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Finding a Home in New Land

In my thirty-four years of life, I often wonder what it feels like to be part of the majority. Since I was born, I have always found myself in the minority. For example, in all the countries we moved to, people would occasionally use their mother tongue. Their culture was very different, especially their dress code, how they greeted each other, and even the food they ate. My family has moved to various countries in search of a better place to live. We lived in Uganda and Ethiopia before finally settling in Kenya. My dad primarily sought a better education system for his daughters. Our journey brought us to Kenya from Sudan, which is now known as South Sudan. Each new location presented its own culture and challenges, but Kenya became our second home for many years. I grew up there, studied there, and created lasting memories. I learned to adapt, embrace change, and find strength in my differences. I carry my identity with me, yet I still wonder—what is it like to be part of the majority group?

The host country and the residents assumed we left South Sudan because of lack of resources, as there were many refugees from our country already living there. The refugees were in Kenya because they were escaping war, conflict, and difficult living conditions. We couldn't afford a good home or good schools and that was not the full story. My dad believes in quality education, and he wanted more for his daughters. He still believes knowledge can change lives. So, we moved—not because we had nothing but wanted more. People misjudged our journey

without knowing it all, they saw only what they wanted. Some residents treated us unfairly. They believed we were poor and only came to take their resources. That never stopped us moving on and focused on the main reason we are their land. We did not runaway from anything, rather we were chasing something greater than what was available in our native country.

People move for several reasons. Some go to other countries for better opportunities, better education, others follow their dreams and others seek safety. My country is one of the most blessed lands in Africa. We have oil, fertile land, and great rivers. We love our country, and we are proud of our homeland. We have resources to build better lives, nevertheless resources alone are not enough for a great nation. A strong nation needs education, it requires leaders who value knowledge. That is why we moved, not because our land was poor but because opportunities were limited. People may not get our journey, but we do. And that is what matters.

When I joined school in Kenya everything felt new. For me, Kenya was not just a place to study. It became a home. A place where I could dream bigger and adjust to inevitable changes. One moment I will never forget was during my days in high school. As south Sudanese, we often stand out. You can recognize us from a distance. We are taller, our skin is a bit darker, and that makes our features distinct. As a result, it didn't take long for others to notice I was different. Some of the senior students started to mock me and a few others from my country in the school. It wasn't just teasing- it made me feel like I didn't belong. I was already adjusting to a new environment and being treated differently just because of how I looked made things harder. I felt more like an outsider than ever. But what changed everything for me was how the school principal responded. He addressed the issue there and then and made it clear to all the rest of the students and staff that we were all equal, no matter where we came from or how we looked. That moment gave me hope. It reminded me that despite our

looks, respect and humanity is still portrayed out there. It also created a valuable awareness of unity and acceptance.

Moving to Kenya meant more than just going to school and learning. It was also learning to live a new life, a new culture, new languages, and traditions, even how people greeted each other- everything was totally different. The big challenge was the language barrier. In Sudan, we study and use Arabic while in Kenya, people spoke Swahili and English. At first, understanding my teachers and making friends was hard when I did not know what to say. I remember one time I went to the market to buy a certain vegetable. I couldn't find it, and I didn't know what it was called in Swahili. I tried to explain, but the seller couldn't understand me. They even gave me a piece of paper and a pen and asked me to draw it. It made me feel lost and frustrated. It showed me how hard it was to adjust to a new language and way of life. However, I had to adapt. I had a home tutor helping my family and I learned and practiced Swahili, it was not easy. Feeling out of place, and Kenyans speaking to us in public places in a language that we couldn't understand back then it was challenging. And culture was a challenge as well. Some traditions are completely different from mine. I have learnt to adjust while holding on to my tradition and beliefs. With time, I built friendships and accepted the changes but not changing who I am to fit in. Kenyans accepted me, and I accepted them; beyond our differences, we found common ground. Kenya began to feel more like home.

Accepting a new culture does not mean losing who you are. I held on to my native roots as well. It shaped me, and I was proud of it. At home, we still spoke Arabic, cooked our traditional meals, and celebrated our customs. But outside we embraced the Kenyan way of life. Sometimes, these two worlds clashed but it had beauty in it. It means that belonging does not mean losing who you truly are. I never let go of my identity like my name which was difficult to pronounce but I just teach how it says. Brought out the aspect of understanding and

respecting others while staying true to yourself carried South Sudan in my heart while growing in Kenya. I found a place in both worlds.

Reflecting on our journey, it was not easy. We moved from place to place, adjusting, learning, and searching for a sense of belonging. In many ways, Kenya became my second home because I was accepted for who I am. I carried my traditions, beliefs, and identity in my heart while also embracing the Kenyan way of life. True belonging is not about losing yourself; it's about finding a balance between your roots and your current environment. Living in the US now, I still carry the lessons I learned in Kenya- how to adapt, stay true to myself, and respect other's culture. I know how to navigate being different, and I see diversity as a strength, not a barrier. Even here, I hold on to my roots while embracing a new way of life, just like I did before. Being part of a minority has shaped my story, teaching me resilience, strength, and the beauty of diversity. Change is inevitable. Yet, I often wonder what it feel like to be part of the majority? Perhaps one day, I will find out.