyed it all because they didn't want us to ever come back.

We lived in my brother's house for a while, but it was too crowded. Later our family divided, some living in my sister's house and some in my

brother's. After that I decided to go anywhere that I could get an education. In late 1995 I talked to another brother for the first time since he had left in 1992 after my father died. I told him every detail of life in Somalia. He said to come to Nairobi, Kenya, and he would pay for everything for me. I went to Nairobi in the middle of 1996. Life in Kenya was not easy because of a new language and a new country. Although the Kenyan people were nice to Somalians, their police were very bad and corrupt. You don't appreciate your country until you move to a different country. I lived there for about a year, and then I got the opportunity to come here.

When I finally came to the United States, I was very sad because I had to leave all my brothers and sisters behind. I miss my family very much, and I worry about them all the time. I don't know if I will see them again, and I hope that the fighting does not hurt them.

In Rochester I am living with my little brother who is in the ninth grade. He came to Rochester last year. We have an apartment here, and we try to take care of each other. Sometimes it is not so easy to go to school, and also have to do the laundry, the cooking and the cleaning. I make sure that my brother and I both get up every morning so that we do not miss the bus, because we do not have a car to drive. It is hard not to have a mother or a father to talk to after school. I especially miss my family then.

I miss my country, the hot weather during the day, and the cool during the night. Living in the middle of a war is very scary, especially if war is new to you. That is why I came here. I hope that someday there will be peace in Somalia.

I have worked very hard in high school to pass all my classes and to improve my English. I want to go to college because I know that a college education will give us all a chance for a better life.



Adam Mohamud

My name is Ali. I was born in Hargaysa, Somalia. I have a big family of 11 brothers and sisters. Altogether there are 44 people in my family. My parents took care of me. In my neighborhood there were Somali people. There were many trees. My family made *brees* (cheese) and raised goats.

I never went to school, but my father taught me Somali. I would play outside with my friend. We would play soccer.

When I was five years old, two men came to my house at 5:30 in the morning. They asked my mom, "Where is your husband?" My mother said, "He is not here." My grandfather came out and the men asked again for my father. My grandfather told them my father was not there. The men killed my grandfather. They were looking for money or gold.

My family ran away to Mogadishu for two years and lived with my uncles there. When the war came to Mogadishu, my family decided to run away to Kenya. It took four days to walk to Kenya and we had no food.

When we got to the refugee camp in Kenya, it was not good. We lived in the camp from late 1992 to early 2001. There was no good water or food in the camp. In my country I was eating meat, but when I came to Kenya I didn't eat any meat because we didn't have the money to buy it. In Kenya we could not work. The government was very corrupt and wouldn't allow Somali people any freedom. A brother sent us money to buy food.

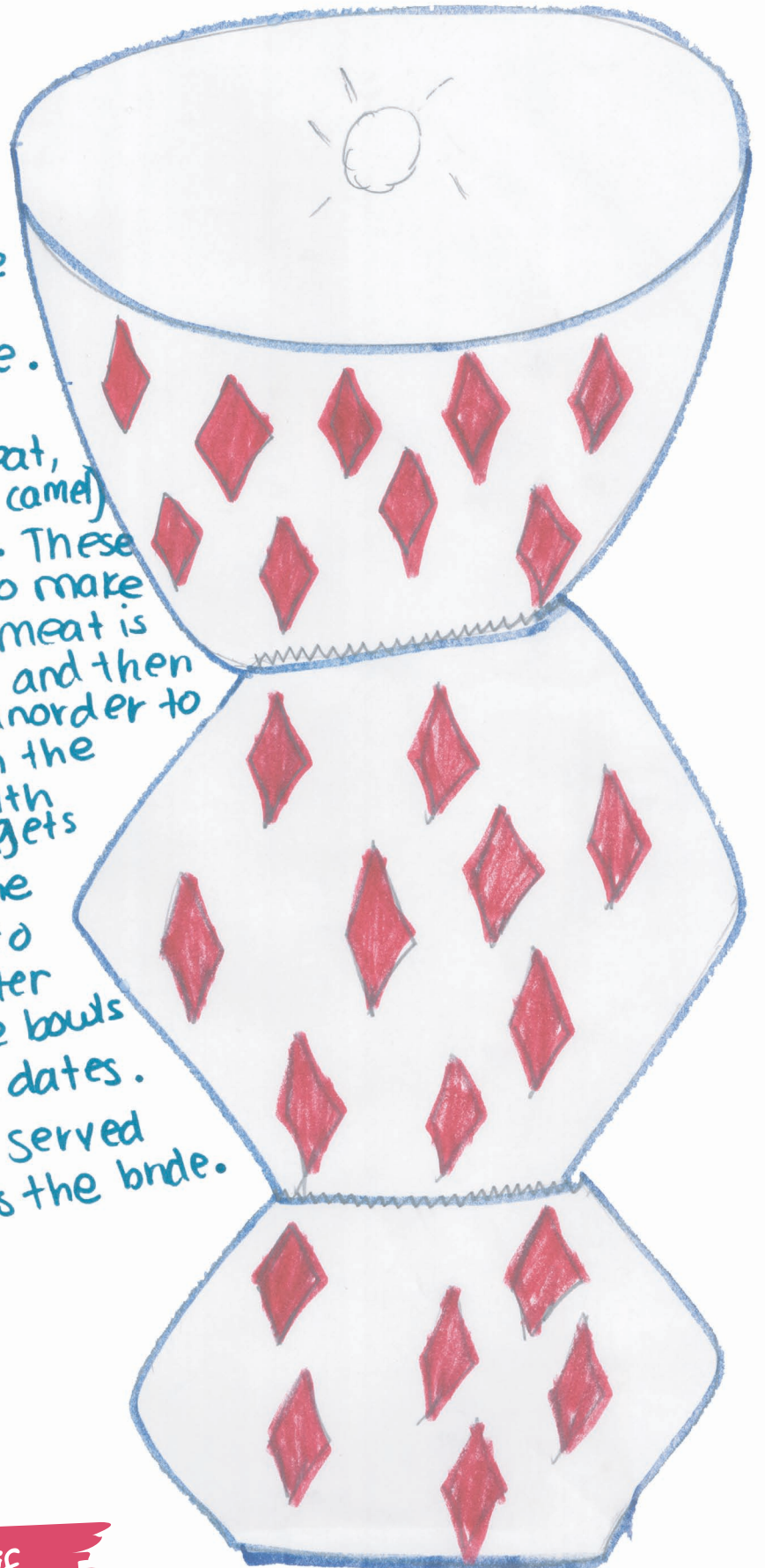
I heard about the United States. I heard that it was a nice place. I was happy to come here. My older brother, who already lived in the United States, sent our family money from 1992 until 2001 and sponsored our family to come to the United States. The only problem I have is the language.

Ali Abdi





This is called Heero. It is a gift from the bride's mother given to the bride before she leaves her mother's house. Heero is a three full bowls of meat, (mainly from cow or camel) butter and date. These are steps of how to make Heero. First, The meat is cutted into strips and then dried in the sun in order to preserve it. Then the meat is cooked with vegetable oil till gets brown. Next, the meat is poured into bowls and cow butter is added. Then the bowls are covered with dates. Then the meat is served when guest visits the bride.



In 1975, General Vang Pao flew out of the country of Laos. Later in 1977, the Vietnamese soldiers approached my grandma's village. The Vietnamese soldiers came and asked for the clan. My grandma got scared and the family headed for the jungle. The Hmong people saw the Vietnamese soldiers burn the rice and shoot the animals.

One of my grandma's uncles came back to the village to check on the animals. The Vietnamese soldiers saw him and shot him in his chest. He ran as fast as he could, but before he could make it, he was on the ground. His son came and dragged him into the jungle.

After that, the Vietnamese soldiers saw where my grandma was because of the footprints that the Hmong had made. Then the Vietnamese soldiers sent airplanes to bomb the Hmong. But they only bombed where a lot of trees grew and by the hillsides because they knew that the Hmong hid there. The Vietnamese soldiers also shot a big shell and it exploded. Pieces flew everywhere. When the shell exploded, one piece went into my grandma's head. One of her relatives was also with her. Both of them had bad luck because they both got hurt. Also, one of my grandma's relatives was carrying a baby on her back. So when the pieces flew, one killed her baby. When that shell exploded, smoke was everywhere, so my grandma's relatives and my grandma couldn't find each other. She was then lost for two whole weeks. When my grandma

found her relatives, flies had laid eggs all over her forehead. She and her husband thought that each other were dead. When she found him, he was hurt badly. When her relative saw them, her relative said that her baby was killed and she left it at the mountain.

The people who breathed the smoke all died. When the shell exploded, my grandma was carrying my mom on her back. My mom was six months old and she was dying. People died from that very instant. People were also asking about when the shell exploded. They asked, was the smoke white or was it black? They said if the smoke was black, go and find black medication for the people. If the smoke was white, then find white medication. So that night, my grandma and her family went to a village where the people had all run away. They went and slept inside the village for a place to stay that night. My grandma had no place to sleep because the place was too small. So she slept sitting. While she was sleeping, her grandma came from the spirit world and talked to her.

"Honey, just get the soot from the chimney for the baby. Just do what I say." My grandma woke up suddenly. She didn't say a word and went to get the soot. My grandma put that onto my mom's chest. The next morning, my mom was fine and didn't breathe like she used to before my grandma put that onto her chest. My grandma wasn't worried anymore about my mom, but a lot about her own head.

While my grandma was in the jungle, they dug yams to eat and dug some food from a bamboo tree to eat. When they dug for yams, they could only eat a handful because people had already dug up a lot of them.

My grandma and her family ran in the jungle for six months. One day, her head hurt so much and two pieces of the shell came out. They were as long as your pointing finger, but the width was as big as your pointing finger and your middle finger put together. My grandma was so glad.

My grandma and her family ran in the jungle for three years.



In the fourth year, Vietnamese soldiers started shooting again. Then the men wanted to leave the women and children and elders behind to the Vietnamese soldiers. So the men started heading towards the Mekong River and headed towards Thailand. My grandpa also left my grandma and her children behind. My mom and her siblings were crying and my grandma was worried about herself and her children.

Eventually, my grandma got taken by the Vietnamese soldiers to live in a village. She had to work for them there and wasn't free. More Vietnamese soldiers

came to the village and thought that the Hmong leader was helping the people who were hiding. So they started shooting the Hmong people. They then had to run back to the jungle and hide. They were hiding and running everywhere and my grandma saw one of her uncles. She decided to go with him. They went back to the village and the Vietnamese soldiers had put notes saying "Run anywhere and we'll find you."

So they got scared and decided to cross the Mekong River to be safe. On their way to the camps, my grandma's oldest daughter died of starvation be-

cause of the rain and cold and no food.

Once they were at the camps, my grandma found my grandpa. He had married another wife, but she lived with them anyway and they had a lot of arguments. The second wife didn't like my grandma. The second wife said that if he didn't get rid of her, she would divorce him. So my grandma decided to leave my grandpa.

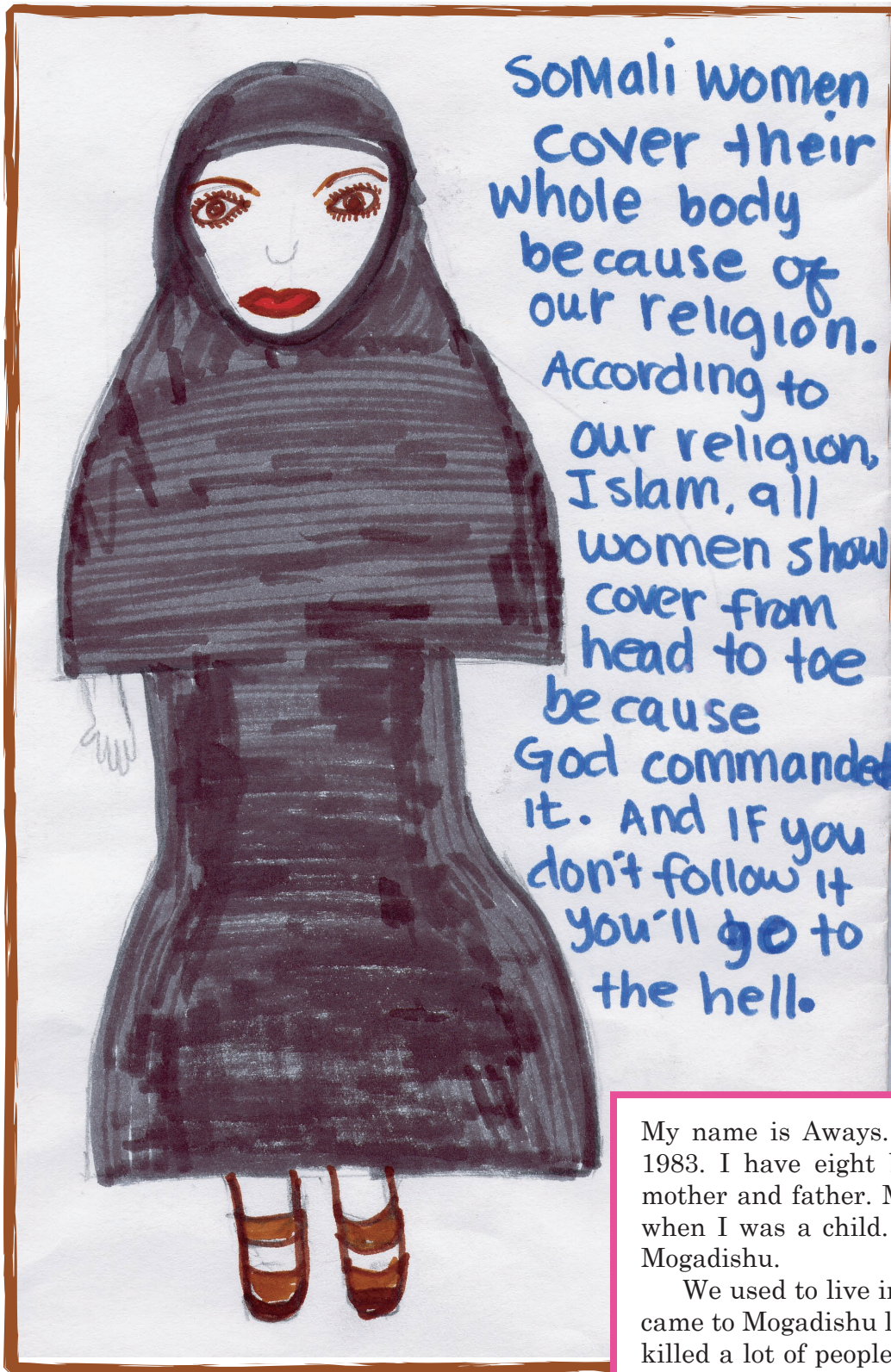
My grandma helped my mom and her siblings grow up in the camp. My aunt got married and after one year my mom got married. My dad didn't really like my grandma.

My mom and dad came to America first. Then a year later, my oldest aunt and her husband got the papers for my grandma and her uncle. My grandma was in California first, but now she lives here. When it rains, my grandma says her head hurts where those metal pieces were. If you feel her head, you can feel where the shell hit it.



Bibi Abdalla

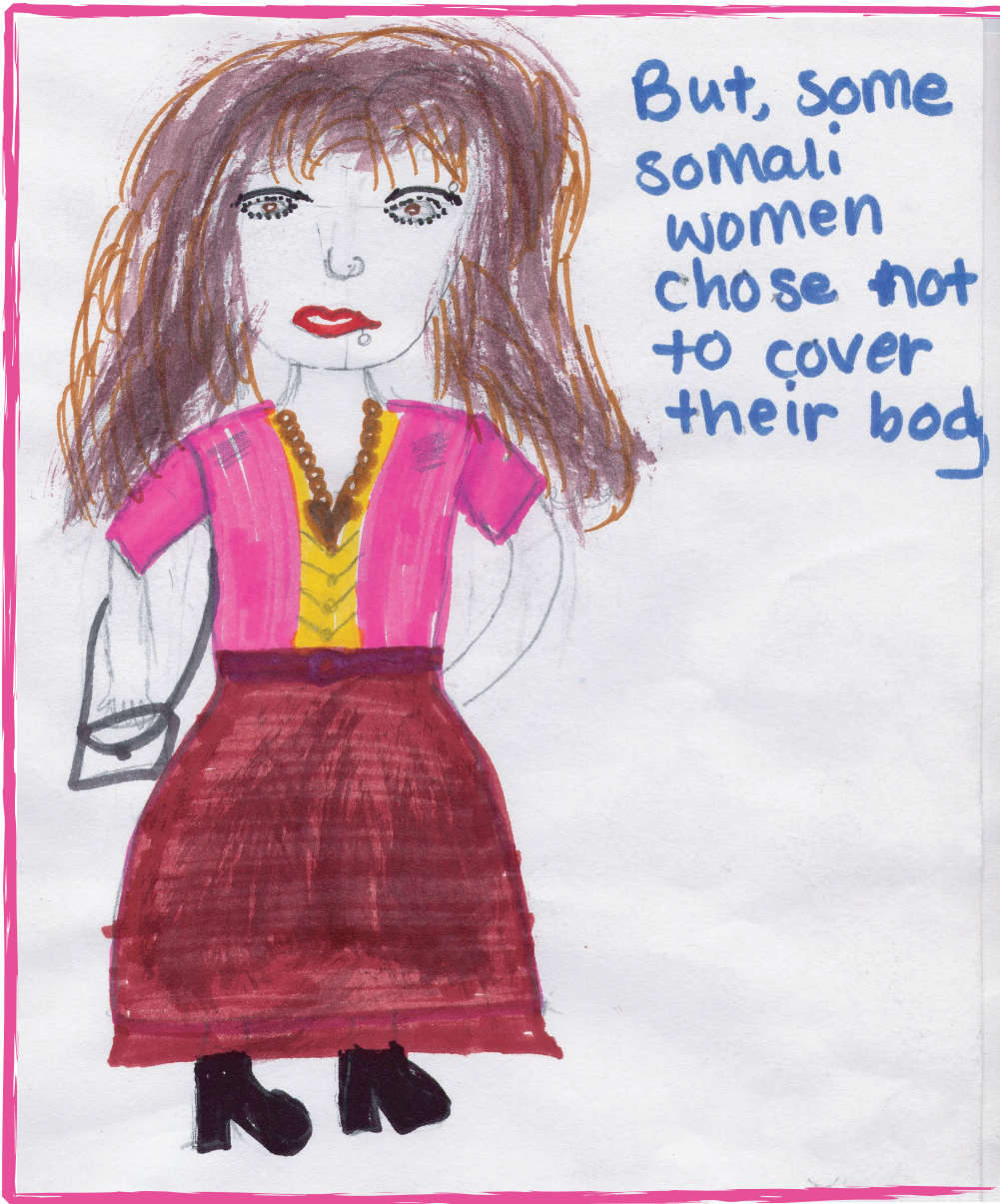
Mai Vañg



My name is Aways. I was born in Somalia in 1983. I have eight brothers and one sister, a mother and father. My parents took care of me when I was a child. I grew up in a city called Mogadishu.

We used to live in our home, but gangs who came to Mogadishu looted our home. The gangs killed a lot of people and looted their property. There was a civil war between two clans. During the war, a lot of people were evacuated from Mogadishu to other countries. Mogadishu was destroyed.

Somalia is a poor country. Right now no one can live in Mogadishu. Some people live there, but most of them are in gangs. They don't know right ways from wrong ways. They are indifferent about everything.



But, some  
somali  
women  
chose not  
to cover  
their body

Hodañ Abdirubad Khalif

The people were evacuated to Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and other countries. Life is not easy in those countries. The people of Kenya are nice, but the government is very bad. They don't like Somali refugees. During the day and night, police wander around districts where Somali people live. If they see you outside of the district, they will arrest you with handcuffs. If you give them money they won't put you in jail.

First they say, "Do you have any identification for staying in this country?" If you say, "I don't," they arrest you, handcuff you and lead you to a place no one can see you. They say, "Do you have money to get free?" If you have money, you are obliged to give it to them or they will put you in jail. Sometimes when they arrest you with the

handcuffs, without asking you for money, they search for money in your pockets. If they get it, they will let you free. If they don't, they put you in jail. After you are in jail for months, they will repatriate you to your country, whether it is bad or not. African countries are not good places to live for Somali refugees because the countries don't have good economies even for themselves.

I stayed in Kenya for three years, and then I came to the United States. America is a good country, and it has friendly, respectful people. I came to America with pleasure. I forgot all the bad things that happened to me when I was in Africa. I like the schools of America and want to be an educated person. I would like to keep living in America.

Always Naji

My name is Yusuf. I was born in Mogadishu, Somalia, in 1986. I have four sisters and eleven brothers, and both of my parents. When I was a child, my parents cared for me. We lived together in north Mogadishu. Our home consisted of nine rooms. We had a big farm. We grew bananas, mangoes, oranges, and corn in Afgoye. We had two trucks to take the fruit to the cities.

My grandmother, my uncle, and his wife lived in east Mogadishu. One day, my father went to visit them at their house. That night at 3:00 a.m., somebody knocked on the outside door, strongly. My uncle woke up and opened the door. Twenty men came in. My uncle said, "Hi. Can I help you?" They laughed and they looked at each other. They said, "We don't need your help." They hit my father, my uncle and his wife, and my grandmother. My grandmother said, "Take everything from our home. Please save our lives." They opened fire on all of them. My uncle and his wife, who was pregnant, and my grandmother all died. My father was bleeding from his shoulder and leg. The next morning, people from east Mogadishu came and told my family and I that they had all died, including my father. My brother, mother, and I all cried. We asked my mother, "Why? Why? We don't understand why people are killing. No one in our family is a government worker, we are farmers." My older brother says, "I need to see them, if they are really dead." My mother says, "No, no, don't go there, they will kill you."

The next day the same people who killed my grandmother, uncle, and aunt came to my village. They stopped in front of our next door neighbor's house. I was playing in our yard outside. I saw the militia open our neighbor's door and open fire. Our neighbors all died, including their six children. For the next few days my mother and my brother told me that I walked around with my eyes open, but not seeing anything.

We ran to a village that had government. We stayed there for five days. Every single day there were more and more people coming to that village. All day and all night we heard the noise from many kinds of guns firing and bombs. Dark smoke filled the sky. We couldn't sleep or eat, or do anything, we were so frightened. My family left then for Afgoye. That city is close to Mogadishu. We stayed there many days because in that city we found peace.

One morning we opened the door and we saw a lot of people standing in groups. They said the president of Somalia had left Mogadishu. Some people were happy, some people were sad. In a few days,

the militia of Mogadishu killed many people and trashed the city. Then the militia came to Afgoye. Many people who came from Mogadishu were in Afgoye for the peace. The militia started to kill people in Afgoye. My family ran from that city. We went to a country farmhouse. We ran from morning until about 6:00 p.m. We had borrowed a big truck. We slept one night in the truck. When we woke up, the militia was standing all around us. They took our truck. They took the cow from the farmers and everything else they could take. When there was nothing else to take, they killed.

We took a tractor, with food, to another village. The militia stopped the trailer and asked if we were from a certain village. The militia slapped people if they didn't hear the answer they wanted to hear. They took all the food and silverware. We walked then, and saw many women and children dead on the road. We stopped in many cities but came back to Mogadishu. We stayed for a few days, but everything was destroyed—cars, buildings. My mom had some gold and jewelry and paid much money to buy passports. Many militiamen would stop us and say, "That is an old passport, you need a new one."

Many families were left to walk because there was no more money. We decided to go to Ethiopia, but there was no water, many had no shoes, and there were so many little children crossing the desert. Children cried for water. Once a big truck stopped. They gave us water and sugar but no food. No one helped us. There were so many people going to Ethiopia that I got lost from my mother. I was only four or five, but I just followed all the people. That night I found my brother and mother at the border. We stayed for a few months on the border of Somalia.



Mai Vaing



My sister in Djibouti helped us come to Kenya. My mother and the younger children stayed in Ethiopia.

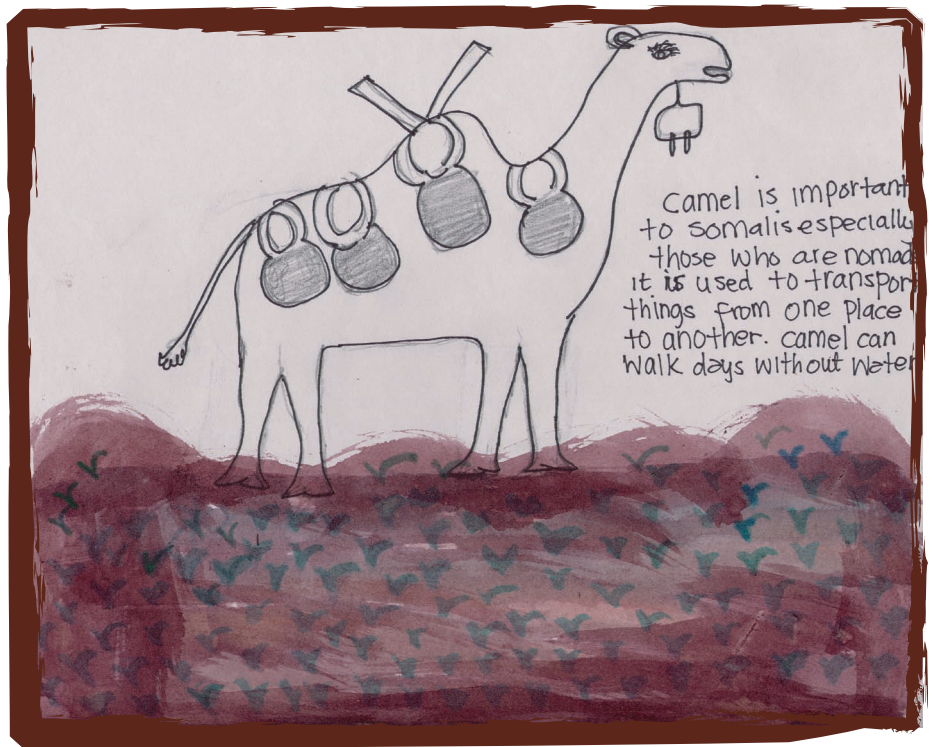
In 1996, we found that my father was still alive. After he had been shot, he ran to Kenya. He sent a letter to the BBC. I lived in Nairobi with my father in an apartment for three and a half years. The people are good in Kenya, but the government is bad. It was always asking for money.

My older brothers and sisters, who were over 21 years old, were too old to come to America. My father sponsored his younger children, plus five others. The INS said they had reason to come to America based on their interview.

On August 28, 2000, I left the airport in Kenya and took a plane to Holland. I was so afraid. My mother and four children were in Ethiopia; three brothers and one sister were in Kenya. My father, two sisters, three brothers, and I were coming to America. I was separated from my family and I knew nothing about the United States.

I hope to someday have a job so that I can help my family. They have no jobs in Kenya and Ethiopia. The people in Somalia still have many problems.

Yusef Hirsey



I'm Ayan Ali. I'm from Somalia. I grew up in Mogadishu. Where I grew up was very wonderful. I will go back to my country when I finish my education. I decided that. I will see where I grew up when I go back to my country.

I remember when I was in my country. That was the beginning of the civil war in my country. It was in 1990 on a Sunday. I was going to school, and I heard Boom! Boom! I was afraid because I had never heard that before, so I went back home. I was crying so my mom said "What happened, Ayan?" I said "Mother, I hear fighting downtown." After a few minutes, we saw some people who were crying. We saw that people were injured. Their blood was on the street. When I saw them, I fell down. I was too sad. I don't like remembering that time. We decided to move to another country.

We moved to Kenya. We lived there for five years, but we weren't citizens of Kenya. That was a problem for us because we didn't have power in that country. The police always asked the non-citizens questions. Then my mom called my uncle. He lived in Australia. When she told him the problem we had, he said he wanted to sponsor us in Australia. We waited two years, but they didn't accept us. My uncle fought for us. The immigration office in Australia told him he could pay a lot of money, but my uncle didn't have a good job. He was a refugee. My uncle called my mom and said he was sorry about that. He paid bills for us.

My mother called my sister, who lived in the U.S.A. She told her that we had problems in Ke-

nya. My sister said she couldn't be a sponsor because the United States was not allowing sponsorships. She said, "I will send for you when I can sponsor you." We waited from 1995 to 2000. We lived in Kenya for five years, and then my sister sponsored us.

People at the immigration office in Kenya sent us a letter saying we were to be interviewed. At that time the sponsor process began. We went in the morning. They asked us our names and birthdays. They asked us, "How did you find your sister?" We had a letter sent to us. We gave it to them. We did everything they needed. Then we passed. The immigration process for the United States ended in six months.

Six months later we went on an airplane. That trip was nice because my family and I were together. On the day we were to go to the airport, we woke up early because we didn't sleep well. Our cousins visited us. I was afraid of the long trip. I had never been on such a long trip. The trip didn't have problems. First we flew to New York at night. We slept in a hotel in New York. Then we got on an airplane and came to Minnesota. When we came here, we lived with our sisters. Then we filled out forms for Social Security and the I-94. I got a job and started at the LEAP school. Now I study still at LEAP.



My name is Gabriel. I was born in a small village called Duk in the southern part of Sudan, in the upper Nile region. I was born on January 1, 1985. I grew up and lived part of my life in the countryside with my parents and relatives. I didn't know that some time in the future I would be away from my surroundings and the beauty of my neighborhood. Surprisingly, it happened. I had really lived a very peaceful life with my neighbors. I could sometimes sleep at any of my neighbors' houses and have time for playing with kids my age.

One bad thing about my home was the lack of school facilities, yet we were taught under the trees, and there I would learn ABCD, 123, and a few English words, like "food," "cat," and "dog."

My dad was a farmer and my mom was a housewife. My sisters used to help my mom around the kitchen, collecting firewood. My brothers and I helped our dad take care of the cattle.

Oh, it was really exciting when I used to play with my friends. We used to swim, play with calves, and play soccer. My parents would tell us stories at night.

It was in the middle of the night that our house was attacked. I fled by myself, following others who were running away trying to save their lives. I managed to keep my heart strong and maintain a will of survival, and God was always with me. I was always lucky to find food and water from that night. I never again met anyone from my family during those days of my darkness.

I fled to Ethiopia and lived there for four years. I went back to Sudan in 1991, and then left for Kenya as a refugee in 1992. I lived in Kenya for nine years.

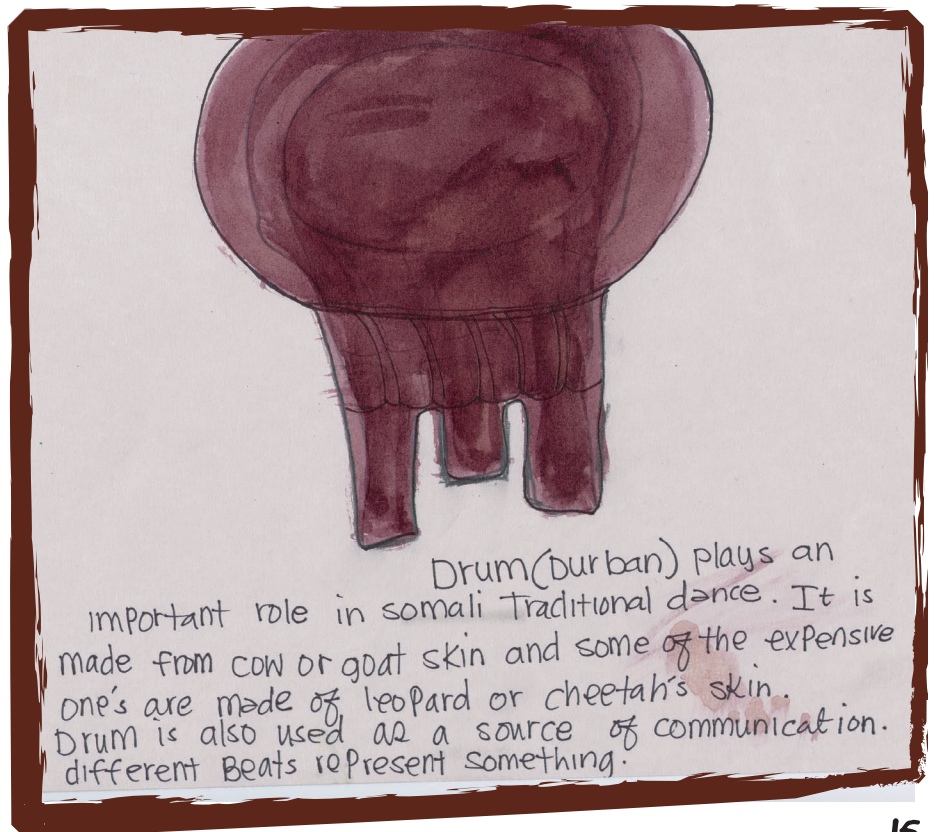
In 1998 the U.S. Embassy started to arrange the process of resettlement for all the orphans who had fled by themselves. I filled out a form and my case was approved by the INS. I was unwilling to leave without seeing any of my siblings for a last time. I brought nothing with me to the United States, but only the courage to survive under any conditions, as I had done before in Africa.

The things that affect me here are how hard it is to make friends, the snow, and how I wasn't lucky enough to meet my family. I used to pray that one day I would be together with them.

Always hoping to be home,  
Gabriel

Gabriel Deñg Majak

Hodañ Abdibudal Khalif





Sagal Haji

When I was in Somalia, I used to go to two schools on the weekdays; one was a Somali school and the other one was an Arabic school. On the weekends, I used to go to *madrassa*. *Madrassa* is a place to study the Muslim religion. I used to go to the Somali school in the morning and Arabic school in the evening.

One evening when we were all in Arabic class we heard “Boom! Boom!” Fighting had started and everyone ran into the field. I ran so fast and after a few minutes I reached home and no one was there. I sat and started crying. Guess if that is true. That wasn’t true! Everyone was there, and I joined them. We started running into trucks we had and moved from city to city. After running for two months and fifteen days, we reached Kenya.

They welcomed us, but we didn’t have homes there. We started building wood houses with no doors. We didn’t sleep the first nights because we were scared of the hyenas and lions. The snakes and reptiles were biting the people. My mother was bitten by a kind of reptile, but she didn’t see it. My mother tried to figure out a way to get out of there. She wanted to go to a peaceful place that would let her family come with her. My mother decided to come to the U.S. It took a long time. She came here in 1997 and started working out a way to get us here with her, and she did it. We also couldn’t wait to be with her. We worked hard to come here. We went to the immigration office every morning at 5 a.m. and came back home at 5 p.m.

The war in Somalia made us go through a lot. We were scared for years and years. We went into strange countries and worked hard to start our lives again.

Suhaam Mohamed

Four years ago, when I was a student in Oromia, I had many plans to go to Kenya. I didn’t have enough money to take an airplane. I went to Nairobi, Kenya, by bus. It was 1,000 kilometers from the capital city of Oromia, Finfinne, to Nairobi.

I lived in Kenya with many refugees from different countries. Most of the refugees were from East African countries like Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, and Oromia. I lived there for two years and one month.

For a couple of months, I was in a refugee camp called Kakuma with thousands of different refugees from different countries. Most of the refugees were from East African countries like Somalia, Oromia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Tanzania.

In August 1998 my family asked my brother-in-law to sponsor me to come to the United States. His name is Abdi, and he is married to my sister. When my family asked him to help me to come to the United States, he said “OK.” He sent me some money and sponsored me. The process took a long time. We arrived in the United States of America in September of 2000.

I was so happy to get a chance to come to the United States. Mr. Abdi is a nice person. When we were in Kenya, we had some problems with money. After my family talked to him, I didn’t have any problems because he helped me with money and called me on the phone. Abdi is an important person in my immigration story. He was trying to help me with all my problems.

When I came to the United States, I brought him a gift. It was something that had the Oromo flag on it and it was a beautiful thing, and handmade. Also, it described the Oromian culture. He liked it and said, “Thanks a lot for bringing me a gift from Africa.” His wife also liked it and said, “It is a good thing that I have never seen before.” She is a nice person as is her husband, Abdi. They rented a two-bedroom apartment for all of us.

My brother-in-law sponsored me to come to the United States of America in 1999. The process took a long time, and I came to the United States of America in September 2000 with my dad and some of my brothers. We all thank Mr. Abdi who sponsored us to come to America.

Safi Ayub



I am going to talk about my immigration story. There are many kinds of immigration. Some kinds of immigrants come to visit and stay longer. For myself, I received permission from the Laotian government to come and stay in the United States. First, I got permission from the Laotian government. Second, I took a plane to come to the United States. Third, I felt so cold and I also felt happy when I first came to Minnesota.

First, I got permission from the Laotian government. I waited for my permission for six months. Before I got my permission, I filled out forms and sent them to the Laotian government. They checked everything to see if I had enough reason to come to the United States. After I got my permission, I felt I would miss my family, friends, cousins, school, and teachers. I changed my mind for a few days. I didn't want to come to the United States because I didn't want to leave them. My brother Bli and I had a conversation. He asked me, "Don't you think you are going to spend your life with them for the rest of your life?" I answered, "No, I am not." He asked me again, "Are you sure?" I said, "Yes, I am sure." I didn't change my mind after we had that conversation. I thought about my new life and my new school in the United States.

I took a plane to come to the United States. Before I came to the airport, I met some Hmong friends. They were coming to visit their cousins in my city. I knew them for one week before we went to the airport. We went to the airport together. My family, friends, cousins and I talked for a long time. They said they were going to miss me. I felt so sad and I cried so hard.

Finally, it was time for me to leave them and say goodbye. After I said goodbye to all of them, I talked to my new friends. They told me about their life in the United States and it made me feel a little bit better.

We left Laos on Monday, March 18, 2002, at 4:00 p.m. We took one hour to arrive in Thailand. We arrived in Thailand at 6:00 p.m. We slept a night in a Thai hotel. We left Thailand on Tuesday, March 19, 2002, at 6:00 a.m. We arrived in Japan on Tuesday, March 19, 2002, at 1:30 p.m. We stopped in Japan for one hour and then we continued to stay on the plane until we arrived in Minnesota. We arrived in Minnesota on Tuesday, March 19, 2002, at 1:15 a.m. I stayed on the plane for 17 hours and 45 minutes.

I felt so cold and I also felt happy when I first came to Minnesota. I felt so cold because when I lived in my country, I never saw snow. In the winter it is not very cold in Laos. I used to live in a warm place and that is why I felt so cold when I arrived in Minnesota. I felt happy because it was the first time I saw my oldest brother and sister-in-law. It was the first time I tasted American food. It was the first time I saw many different things that they had on the street such as stop signs. I first went shopping with many people in big stores and malls.

Overall, I think my immigration so far is good. I didn't wait for my permission for a long time. I took a plane with my new friends and enjoyed them on my trip. I felt so cold when I first arrived in Minnesota, but now I am used to living in the cold weather, and it is not a problem. I also felt happy when I saw a new country.

Mai Yang



My immigration story is about coming to the U.S.A. First we moved from Afghanistan to Pakistan, because there was war in my country. Another reason was my uncle wanted to sponsor us. So, we moved to Pakistan. We lived there until about 1995. Then, he sponsored us. In the Islamabad airport we left on a Pakistani plane. The plane stopped in Manchester, England. Then the plane changed. From the Manchester airport, we took a U.S. plane. We stayed in planes for 28 hours. The plane landed in the New York airport. Then we arrived in Minnesota by plane.

When we came to the U.S., we were excited. We didn't have culture shock. I was scared when the plane flew. We came to the U.S. in 1999 on the 27th of July. My grandmother, uncle, aunts and cousins came to visit us in the airport. When we saw them, we cried because we hadn't seen them for a long time. So my uncles helped us to bring our suitcases home. In the airport, my uncle and my aunts took pictures of us. We stayed in my uncle's home until he found a place for us.

Soon, my uncle found a place for us to live. For the first time in the U.S., we saw many different cultures, religions, and customs. The people come from around the world. They left their countries because of many reasons like war, politics, and refugee camps.

Here women can go to college. They can do business; they can vote in elections for president. In the U.S., many women are pilots, scientists, politicians.

We came to the U.S. because my uncle, aunts, grandmother and my cousins live here, and because we missed them. We came here for a better life, for education and freedom. Now we have lived in Minnesota for three and a half years. There is freedom of religion. There are good laws and discipline. The police and the security guards keep order in the city. The people cannot commit crimes. If they commit crimes, they go to jail. Also, women can live alone. They aren't scared of criminal people. If bad things happen, they can call the police.

Shahnaaz Sultani

I would like to tell you about my immigration story. There are many different kinds of immigrants—some come to visit and some stay longer. Some of them have permission to come from Laos, for example. I had permission from the Laotian government to come and stay in the United States. In the following paper, I will talk about my immigration story. I will talk about waiting to come, how I felt in the airplane, and my arrival in the United States.

I went to the immigration office to wait for my visa to come to the United States. It took time for me because to go from my house to the immigration office by car took me one and a half hours. When I went to the office many people were there already. I had to wait for all of them to go first, and then I could go. It took so long that I had to go back the next day. After I got my visa, then my husband was going to pick me up in the United States.

When I was on the plane, I was scared. When the plane flew up in the sky, it made me very scared. I thought about what I could do if my plane had an accident. I said to myself that if the plane crashed down to the ocean, I could swim out of the plane. But, if the plane crashed down to land, what could I do? I thought that I couldn't get out anymore. If I thought a lot, it would make me scared and I would cry. When the plane came

over to the United States, I was happy.

When I arrived in the United States, I was very shy. I looked at other people who were so different than people who lived in my country. But now I am not shy with everybody because I have learned about other people who live here. When I came to the United States, my husband gave me money to go shopping with my aunt. They took me shopping all day, but I didn't know how to spend my money. Then I brought my money back home because I didn't like many of the clothes.

I learned everything in the past. I remember how I went to the immigration office to wait for my visa, how I felt on the airplane, and my arrival in the United States. I understand about many people who lived in my country. They wanted to come to the United States but the immigration office was too busy. I heard some people talk about an airplane crashing and a lot of people died. It made me scared to go on an airplane. When I arrived in the United States, I didn't have a good memory. I didn't know how to spend money. But now I have a good memory that is better than before I came here. I remember everything in the past, and I felt very sorry for myself.

May Dia Voe

Because of the war, thousands of Cambodians have fled their own country to the United States. In the new country, we are alike. We learn many things to adapt to American culture. It is difficult for people who come here as adults.

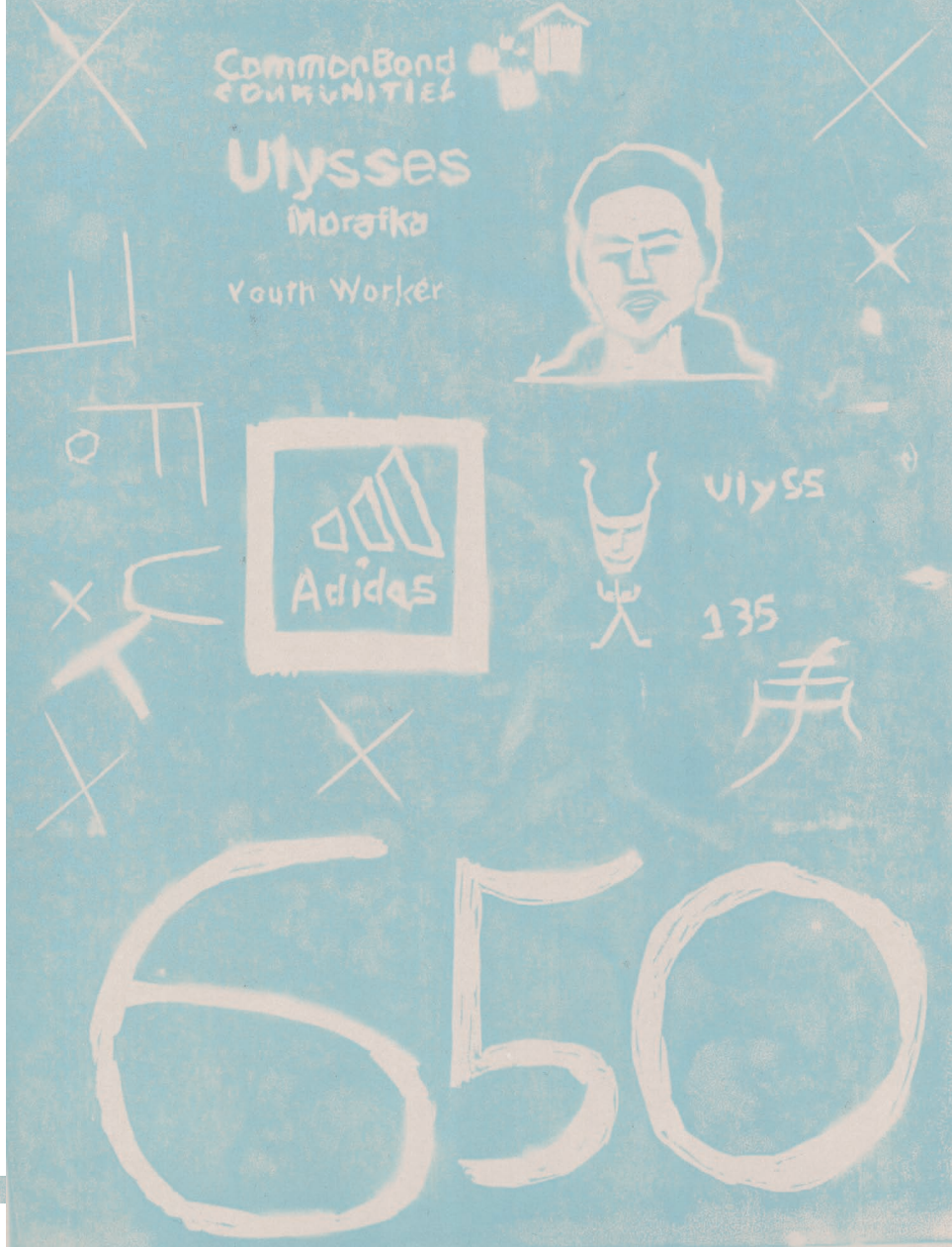
In the following paper, I'd like to write about civil war, politics, waiting, and my feelings. These are my experiences in coming to the United States.

On November 25th, 1999, I arrived in Minnesota, a state of the United States. It was the date that my mother sponsored me to be in this country.

Cambodia has been in civil war for almost three decades.

From 1975 to 1979, over three million Cambodian people were killed by the Khmer Rouge. Those Cambodians killed Cambodians. After that regime fell, many Cambodians fled their country to almost everywhere in the world to start their new lives. Many went to the United States. Among all of those people, my family also fled here because of the civil war.

On July 27th, 1999, I went to the American Embassy in Cambodia for my interview. I was so nervous because I had never been there before. That was my first time. I couldn't sit well as I waited for my turn to be interviewed.



Ulysses Morafka

After many hours, I heard my name called by an American woman. I stood outside of a window of the office opposite the woman who sat inside. There was a man who stood next to her and he was her translator. She asked me why I wanted to come to the United States and that man translated for me into Cambodian. I told them, "Because my mother lives in the United States." They asked me many questions about the relationship between my mother and I showed them my family pictures and some documents to prove this was my family.

They continued asking me why my mother fled her country

for the United States, and I told them I didn't know very much about her because she rarely lived with us like other parents. I told them I just knew that she worked for a political party, and she traveled back and forth between two countries, Cambodia and Thailand. By 1994, she disappeared from Cambodia and I didn't hear from her for almost two years. In late 1996, I was so happy because I heard the good news from my mother that she had been in the United States. At about 5:00 pm, my interview was finished.

On August 8, 1991, I got my visa approval. I was so pleased that I would see my beloved

mother again after being separated for almost five years. After that, they sent me to have a physical exam and urine test, and I passed those tests.

As I described above, because of the war my family was broken apart in two different countries. I wish Cambodia would be in peace someday and my family could have a chance to go back and live together there forever.

Sopheha Chhim

I am going to talk about my immigration story. My story is different than that of other immigrants because I am from Somalia. Somalia had a bad civil war. Many people died and were wounded. When the civil war happened, Somalia had many thieves that it didn't have before. The thieves looted the civilians' houses. The civilians became homeless, and they decided to move to another country where they could get peace.

My father and I moved to Nairobi. My uncle had many restaurants in Nairobi. My uncle gave one restaurant to my dad. My immigration story talks about getting my visa, my trip to the United States, and my arrival in the United States.

I was in Nairobi for almost twelve years, but I wasn't waiting for a visa. My family was in Somalia, but my father and I were in Nairobi. I wanted to come to the United States, so I tried to get to know a guy who was going to the United States. The guy that I met was called "Liban." He was a nice guy, although he wasn't handsome. I didn't like him, but I wanted to come to the United States. I didn't care about how he looked, but I cared about my family's life.

Liban and I got engaged. His mother wasn't happy about her son getting married because she thought I was a poor girl. In the year 2000, Liban came to the United States. He lived with his mom, and his mom tried to make us separate.

She said to her son, "How can you marry a poor girl?" Liban didn't care what his mother said, but he cared about me. Liban sent me a visa, and he said, "I need my wife." I didn't want to be his real wife, but I wanted to come to the United States. I wanted to send money to my family. That was the reason I was with him.

The immigration office allowed me to come to the United States. My flight was January 15,

2003. It was a nice trip. There were many people, but I was the only person who had a visa. All the other people were sponsored. My plane arrived at 12:00 p.m. All my friends were crying when I got on the plane. They said to me, "Don't forget us when you go to the United States." I said, "I won't forget you."

When I got on the plane, I sat in the first chair of the plane. A young

lady said to me, "You aren't supposed to sit here." I couldn't speak English, so I didn't understand what she was saying. Another lady who was Somali said to me, "You can't sit here, you need to sit back."

When I sat back, another lady who was a stewardess said to me, "What do you want to eat and drink?" I didn't answer her because I didn't understand what she asked me. She thought I could eat whatever she had. So she gave me rice with pork, and I didn't know what pork looked like. I took my plate, and I wanted to eat it. But another lady





said to me, “Are you Muslim?” I said, “Yes.” She didn’t ask me another question, but she took my plate and said, “Don’t eat this kind of food.” She called the stewardess, and she said, “This lady is Muslim, so she can’t eat this food. Can you change it for her?” I didn’t know why she took my plate, so I asked her why she changed my plate. I asked her, “Why did you take my plate?” She said to me, “I am a Muslim, and I know what you can eat and what you can’t eat.”

My trip was fun. When I got off the plane, I saw a huge and beautiful airport. It was the most beautiful airport that I had ever seen. I really would have liked to stay in the airport forever because of its beauty.

I came to Minnesota on January 16, 2003. It was wintertime when I came to Minnesota. At that time, Minnesota had a lot of snow. When I saw the trees and the earth, I was surprised. The trees looked dormant. I said to my cousin, “Is this the United States?” I thought all the states had the same weather.

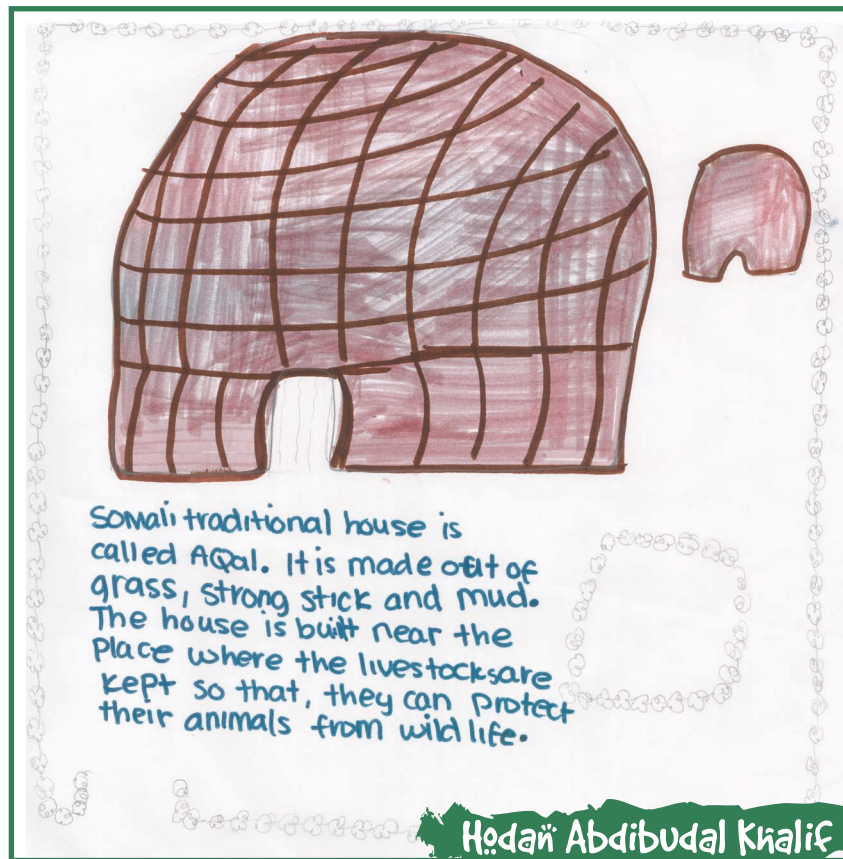
The reason I came to Minnesota was for a job and education. I could work in Somali malls or restaurants, but in other states I couldn’t because there were not many Somalians who lived there. I also came to Minnesota to be an educated girl. My

mission was to be a doctor. I came to the LEAP School on February 6, 2003. It was a nice school, although it was only a school for immigrants. The teachers were nice, but the students weren’t nice. They didn’t like to help me because I couldn’t express myself. On the first day, I put my jacket on

the second floor. When I wanted to go home, I couldn’t take my jacket because I didn’t know what floor I had put it on. I spent a lot of time finding my jacket. Finally, I found it, but I missed my bus. I couldn’t take a city bus, so I called my cousin and he gave me a ride.

In conclusion, I talked about my immigration. It was easy to get the visa. It didn’t take me a long time to wait for my visa. My trip was interesting because I saw many nice

people that I hadn’t seen before. Minnesota wasn’t good because it was too cold. In my country it wasn’t cold like Minnesota. I hope the people who want to come to Minnesota don’t come in the wintertime because they will be shocked when they see the snow. I will get a better education in the United States. I like the LEAP school and the students. Do you like my immigration story?



**Hodañ Abdibudal Khalif**

**Fardowsa Said**



**Ikrañ Haji**

In this story, I will talk about how I got my visa, when I was on the plane, and how I felt when I arrived here. I think people immigrate for jobs and for a better life. I immigrated to study and to be with my dad. My immigration story started on March 4, 2002. It happened in Juarez, Mexico, in a dangerous city, and I was with my stepmother, my dad, and my two sisters.

My sisters—Erika and Doris—and I left our city, Puerto Vallarta Jalisco. My dad and my stepmom were with us when we flew on the plane. We stayed in Juarez, Mexico to get our visa. We went outside of the hotel to go shopping. When we went to get some papers we needed, I saw many people trying to get some documents. I thought that some of them wanted to have a better life. I asked my dad when we would go home, but he told me, “We need to stay five more days to be in the meeting on March 8.”

When we got the visa, we went to El Paso, Texas. We stayed there for two days. I was desperate because I wanted to be in Minnesota. My dad wanted to see a little bit of El Paso, Texas, so we went to look at the center of town and also we went out to eat. The food was good. We stayed in a hotel there. In the night, I called my mom and I felt better.

On March 10, we had a flight to go to St. Paul, Minnesota. My dad wanted to live here because my stepmom has been living here for a long time. Also, she has her family here. My sisters and I were nervous and we felt weird because we didn’t know anybody and also we didn’t know the language. When the plane arrived, my two sisters and I were happy,

but we were still nervous, a little tired, and hungry. Doris, Erika and I felt cold when we went outside of the airport. The weather was too cold and my sisters and I were freezing. My dad and my stepmom were very excited because they could get the visa and my stepmom’s family was surprised.

Then three days later, my sisters and I started school. The name of my school is LEAP School. The first time I came to LEAP School, I was very nervous and confused. It had a small number of students, but the teachers were so nice to all the students. I met two girls and we went to lunch together. My sisters were studying at another school, called Highland Park. My dad was applying for residency. Lori, my stepmom, was helping my dad and us, too. So everybody was doing something. Two days later my dad got residency for us. Also we waited for citizenship for about two or three months and we got it.

This is my immigration story and also it is my sisters’ story, too. Today, my two sisters are living in San Jose, California, with my mom, my little stepsister, my two little brothers and my stepfather. It was very difficult but it was fine, too. So today, we are here in St. Paul, Minnesota, and always we are going to remember that time we got the documents. In this moment, I feel great and I feel happy, too, because I am here studying to be something in the future.

Viridiaña Ayón

There were many different immigration papers that I had to fill out or send to the United States. First, I had to fill out a form to get my passport as soon as possible. After I got my passport, I could go to my first interview with the U.S. Consulate in the U.S. Embassy. If I passed my first interview, I could go to check up on my health to see if I had any kinds of diseases. Finally, if my health was good, I could go back for my final interview and wait for my visa. In this story, I am going to write about how I got to the airport, how I got from Thailand to Tokyo, and how I got from Tokyo to the United States.

First when I got my visa, I went to buy my plane ticket and organize all my baggage to check it in at the airport. When I got to the airport, I took my passport and visa to the Laotian customs to check to make sure that I didn't have anything that wasn't allowed. At the airport, I felt sad and also excited. The reason I felt sad was because I missed my whole family so much, and I didn't know when I would come to see them again. Also, the reason that I felt excited was because I got a chance to fly in an airplane for my first time. This was my first airplane ride to Thailand.

When I got to Bangkok, I stayed in the airport one night until I had a departure to Tokyo. During the night in the airport, I went out to Chang Mai in Thailand to shop. It took about six hours to go shopping. After that, I went back to the airport

and it was around 6:00 in the morning. Finally, I took all my items to check out of Thai customs and was ready to get into the airplane to fly to Tokyo. While the airplane was in the air, I fell asleep because I didn't have enough time to sleep before. I wanted to sleep, but I kept my eyes open to watch the beautiful raindrops outside the window. This was my second flight to Tokyo.

When I got to Tokyo, I spent about forty minutes walking to the airport lounge. After the airplane refueled, I could go back into the airplane and fly to the United States. While the airplane was in the air, I was sleeping until I got to the United States. When I got to the airport, American customs checked out my visa and passport. After that, I could go check out my baggage. I got out at the door and I called my parents-in-law to pick me up at the airport. Finally, I was so happy to get to the United States and ride in a car. This was when I arrived in the U.S.

I told you about my immigration papers, and it was very complicated. I took three flights in an airplane to get to the United States. I had to check out my passport and visa so many times until I got to the U.S. I hope you can understand how difficult my immigration to the U.S. was.

Mai Xee Xiong



Ikrañ Haji



Liban Adam

Moving to the U.S.A. was one of the best decisions my dad made. I never thought or believed for a second my life would be like this. I have seen and learned a lot since I left my country. Life in America is nothing like I thought. It is so different than what I expected.

There is a lucky game called the diversity visa lottery. You have to fill out a form in order to win a visa given out by the U.S.A. government. This enables an immigrant to have a chance of permanent residence in America. My dad won the lottery, and I came with him. First, we filled out the form and sent it to the U.S.A. Then, we waited for one year.

After a year, the U.S. government sent us a letter notifying us that we had won the lottery. After that we had to begin preparing for our trip. We went to the INS and got our passports. Then we went to the American embassy in Ethiopia.

We took an HIV test and got a physical checkup. We waited for three weeks to get the results. We got a clean bill of health.

Lastly, after we had done every checkup, we went to the American embassy for the interview. It was very scary because we thought we might not pass the interview. After we waited for two hours, they called my dad and me. We went to the window where the lady that interviewed us stood. She said “congratulations” to me and I called my dad and told him we won. We were very delighted because we got our visa to go to the U.S.A.

I thank God for what He did for my family and me. He helped me to win the lottery, get the paper that shows I am free from any kind of disease such as HIV/AIDS or yellow fever, to pass the interview, and to get the visa to come here.

Rahale Desta

## Resources for Teachers

Understanding the experiences of refugee youth can help you build a supportive environment leading to academic success.

*Estimated numbers of child victims of armed conflict in the past decade* (Source: UNICEF, 1996)

- Killed: 2 million children
- Disabled: 4–5 million children
- Left homeless: 12 million children
- Orphaned or separated from their families: 12 million children
- Psychologically traumatized: 10 million children

Today, there are an estimated 15 million externally displaced refugees (2002, World Refugee Survey).

*Who is coming to Minnesota?*

According to the Minnesota Department of Human Services, approximately 13,300 refugees have been resettled in Minnesota over the last five years, from about 30 different countries of origin.

- Just over 2 percent of the total admitted to the U.S. are resettled in Minnesota.
- Current estimates of refugees in Minnesota: more than 50,000.
- Most refugees resettled in Minnesota in the last several decades have been Southeast Asian, but the population has recently become more diverse with people immigrating from countries in strife such as Bosnia, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Liberia, Iraq, and the former Soviet Union.

*What is a refugee?*

A refugee is a person who, “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

*Losses experienced by refugees*

- family, extended family, friends
- economic and/or social status
- culture (including language)
- possessions, home, family land
- community support system
- geography, climate of home
- social, cultural and political structures
- health
- faith and spiritual beliefs/practices
- shared traditional values
- familiarity, stability and control
- trust

*Stresses on the family in the U.S.*

- bad news and/or continuing conflict in home country
- discrimination: racial, ethnic, religious
- housing in high-crime areas
- economic stress
- conflict: marital, generational, family, community
- role reversal and ambiguity of new roles

- multiple barriers: language, services, transportation
- survivor’s guilt
- psychological and physical effects of trauma

*Trauma reactions; students may*

- be easily startled by common noise and movement
- struggle with sustaining attention
- have difficulty retaining new information
- experience recurrent memories of traumatic experiences
- display a great deal of anxiety or be easily agitated
- suffer sleep problems (nightmares, irregular sleep)
- have body aches/pains or other physical problems
- display strong emotions (anger, sadness) that are easily provoked and hard to control
- show a marked lack of emotion, or feel empty inside
- feel alone, with a sense that no one cares
- be fearful, particularly when facing new and unfamiliar situations
- show heightened sensitivity to issues of fairness
- have an exaggerated fear of discipline, such as time-out or “detention,” because it elicits memories of past imprisonment and/or torture

*Examine your expectations of refugee students*

- Many have not had previous educational experience.
- There are often differences in contextual variables: time, class structure, expectations.
- What it means to be a “good” student differs in many cultures.

*Dealing with disclosure of traumatic events*

As traumatized individuals develop trusting relationships with peers and school staff, they may start to open up and share their pain and sense of loss. Such disclosure is an opportunity for the young person to share difficult experiences and therefore to be heard and believed. Dealing with disclosure requires great sensitivity from school staff.

- Always give students the choice to tell their stories verbally or by some other means of expression. They should never be forced to share their stories.
- Fear may be common, with students worrying that they or their families will be punished or be victims of retribution because they exposed “secrets.”

*In your classroom*

- Provide structure, consistency, and clear expectations.
- Provide safety and a nurturing environment.
- Prepare students for change; facilitate transitions.
- Use creative means (art, music, essays) as vehicles for expression and healing.
- Recognize and honor students’ strengths as survivors.
- Include resources on refugee experiences.
- Consider trauma as a potential factor in learning and behavior problems.
- Normalize trauma reactions.
- Consider referring for individualized treatment those students who exhibit chronic trauma reactions.

*In your school*

- Provide students with chances to do important tasks for the school, their families, and the community.

- Help them feel they can contribute to and be part of the school community.
- Link students with school “buddies” or mentors who can provide support and help them learn how the school works.
- Provide opportunities for refugee students to teach others about their countries, cultures, and experiences.
- Involve parents as much as possible and discuss expectations regarding parental involvement in school.

#### Helpful web sites

- The Center for Victims of Torture: [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org)
- Bridging Refugee Youth and Children’s Services: [www.brycs.org](http://www.brycs.org)
- The Center for Cross Cultural Health: [www.crosshealth.com](http://www.crosshealth.com)
- The Center for Applied Linguistics: [www.cal.org/rsc](http://www.cal.org/rsc)
- The United Nations High Commission on Refugees: [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch) (order free teaching tools and videos)
- British Broadcasting Corporation: [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com) (country profiles and current news)
- Virtual Refugee Camp Exhibit: [www.refugeecamp.org](http://www.refugeecamp.org)

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## Discussion questions

### Mainstream students

1. When you hear the words “refugee camp,” what images comes to your mind? Go to [www.refugeecamp.org](http://www.refugeecamp.org) to experience a virtual tour of a refugee camp.
2. What do you think it would be like to lose track of your family in flight? How can you help someone who came to the U.S. without his or her family?
3. Is your school a welcoming place for refugee students?
4. What can you do to make refugee students feel welcome at your school?
5. What is one question you would like to ask someone who came to the U.S. as a refugee?

### Refugee students

1. Did you ever live in a refugee camp? If you did, what did it look like? What was it like to live there?
2. How did it feel to move to a country where the language spoken is very different than what you spoke at home?
3. What differences between life in your home country and life in the U.S. have been the most difficult to get used to?
4. What things from your home country do you miss most?
5. Describe your first winter in Minnesota.
6. What is it like to have to make new friends in a new country?
7. Did you come to the U.S. alone or with your family? If you came alone what was that like?
8. What is one thing you would like American students to know about you?

