

I was abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army when I was twelve years old, from my village of Koro, in northern Uganda. The rebels came at midnight and broke down the door where my cousin and I were sleeping. We were both abducted in the presence of our parents, who could not do anything to stop the LRA, knowing that the orders they are given to carry out are always final.

The rebels tied our hands together and we walked through the whole first night. They made us keep walking for the next three days until we reached Kitgum district, about 90 miles away from my village. It was here that I met with my brother, who had been abducted one year earlier. It was a shock when I saw him, but at the same time it made me so happy to see that he was okay. After one week together, my brother tried to escape, but unfortunately he was caught. My brother was brought back to the group where I was and was killed in front of me, to serve as example for others who would want to escape.

We then met with another LRA group who brought ammunition from Sudan, and the commander of this group wanted someone young to carry his chair. Being the youngest, I was selected to go with this commander. To gain his trust, I lied about how long I had been with the LRA, telling him I had already been with the LRA for three months. On hearing that, he thought I was loyal to them, and he gave me freedom to move. Our group approached the border of South Sudan, and that is when I decided to escape. I was so scared. I had been thinking about it from day one, but this was the first time I had the opportunity to escape. I left while the others were asleep and walked the whole night until reaching a large displaced camp called Atiak, where authorities helped me get back home to my village.

When I came back home, I had the fear of being abducted a second time, which would have resulted in me being killed for having escaped. So I joined the thousands kids who used to walk miles each night to go to the town center to sleep, where there was some security. We used to sleep at the bus park and under verandas -- anywhere in the center of town was safer than being exposed to abduction in our village at night. This is where I first met the founders of Invisible Children, and I told them the importance of education in my future. I knew that education was the only thing that could change the situation in northern Uganda. Through the filmmakers I met Jolly Okot, the Country Director of Invisible Children, who began setting up a scholarship program for kids like me in northern Uganda. I joined the scholarship program and was supported through my studies for six years, alongside thousand of other kids from northern Uganda.

For so long, I thought that I was alone and that our situation was forgotten by the rest of the world. I thought people did not care about what we were going through or about stopping the LRA. But when I came to the United States in 2006 for an advocacy event called Displace Me, I was encouraged. Thousands of youth in America came from all over and slept outside in the cold, trying to bring attention to what was happening with victims of the LRA. Many similar campaigns have

followed and now the whole world knows about the LRA. The youth from around the entire world are demanding that the LRA be stopped.

Through education, my life has been transformed. Education has made me independent, and it has changed my future. As a boy, I dreamed of being a human rights lawyer, so that I could fight for others who have suffered injustices just as I have. I have traveled the world as an advocate, sharing my story and making people aware of what is still happening today in central Africa. Now, I am proud to say that I have received my diploma in Law, and am working for a law firm in Uganda. I am happy to pay forward what has been done in my life to many who still need the same.

I feel I should join the world and do what has been done for me not only in Uganda, which is now peaceful, but also to my brothers and sisters in the DRC, CAR and South Sudan, who are now going through the same suffering that I went through. Their children are now being taken; it is their brothers now who are being killed. I stand before you today to advocate on behalf of those in central Africa, to call upon the world to get involved in stopping this war, and to urge that we stand together to provide a brighter future for the victims of the LRA.