

Interview was conducted with Crystal Cordova, from the Star City Treasurer's AmeriCorps History Project. This took place on May 23, 2006, at interviewee's house. The interviewee's name is Siddig.

**CRYSTAL:** Where in Sudan did you come from?

**SIDDIG:** Um, actually I'm from northern Darfur –

**CRYSTAL:** Oh, okay.

**SIDDIG:** – where the war is running right now.

**CRYSTAL:** Okay.

**SIDDIG:** But um, when I graduated in '88, I moved to southern Darfur to work there as an attorney.

**CRYSTAL:** Okay.

**SIDDIG:** Um, so I moved my family and everybody to that part of the country. And then I worked there until the year 2000, when I came here.

**CRYSTAL:** And, can you spell where you were from?

**SIDDIG:** Um, the last city that I was there was Nyala, N-Y-L-A.

**CRYSTAL:** Okay.

**SIDDIG:** N-Y-A-L-A.

**CRYSTAL:** N-Y-A-L-A?

**SIDDIG:** Right.

**CRYSTAL:** Okay.

**SIDDIG:** So that's Nyala city, which is the capital city of southern Darfur state.

**CRYSTAL:** Okay.

**SIDDIG:** Yea, and um, I came here in the year 2000, in April. And we won -- actually, my wife won -- the diversity, diversity visa lottery, which means that um, the programs that's conducted by Immigration department, they – every year they select randomly um, people from different countries in the world to come to the United States as immigrants. And then, um, when they come here they will give them green card, and then after five years they're gonna be eligible for

citizenship. So, we won that program and we came here and um, we complete our five years, we receive our citizenship. And, now after I have graduated from Southeast Community College, we are ready to go back to Sudan for visit for two months, and then come back.

**CRYSTAL:** That'll be nice.

**SIDDIG:** Yea.

**CRYSTAL:** How is -- since you went to school there -- how is it different from the school system there, than it is with your kids in the United States?

**SIDDIG:** A lot of differences, of course. Um, the main difference is the style of education in my country. It's different from, you know, the quality, um, number of years, curriculum, and other differences. And -- but at that time, I was youth, I was unmarried, I was continuing my education from high school to university, directly. There is not any gap, any spaces. But here, I'm married, I'm father of four kids, and I have my wife. We both work. Um, we spent two years, the first two years, as AmeriCorps members in Lincoln Action Program. Um, my first year I spent as Computer Literacy educator. And then, my second year I spent in, um, helping people find a job. Using the internet and other computer resources. And when I complete my two years, I um, I'll be full-time student -- to just, you know, complete my school um, which was finished last March. And then now, I'm doing my internship with Lincoln Housing Authority, their computer department. And, which is gonna finish this Friday, which is 26th. And I'll be ready to have a two month break, and then come back to start to find a job!

**CRYSTAL:** That is awesome! So, what are you graduating from -- what did you graduate for at SCC?

**SIDDIG:** SCC, I studied the Micro Computer Technology, with focusing on the Computer Networking, so.

**CRYSTAL:** You said you had four kids?

**SIDDIG:** Mmhmm, I have four kids.

**CRYSTAL:** What are their names?

**SIDDIG:** Ahmed.

**CRYSTAL:** Can you spell those? [laughs] Thank you!

**SIDDIG:** A-H-M-E-D.

**CRYSTAL:** Okay.

**SIDDIG:** He's eight. I have Aiah, A-I-A-H. She is six. I have Mohammed, M-O-H-A-M-M-E-D. He is four years now. And, I have the little Eimin, E-I-M-I-N. She's twenty months now.

And, uh, the last name – they use my last name, so everybody's last name is Nour, except my wife, so.

**CRYSTAL:** And why is that, that you have – does she use her maiden name?

**SIDDIG:** Yea.

**CRYSTAL:** Oh.

**SIDDIG:** In our country, part of our culture, the wife um, doesn't take the husband's name. So, she use her own.

**CRYSTAL:** I understand that.

**SIDDIG:** Yea.

**CRYSTAL:** In my culture, we do our maiden name slash our spouse's last name.

**SIDDIG:** Right, okay.

**CRYSTAL:** So that makes sense to me!

**SIDDIG:** Okay. [laughs]

**CRYSTAL:** Um, your oldest kids, do they know the difference, or are they still too young? Or, were they too young to know the difference from there to here?

**SIDDIG:** Um, the older two ones were born in Sudan and they came from Sudan when they were three and one year. They still remember a lot of things in Sudan, especially the family members. So, they know that there are differences. And we have a satellite um, that connect us to our country. We have Sudanese, Sudanese channel, which, you know, helps my kids know their --

**CRYSTAL:** Try to keep their roots.

**SIDDIG:** -- background, culture.

**CRYSTAL:** Yea.

**SIDDIG:** Especially the language.

**CRYSTAL:** Yea.

**SIDDIG:** So, they – everybody all must speak Arabic and English here.

**CRYSTAL:** Oh, well that's awesome!

**SIDDIG:** We, yea, we um, try to keep them in touch with the culture and Arabic language.

**CRYSTAL:** Yea. Are you scared, as the younger kids get older, that they're gonna lose some of their roots, or...

**SIDDIG:** That's one of our concern. But um, we try to keep it, you know, alive and everything. And, that's why we have a satellite channel from Sudan, and other different, you know, countries that, you know, who have the same culture. And, we're gonna make a plan to visit Sudan, you know, oftentimes.

**CRYSTAL:** As much as you can.

**SIDDIG:** As much as we can. In the summertime, and vacations, so the kids can, you know, keep things alive. But yea, it is one of the most serious concerns with us, about our kids.

**CRYSTAL:** I don't know where to go from here. Um...Some people would like to call Lincoln a very friendly place to live. I know, I grew up in a different part of Nebraska, and coming here, they seem a little bit more nice, and a little bit more genuine. Do you see that, or is it different from you coming from...

**SIDDIG:** Oh yea, that's true. Um, everybody is going out of Sudan, in a way or another, he fleeing from the war. And if, if you experience a war, you're gonna look for calm places. Places that, you know, doesn't have a lot of crimes, doesn't have a lot of troubles. You know, especially if you have kids and family. Um, when we first came, we came through in New York City. We spent two months -- oh no, two weeks over there, and in two weeks, just in our *neighborhood* there were seventeen shootings.

**CRYSTAL:** Wow!

**SIDDIG:** So, we realized that that place was not the place that we were looking for.

**CRYSTAL:** Yea

**SIDDIG:** And, hopefully, we had a lot of friends in Lincoln, before us here. So, we made a lot of, you know, phone calls, in different parts of country. And, then um, our friends who lived in Lincoln, they talked about the city in a very, you know, a way that it seemed like the place that we are looking for. And, when we came here, really we found this very calm place, very eh, you know, small country – a small city. And uh, you know it seems like a peaceful place, peaceful place to live. And uh, right after we came here, we spent like, you know, four months, and then we get the public housing assistance. That's a very short period, if you know --

**CRYSTAL:** Yea, it is a very short period.

**SIDDIG:** Yea, it's a very short period, so. Um, when we moved to the public housing, and then

– we learned that they have a program that can help if somebody is going to school. So we start that, we get the benefit of, of their program. So, um, they help us a lot in our school, paying some different tuitions and different fees. So, I think Lincoln is *still* the very friendly and calm place, especially for people fleeing from war.

**CRYSTAL:** Coming from such a horrible place.

**SIDDIG:** Yea, right. So, yea it's different place, nice. We like it -- we love it. We wanna come back to Lincoln again, and we don't have any plan to move from Lincoln, so far. So, I think you are right.

**CRYSTAL:** Let's jump back in history a little bit, because I know you said you were married.

**SIDDIG:** Right.

**CRYSTAL:** How did you meet your wife?

**SIDDIG:** In our culture, it is preferred to marry from, from relatives. It is preferred, not only possible. So, um, she's my relative. Not the first, or second, but she's my relative. And uh, our families um, they don't live the same place, but they have contact and visit, and so forth. And uh, when I was in, in college there, in my country, um – because their city is near to the college where I live, I'm taking classes. There, and my own village, which is in different faraway state. So, I would spend some short vacations, from the school, with them. And uh, when I finished I went back to my state, and then she went to the same school that I graduated. So, from there...

**CRYSTAL:** From there you got married and had kids! [laughs]

**SIDDIG:** Yea.

**CRYSTAL:** That's very awesome. Is there a specific way of how you guys do the marriages? Like, here we have – we go to the church, we light a candle, we say 'I do', we have a huge reception...

**SIDDIG:** There are a lot of, a lot of um, ceremony go with the marriage. Um, there's the celebration with the friends, neighbors and family members. And, instead of you go to church, we go to mosque to complete the paperwork, paperwork and marriage certificate, to take the marriage certificate. And uh, as far as the celebration, it's different because there are some specific, you know – I don't know how to say them, but there are, there are a lot of um, culture specific pieces of celebration. Um, there are dancing, there are, um – you know, there's a big meal like supper, instead of you say, reception?

**CRYSTAL:** Reception.

**SIDDIG:** But there is, yea, we have a open, open meal for everybody. And uh -- it is hard to

explain.

**CRYSTAL:** Yea.

**SIDDIG:** But there are, there are a lot of you know, culture specific -- you wear a specific suit, and clothes. So, there are a lot of different things.

**CRYSTAL:** Well, that's awesome. Well, I really don't have anything else to ask you. On behalf of Lincoln Parks and Rec, and AmeriCorps, I thank you for letting me come into your home and do this.

**SIDDIG:** You're welcome. And, thank you so much for this opportunity to bring my history to Lincoln people. So, I'm glad for that.

**CRYSTAL:** Alright, well thank you!

**SIDDIG:** Thanks.