

NAME: George Paul

CLIENT: Park Teen Center

NAME LIKE TO BE CALLED: George

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HOMETOWN: Uganda/Kenya

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WHERE IS YOUR FAMILY FROM, GEORGE?

Well, my mom and dad, they're from Sudan. And most of my brothers and sisters were born in different part of Africa. Me and my little sister were born in Uganda. And I only lived there for like five years, and then I moved to Kenya.

THEN YOU MOVED TO KENYA.

Where I grew up.

HOW MANY YEARS DID YOU SPEND IN KENYA?

I spent like four years in Kenya before I came here.

SO YOU WERE ABOUT 9 YEARS OLD WHEN YOU MOVED?

Yeah.

WHAT LANGUAGE DO YOUR PARENTS SPEAK?

My mom, my mom and dad speak, uh, they speak my language which is Ajoli(?).

JOLI?

Acholi.

ACHOLI.

Yeah. And they speak Arabic and they speak, um, Saswali.

SASWALI. YEAH.

And I think they speak more, but I don't know.

WELL THAT'S A LOT.

Yeah.

BUT THEY MOVED A LOT, RIGHT?

Yes.

SO THEY'D HAVE TO SPEAK DIFFERENT LANGUAGES EVERYWHERE THEY MOVED.

Um hum.

UM, WHAT WAS, WHAT WAS UGANDA LIKE? DO YOU REMEMBER MUCH ABOUT UGANDA?

Only a little.

ONLY A LITTLE? WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER?

I remember that it always was green and it was like just a village and a forest and stuff. And it was very little people where I lived.

VERY LITTLE PEOPLE. WAS IT A SMALL VILLAGE?

Yeah.

DID FAMILY LIVE THERE?

Yeah, most of my family lived there.

MOST OF YOUR FAMILY LIVED IN UGANDA. (yeah) SO DID YOU HAVE LIKE GRANDPARENTS, UNCLES, AUNTS.... DID YOU HAVE COUSINS THAT YOU PLAYED WITH?

Well yeah.

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS WOULD YOU GUYS DO?

We would play soccer. Well we made our soccer out of, uh, like a balloon or we, um, rubber glue and then tie it with clothing and we could tie it and (inaud) a ball and we played with it. And if it popped, we just made another one. It lasted long though.

YEAH. (yeah) AND SO YOU REMEMBER PLAYING LOTS OF SOCCER (yeah) IN UGANDA. UM, WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR HOUSE IN UGANDA?

Well it was little but kinda huge when we (inaud). (YEAH) And I remember being scared of the picture on the wall. I don't know why.

THE PICTURE?

Yeah.

(SMILE) WHAT WAS THE PICTURE OF? DO YOU REMEMBER?

Well it's like just human picture, but I used to be scared of em.

YEAH. UM, WAS THERE ANY HOLIDAYS OR FESTIVALS THAT YOU GUYS HAD IN UGANDA THAT YOU REMEMBER?

Well, we celebrated Christmas. And that's all I remember.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO FOR CHRISTMAS? WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT CHRISTMAS?

Oh, like everybody would cook up like the food and you would just go to this person's house and say "Merry Christmas", and they would want you to eat at their house. And then you would go to this person house and they would want you to do the same thing. So after that then you would be pretty stuffed up. (SMILE)

WELL THAT SOUNDS, THAT SOUNDS ALRIGHT.

Yeah.

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT KENYA?

Well I remember plenty of stuff. Like it was pretty hot. And when I was like a, a (pause) 7 years old, 8 years old, I remember like people from, well they were called Somalians, they moved like on to the other side where the river used to go. And there was plenty of them. And the little city that we used to live in, grew bigger after this.

SO HOW SMALL WAS IT?

It was like, it was like, um, there was like a certain group of people, different tribes, and my people and other people and this whole every, there's like a lot of area that don't have houses and stuff, empty, so they moved down there.

SO THERE, IT GREW A LOT. (yeah) AND THEY CAME FROM SOMALIA?

Yeah.

HOW DID EVERYBODY GET ALONG?

Well, they got along pretty good because, uh, some people from different tribes, they

went to, uh, like the other tribe, um, these others to buy like spices and food and stuff. So they worked out pretty good.

YEAH.

Yeah. But I remember like, uh, a different tribe having a war with other tribe. My dad had to go with it and to (inaud).

YEAH.

I remember the spears and stuff. But other than that I remember nothing cause my mom took me over to this person's, uh, this, her friend's house, her tribe, she's a different tribe so she wasn't like, uh, in the war, whatever, the tribe wasn't. So they couldn't like invade the area. So her friend allowed us to stay over till...

TO STAY UNTIL THE WAR WAS OVER.

Yeah.

WAS YOUR DAD OK?

Yeah. He didn't even fight that much. (smile)

OH, THAT'S GOOD. UM, WHAT WAS YOUR HOUSE LIKE IN, IN, UH, KENYA?

It had like, uh, tile roof. Like silver. And when it rained it always came off. And like when it comes very, very hot it turned all rusty and stuff. So...

WHAT WAS THE MAIN MEANS OF GETTING PLACES. IF YOU HAD TO GO FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER PLACE, ONE CITY TO ANOTHER CITY OR...

Yeah. They have like, well there is like a whole group of people, they like, it's kinda like a taxi business. But over there you have like a motorcycle. Uh, they, you just pay your money and they drop you over there, or you could take like the mini bus. It's just like a van. And it would take you.

SO MOST OF IT WAS THROUGH TAXIS AND STUFF LIKE THAT. YEAH.

Yeah.

UM, WHEN YOUR FAMILY, WHEN YOUR PARENTS TELL YOU STORIES ABOUT AFRICA, ARE THEY MAINLY POSITIVE STORIES OR NEGATIVE STORIES?

They usually positive, but sometimes they make it so (inaud) when I know it is not true.

YEAH? UM, WHAT ARE SOME GOOD THINGS THAT THEY TELL YOU ABOUT AFRICA?

Well, they say they're gonna move back, but and I believe it cause like my, uh, my mom's, uh, (pause) uh, brother's wife, her mother went back. So pretty much of half of the family wanta go back. But I don't know yet if they're gonna...

WHAT ARE, WHAT ARE SOME GOOD MEMORIES THAT THEY HAVE ABOUT LIVING IN AFRICA?

Well, they would always help a lot of people and help each other out. And there, like (pause) if like someone got married they would always go and take food and stuff and help (inaud).

YEAH. WHAT ARE SOME NEGATIVE THINGS THAT THEY TOLD YOU ABOUT LIVING IN AFRICA?

Well, they told us that, um, (pause) uh, like many animals will come at night and then bite you, but I don't believe it. Cause when the village, they have a fence, yeah, and they close it at night. Very high.

WELL THAT WOULD BE A LITTLE SCARY THOUGH, HUH?

I knew it was wrong. (SMILE)

I'D BE SCARED. UM, WHY DID YOUR FAMILY COME TO AMERICA?

Uh, well, my grandma came before us. And we had this like a passport sent from the United States for us to go to come over here to live and have a good education. So yeah.

SO YOUR PARENTS THOUGHT THE EDUCATION WOULD BE BETTER HERE?

Um hum. (yes) (AND THAT'S WHY YOU CAME?) Um hum. (yes)

UH, WHAT DID YOU DO TO GET READY TO COME TO AMERICA?

Well, uh, they interviewed us. They made sure that none of, none of the (inaud) were married(?). And they said, uh, they questioned us a lot of if we are hard workers and, and my parents were, so they could come here. They would work hard and, and they took our photos.

WHAT DID YOU KNOW ABOUT AMERICA BEFORE YOU CAME HERE?

Well, I only, I didn't know much about it, but I only heard that, uh, it had pretty high

buildings and stuff. Cause I remember a lot of white folks going to Africa and just, uh, looking around at stuff and taking photographs. And I knew a little English, a little.

A LITTLE ENGLISH?

Yeah. Cause in Uganda, um, many people over there speak English.

OH, OK, SO YOU LEARNED A LITTLE ENGLISH IN UGANDA. DID YOUR PARENTS LEARN ENGLISH WHEN THEY LIVED IN UGANDA?

No.

NO, BUT YOU PICKED IT UP A LITTLE BIT.

Yeah. But they did learn a week after we came to United States, my dad did. He was fast.

OH, THAT'S GOOD. UM, DID, DID YOU READ ANY BOOKS ABOUT AMERICA OR DID YOU... DID YOU HAVE ANY CLASSES IN SCHOOL THAT TAUGHT YOU ANYTHING ABOUT AMERICA?

They only taught us like, I remember the teacher teaching (inaud) a fruit, like an apple and I've never tasted before so I was like, it looked weird. And before we came there was, um, they showed us pictures of what America gonna look like. And the schools and the buildings and the apartment that you would live in.

SO YOU KNEW, YOU KNEW QUITE A BIT ABOUT AMERICA BEFORE YOU CAME HERE, WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE AND STUFF. (yeah) SO WERE YOU EXCITED TO COME HERE? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR FEELINGS?

Well, before I knew that I was gonna get on a plane, because I never been in one, I was pretty excited. But then when I knew I got a little scared cause the plane that we went in, it didn't have no seats. So we had to sit on the ground. And there was like this rope, we had to like tie it on our waist and hold it as a seat belt. And it was pretty scary.

THAT'S REALLY SCARY. THEY DIDN'T HAVE SEATS?!

No.

YOU JUST TIED THE ROPE.

Yeah. That was till when we get to, till we got to Europe. And then we changed to a plane that had seats.

WOW, WHERE IN EUROPE DID YOU GO?

I don't remember. I think it was in England or France. And then we took a flight from there all the way to the United States.

AND WHERE DID YOU GO IN THE UNITED STATES WHEN YOU FIRST GOT HERE?

First I arrived in New York. (UM HUM) And we took a flight from there to Dallas, Texas, the Dallas, Texas airport. And my uncle came there with my grandma, he came and picked us up from Dallas Fort Worth (UM HUM) yeah, the airport. And dropped us home. But we didn't have like a house yet so we had to live in my grandma's house like for a couple months till my mom and him could find a job. And after that they rented an apartment and then bought a (inaud).

NICE. UM, WHERE DOES YOUR GRANDMA LIVE?

My grandma lives in Dallas, Texas.

IN DALLAS, TEXAS. HOW LONG WERE YOU GUYS IN DALLAS, TEXAS?

We were there like for two years. (TWO YEARS.) And then went to Minnesota. And after Minnesota we moved to Kansas City, Missouri, and then we moved to Lincoln.

WOW, YOU'VE SEEN A LOT OF THE UNITED STATES.

Um hum. (yes)

HOW DID YOU LIKE DALLAS, TEXAS?

It was cool cause like there was a lot of immigrants living there. So (pause) I liked it pretty much.

WHAT DID YOU THINK ABOUT MINNESOTA?

Minnesota is pretty cold.

YEAH. (SMILE) IT'S REALLY COLD UP THERE, HUH? (yeah) UM, WHAT ABOUT DOWN IN KANSAS CITY?

Well, there was a lot of violence going on, so that's why we moved to Lincoln. (UM HUM) Cause we didn't like it very much. (YEAH) It wasn't fun at all.

AND HOW DO YOU LIKE LINCOLN?

Lincoln is pretty cool. It's a small city. And (inaud).

YEAH. UM, DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL IN AFRICA?

Yeah, I did.

YOU GO TO UGANDA OR KENYA?

I went to school in Kenya.

IN KENYA?

Um hum. (yes)

WHAT WAS SCHOOL LIKE?

Well, the school was kinda like the same from here, but kinda like a little different, the way they do their work. It's kinda like, um, I only remember elementary stuff. So... And the grades, I would be like in 11th grade by now over there, so pretty different.

YEAH, THE GRADES ARE REALLY DIFFERENT, HUH? UM, HOW LONG WERE THE SCHOOL DAYS?

They were like the same as here. (YEAH?) Um hum.

UM, WHAT DID YOU WEAR TO SCHOOL?

Well, before I came I had like a lot of clothes that I packed from Uganda before I came. And my grandma would always send us clothes from United States.

DO YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO WEAR A UNIFORM TO SCHOOL.

Well, I did for a couple months, but then they changed that, uh...

THEY CHANGED THAT SO YOU CAN JUST KINDA WEAR WHATEVER.

Yeah.

UM, WHAT WERE THE, WHAT WAS THE, WHAT WERE THE TEACHERS LIKE?

Well, a lot of them were pretty strict because like they, if you don't get, if you don't know like a word, if you like less, uh, say for example like he says "read this word, apple" and you don't quiet get it then they would like hit you and....

THEY WOULD HIT YOU?

Yeah. But...

LIKE WITH A RULER....

With a belt.

WITH A BELT. (yeah) OH NO! SO YOU WANTED TO GET ALL THE WORDS RIGHT.
Well, I got em right, but...

SOME KIDS DIDN'T? (yea) AND SO, UH, IF KIDS MISBEHAVE, DO THEY DO THE
SAME THING?

If kids misbehave they got like an ISS, but (pause) that's where, um, they get
mistreated. (smile)

YEAH. UM, HOW MANY STUDENTS WERE IN A CLASS?

There was like (pause) as many as I can remember, I remember having 35 (35) in a
class, yeah.

SO IT WAS SIMILAR TO HERE THEN. IT WASN'T TOO MUCH BIGGER. UM, WHAT
SUBJECTS WERE YOU TAUGHT?

I was taught, mathematics, English, social studies, same subjects as over here.

UM HUM. DID YOU HAVE ART CLASS?

Well art class, I didn't know, but my brother knew really good art and he could draw
pretty good, so I learned from...

FROM HIM. UM HUM. HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM GOING TO SCHOOL HERE?

Well, over here (smile) they don't hit you if you don't know words. (LAUGH) There is
plenty dif-, different. And, uh, it's easier here.

IT'S EASIER?

Yeah, to learn. Cause the teachers make, make sure you know the words and stuff and
know what you're doing.

SO WHICH ONE DO YOU LIKE BETTER?

Uh, for school I like it here better.

BUT FOR LIVING?

For living I like it here better too.

YEAH? YOU LIKE IT HERE BETTER AS WELL. WHEN YOU FIRST CAME HERE, UM, WHAT DID YOU HAVE TO CHANGE TO FIT IN TO BE AMERICAN?

Well, (pause) um, I had to change my accent a little cause, uh, (pause) I was taught like pretty bad stuff in Africa. (smile) So, uh...

LIKE WORDS?

Yeah. And that's pretty much about it, if I can remember of any. Um...

DID YOU HAVE TO CHANGE YOUR CLOTHES AT ALL?

Over here or in Africa?

HERE. COMING FROM AFRICA TO HERE, DID YOU CHANGE WHAT YOU WORE?

Yeah.

YEAH? HOW DID THAT CHANGE?

Well, it didn't change very much.

NO, BECAUSE YOUR GRANDMA SENT YOU CLOTHES FROM HERE?

Um hum. (yes)

WHAT ABOUT YOUR MUSIC?

Well I, I know that my parents know a lot of music and stuff. And they..

WAS THE MUSIC DIFFERENT THAT YOU LISTENED TO IN AFRICA, COMPARED TO HERE? WAS IT DIFFERENT?

Well, kind of. Cause some of the singing they be singing about would be about like, um, myths or something.

UM HUM. SO DID THEY HAVE RAP MUSIC THERE?

Yeah.

YEAH. UM, WHAT WAS THE HARDEST PART OF ADJUSTING TO LIVING IN AMERICA?

Uh, (pause) making sure that you have your homework in and hard work and that's about it.

HOW DO YOU FEEL OTHER KIDS TREATED YOU WHEN YOU FIRST MOVED HERE?

Well, (pause) they were nice to me cause when I first came in class, um, at the elementary school and I remember this different girl giving me a book the first day cause it was our assignment reading day. And so we had to read some, a couple minutes. And I didn't know how to read pretty good so then they kinda like taught me. And about a week or two I learned a little. And so, so it got better.

WELL THAT WAS NICE OF HER. UM, (PAUSE) WHAT HOLIDAYS DO YOU CELEBRATE HERE?

Um, I celebrate like Halloween just for fun. And Christmas and, uh, Easter Egg Day is a Christian thing. And most of my family are Christians and Catholics.

WERE, IS THERE ANY HOLIDAYS THAT YOU CELEBRATE, UM, THAT ARE AFRICAN HOLIDAYS THAT WE DON'T CELEBRATE HERE?

Not that I remember.

NO? WHAT LANGUAGE DO YOU SPEAK AT HOME?

I speak, uh, Acholi, my language, and English.

ENGLISH. UM, DO YOU EVER FEEL LIKE YOU LEAD LIKE A DOUBLE LIFE? LIKE YOUR SUDANESE OR YOUR KENYAN AT HOME AND THEN AMERICAN AT SCHOOL?

Well, when I come to school I forget everything about my culture and stuff. Like my language, I don't remember it until I go home. And then I talk my language. Yeah. That's what I do.

LEAD A DOUBLE LIFE LIKE THAT. IS THAT TOUGH FOR YOU?

No, it's pretty easy.

YEAH?

Yeah.

HAVE YOU EVER HAD TO TRANSLATE FOR FAMILY MEMBERS?

Um, (pause) well, uh, when I was at parent/teacher conference and my mom went, I had to translate like a couple of words. (YEAH?) Um hum. (yes)

DO YOU LIKE TRANSLATING?

Not really.

NO? UH, WHAT, HOW DO YOU FEEL, HOW MANY LANGUAGE DO YOU SPEAK?

Well, I know Saswali, like three and (inaud) would be four.

FOUR? FOUR LANGUAGES. WOW. DO YOU, UM, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT SPEAKING ALL THESE DIFFERENT LANGUAGES?

Well, many people they just say (pause) it's a good thing. So we feel pretty good.

YEAH, I WISH I SPOKE MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE. I ENVY YOU GUYS THAT, UM, THAT, ALL THE KIDS THAT GROW UP SPEAKING TWO LANGUAGES. TWO OR THREE OR FOUR. UM, HOW DO YOU GUYS STAY IN TOUCH WITH FAMILY BACK IN KENYA OR UGANDA?

Well, in Uganda they have telephones, so you can call one another or you could write letters, as we did in Kenya.

DO YOU STILL KEEP IN TOUCH WITH PEOPLE BACK IN THOSE, THOSE COUNTRIES?

Well, my parents did, and sometimes they let me speak to them.

WHAT FAMILY MEMBERS DO YOU GET TO TALK TO?

I talk to my cousins from my dad's side and my mom's side.

DO YOU, DO YOU TALK TO THEM ABOUT LIVING I AMERICA?

Yeah.

WHAT DO YOU TELL THEM ABOUT LIVING IN AMERICA?

That it feels pretty good and it's pretty hard work and stuff. It's pretty different.

WHAT DO YOU TELL THEM ARE SOME OF THE DIFFERENCES?

Like the schools, they aren't really harsh. And they have snow which they don't know what it is. And they have pretty weird seasons. (smile) (SMILE) Cause over there there is no such thing as snow and it's always hot.

WERE YOU EXCITED THE FIRST TIME YOU SAW SNOW?

Well, kinda cold. And that was like, it lasted for a week, and it felt good. But after that, uh, I went and played in the snow and when I came back in, my hand was like freezing, so I stuck it in hot water, which was bad. (SMILE) And I hurt it, and I hurt it like for 20 minutes or something. It was stinging pretty bad too.

YEAH? UM, I KNOW, IT'S WEIRD BECAUSE I'VE SEEN SNOW ALL OF MY LIFE, AND SO IT, IT'S HARD FOR ME TO THINK OF NEVER SEEING SNOW.

Well, if you wanted to see snow in Africa you, like in Kenya you would have to go like to a, like the famous mountain of Kenya. And there will be snow on top of that. But I have never been there.

YEAH, THAT'S REALLY COOL. IF ONE OF YOUR COUSINS WAS GOING TO MOVE OVER HERE, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE HIM? WHAT WOULD YOU TELL HIM?

Well, don't be scared. They won't do anything to you. Just be normal.

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL HIM ABOUT, UM, ADJUSTING TO SCHOOL?

Well, first I would tell him that they have something called homework. And you have to do it in order to get your grades up and you have to do your homework and then school.

HOMEWORK IS TOUGH, HUH?

Yeah.

CAUSE YOU SIT IN SCHOOL FOR SO LONG, AND THEN YOU HAVE TO TAKE SCHOOL HOME WITH YOU AND DO HOMEWORK THERE.

Yep.

UM, IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU COULD TELL ME ABOUT LIVING IN, LIVING IN AFRICA?

Um, (pause) well, (pause) I remember my sister getting hit in the eye with the ruler by this teacher and my parents had to go there and say something about it. But that's all.

HIT HER IN THE EYE?

Yeah. Like he tried to hit her but she was moving around so... (OH) ..hit her in the eye.

DID IT HURT HER EYE?

Well, not really. It only hit her here and then kinda like bled from the inside. But then a few weeks later it disappeared.

OH, OWE, I BET THAT HURT. I BET THAT HURT. UM, WHAT OTHER STORIES CAN YOU REMEMBER ABOUT AFRICA?

Like I remember like we would all sit in the front yard and tell stories to each other. Well my aunt, she would always tell us this myth story about if you go to sleep like these people never went to sleep because if they slept they would never wake up and die. So one day this guy got pretty, uh, tired and went to sleep and then the next day he woke up just fine. And it made people pretty mad. (LAUGH)

UM, WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR TRADITIONS ABOUT DEATH?

Well, they would, uh, bury the, like cover the person, the dead body with a white blanket and dig a, like put another coffin and dig a hole and just bury the person (inaud) just a coffin type of thing.

WHAT ABOUT TRADITIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE?

Well, you would have to like talk to the, the, uh, person that you wanta marry's, uh, family member, like their dad and their mom. And, and well, I remember that they paid the dad a few monies to like if golden(?) but silver from the inside, pay the dad gold and silver money. And then the other brother then they would get married, they would get everything planned and get married.

WAS THERE CERTAIN TRIBES THAT YOU COULD AND COULD NOT MARRY?
(PAUSE) OR COULD YOU MARRY ANYBODY?

You can marry like anybody. But it's up, like, like if your parents like hate the other or your culture hate the other, whatever, then probably not.

DO YOU PLAN ON GOING BACK WHEN YOU GROW UP?

To visit, yeah.

TO VISIT? BUT NOT TO LIVE? WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO WHEN YOU GROW UP?

I wanta be a football and soccer player. So...

YOU REALLY LIKE SOCCER. UM, WAS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU'D LIKE TO TELL US?

Um, (pause) um, not that I can remember now.

NO? OK, GEORGE, THANK YOU FOR DOING THIS INTERVIEW. I REALLY APPRECIATE IT.