

BIAR AKAR SCHOLARSHIP FINALIST



BIAR AKAR

is a refugee from South Sudan and a senior at Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School. He came to the U.S. in 2010. When he is not studying he likes to both watch and play soccer. Biar is planning to attend Cleveland State University and is interested in studying engineering. After college he would like to go back to South Sudan and help the people still living there.

Sudan's civil war started before I was born. The first attack I remember was when I was about eight or nine. It was the perfect time of day. The sun was "tweg" (setting over the jungle) and I was playing tag with my cousin when we heard gun shots and people screaming. I looked around for the people of my clan; someone to grab or run with into the jungle. I grabbed my cousin Deng and we ran towards the forest of thorn trees. We could feel the sharp needles on our hands as we hid under the leaves. The elders had been training us with games of "hide and seek" since we were very young. I knew then why we would be punished if during the game we were found. We stayed silent as the Arab soldiers moved near us, shooting into buildings and into those people too slow or proud to run away. And everything burned.

As the civil war was getting worse, the Arabs from the north of Sudan were killing a lot of people; collecting all young males into the army and converting them to Islam. I only had three choices: change my beliefs, be killed, or run away. My people know that what we believe is true, so I determined to run away. I ran for months until I made it to the Kakuma Refugee Camp, in northern Kenya. Now I had learned that hatred can destroy the entire world. The only way I can help to stop this hatred is to tell my story and change the way people think.

I will continue to tell my story through live presentations and through my writing. Although English is my second language, I will work hard on my writing and presentations which will help me to communicate with others more effectively. Because education is the best way to help change the hate in Sudan, I would ideally return to my country to work through the school system by presenting my story to younger students in both Sudan and South Sudan. I have a draft of a children's book about my story that I will continue to improve and make available during my presentations and on line. As I gain more confidence I will use the internet more to tell my story and hopefully stop the hate that has destroyed many lives in my country.

