

JAMES LADO OLIMPIO MALI – A personal Story

I was born in 1985 during the war.

What happened was a direct result of the violence we all experienced during the fight for independence.

Violence is an unfortunate consequence of war no matter what side you are on.



My father was the head man (Chief) of a small clan in the village outside of Kuda in Central Equatoria.

Our hut was built on soft sandy soil.

It was our custom to prepare food in the Chief's hut in advance of the soldiers' arrival.

Each family prepared one basket filled with enough food to feed the SPLM (Sudan People's Liberation Movement) soldiers for the day.

They would take the food with them when they went to fight.

On this particular day, the SPLM came to collect their food and then left quickly.

Soon afterwards the enemy soldiers came and saw the footprints of the other soldiers in the sand.

They began to ask questions about SPLM and when had they been there.

Most people were in support of liberation, however, in our area, one specific clan joined the Khartoum government.

My family was part of the liberation movement.

The man who joined the Khartoum initiative directed the North Sudanese soldiers to our village.

Without him knowing our area, the Khartoum soldiers would never have found where we lived.

It was 1989 when I was four years old, I was asleep outside under a tree with my older brother sitting beside me and watching over me.

The soldiers noticed that my Mum was the only adult in the house and they started to ask my brother

where my father was? He told them that our father was in the bush cutting trees to build a house.

I have been told this story because I was asleep at the time.

One soldier grabbed me by my left leg, I was already upside down as I awoke. The soldier was trying to knock my body against a tree, swinging me around by my leg. My brother began to yell "Please, don't kill my little brother." My Mum heard the noise and ran out to see what was going on. She started screaming and crying. My Mum told them the same thing my brother had told them, but the soldier continued to swing me around very roughly, using me to threaten them.

It was then that my hip was dislocated. He didn't intend to do that, but it was because of the violence that I was wounded. I remember that it was very painful and I couldn't move at all because the pain travelled through my entire body and my hip swelled up too. Because there was no doctor or clinic of any kind in my village, I was without medical attention or treatment.

They continued to demand information about where my father was, then the soldier threw me down. Another soldier slapped my mother and left both of us on the ground. They left us like that, which is the memory I have of the incident that day. I did not realise the consequences of the injury until 1995 when we were displaced and everyone was running away, then I knew I was in a bad condition because they were able to run fast and I was left walking behind with my stick.

I kept remembering that soldier's face and what he did to me. I knew then that I would be like this for the rest of my life.

My education was under a tree and our blackboard was the result of removing the bark of the tree and painting it with charcoal. In 2003 I went to Yei for secondary education and was transported to Uganda to sit for final examinations because we didn't have final exams in South Sudan.

In my village where I stay alone, I volunteer to teach the village children. There are no Government teachers, and the little knowledge that I have I want to pass on. For this reason the village elders chose me for the reconciliation training.

My hope is for PEACE in my community and throughout South Sudan.

**Because of the pain and suffering I experienced,
I have chosen to forgive what has happened and who hurt me in war time.**

Unfortunately, I lost my two brothers during the war. Both were shot, one in 1995 and the other in 2003. My old parents moved away to Western Equatoria to live with my sisters.

My passion is for the young people of my village.
I want to ensure an understanding of what unity means
so that no matter what politicians may do for their own interests
the young ones will not be influenced and injured like I was.

**My action as a Peace broker/mobiliser
will be to run awareness workshops on Non Violence
and what a peaceful society looks like.**

I would like to attract recreation centres for the children and youth
with soccer playing, dance and drama groups, drawing and painting.

**This is to bring us all together in harmony and peace.
Through this attention I hope to draw the parents and community leaders into the circle
of peace.**