

Forged in Fire -

My name is Angeth. Angeth Lual, but you can call me Angie since everyone does.

To anyone, including myself, the shooting was a mere rumor, in the tales my parents have shared with me about the early 1990s, a time my family escaped the civil war-ravaged South Sudan to seek asylum in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Growing up in a world that seemed so dark, my first moments in this world relate to the struggle and longing for calm, soft, and even a brighter future.

Don't get me wrong. Kakuma was more than just a camp but a furnace that forged resilience, appreciation, longing, and HOPE intertwined. Oftentimes, I don't like talking about myself, but my story started years before I was born when my parents immigrated to this country for a better future. Even though I was growing up in one of the harshest regions in the world, I always felt that education would take me out of Kakuma and get me a better future. But life had other surprises coming our way.

In other words, I am, and was forged in fire.

As soon as little peace emerged in South Sudan, my father decided to go back home with our family. My two elder sisters had agreed to remain behind in Kakuma to further their education. I enrolled in a local school and tried to adjust to this new lifestyle, but stability was scarce. My uncle, who had risen to be the Minister of Finance in the country, also understood the value of education, especially to me, and as such, he took his family, including me, to Uganda for better education facilities. Leaving my family behind was heart-breaking, but I knew this was my chance to make something out of myself and improve our lives.

While in Uganda, I excelled in my studies, although in 2013, another and more severe round of conflict broke out in South Sudan, and my mother and siblings were compelled to flee the country and join me in Uganda as refugees. They joined me, and we tried to rebuild our lives once again.

This didn't last long since tragedy struck again. My uncle got sick and died in 2017. His demise left a massive void, not only emotionally but also in terms of providing for the family. I was young and just completed my primary school and was hoping to join high school. Since no one was there to pay my school fees, the entire year went by, and I was out of school with all my dreams fading away. I returned to my mom and siblings in the

refugee camp, overwhelmed by hopelessness and fear. Those were some of the toughest months of my life, but they were months that marked a change.

My mother was one of the strongest and most determined women whom I have ever known, and she had to start several businesses to supply our family's needs. Her desire to see me succeed rests as a burning ambition within me. Thanks to my mother's efforts, in 2018, I returned to school. I did not want to perform averagely; rather, I endeavored to do well in a way that could make my family proud of me. The problems that I used to encounter kept me more determined to succeed and work harder. I proceeded to secondary school, which I also finished with good grades. Unfortunately, equally as in high school, the financial issue became the reason for not continuing my education to the next level. Since I could not fund my education in Uganda, I was forced to go back to South Sudan to do my national examination, in which I excelled.

For as long as I can remember, I was a fighter who never lost hope and always tried to find a way out. The toll it has taken on me has made me more responsible, appreciate education, and know the impacts it can bring. Living in a refugee camp, witnessing the war at a young age, and struggling with finances will not let me give up, and it showed me how strong people can be.

Growing up, I have always been able to accept changes, take on the responsibilities that come with them, and never give up on my goals. I consider my background and experiences as an important part of my personality, and this has contributed to my desire to further my studies. In my opinion, luck can change people's lives for the better, and it is my hope that I will be given that chance not only to improve my own life but also the lives of my family, community, and others.

This has motivated me to study and excel in my education, as it has been my light during the darkest of times. It's my hope to be able to work for the progress of my country and assist those in similar situations. My purpose is to motivate the youth, particularly the young girls in the war-torn regions, to ensure that they go to school and strive for their dreams despite the challenges they face.

My journey is not one of only suffering; it is a story of defiance, of yearning for education, and the conviction that no ordeal is insurmountable so long as there is hope. I am willing to further my education and seek to make a difference in the world using my experiences. This college application is not just a chance for me, but it is a shot at the promise I made to myself as well as my family to come out victorious amid all plights.