

## **For a Better Life...** **by Richard Bakheit**

My name is Richard Bakheit and I am from Sudan. I settled in Uganda as a refugee for eight years. It was here that my family began to be disturbed by the rebels, the resistance army in Sudan that is fighting against the government. My two sisters and two brothers were taken away by the rebels. One of them was killed and we do not know what happened to the others. My family came to the US for a better life.

People in Sudan experience many difficulties. Since 1984 there has been a civil war that began because the Arabs who settled in the north of Sudan have control of the government and have tried to control the lives of the indigenous black people. Rebel groups, known as the Sudanese People's Liberation Army movement, began to fight against the government against their will. Because of the war, the following problems have been happening in Sudan: no proper shelter, no food, no proper medical care, no clothes and shoes to wear, poor transport facilities, unskilled doctors and nurses, no proper roads, hostile tribes, tsetse flies which cause sleeping sickness because of thick forests, and man eaters (lions and wild animals). This is a brief explanation of some conditions in Sudan.



When I got here in San Francisco, I stayed home for that semester, because it was coming to the end of the semester. The following semester, in 2006, I joined high school but it is hard for me because I don't write English well yet. I keep on working with my teachers and they give me good advice, and tell me that everything will be OK if you keep on trying. I started working hard, reading easy books for fun and asking teachers about anything that I don't know.

My best ways of learning are: I ask my teachers for extra help; I have two tutors for helping me with my homework; I don't watch TV except on the weekends; I study when everyone is asleep and it's quiet; I ask my classmates for some help; I don't give up although things are hard; and I always try my best to learn.

Here is some advice for youth new to the US:

--Get involved in community programs. "I joined the Mayor's Youth Employment Program. It's fun for me and they also pay me. Everyone is very friendly; I learn from them and they learn from me and about my history."

--Get a job. "I work at the YMCA and they pay me to teach and watch children. I make sure they play safely and don't use bad language."

--Join in RT programs. "Refugee Transitions brought me to my first summer camp. I also got two tutors/mentors. I started with my tutor Matthew, doing school work and then just hanging out. He showed me lots of new things, like how to get around the city, movies, and introduced me to his friends. His friends are great, all with different experiences, and I learned from them. After he left for England, I got a new tutor, Dom, who helps me with school work, gives me advice like to read books for fun, introduces me to his family, teaches me to drive, and right now he is helping me find a job for the summer."

--Choose good people to be around. "Most of my friends are people who give me good advice and who I can learn from."