

Newfound Hope

Malual Deng Duot '11

BY SUZANNE WENTZEL

When Malual Deng Duot '11 MA boarded the bus in January, he knew he was making history. His mission: to vote on a referendum that would grant autonomy to South Sudan. The vote represented more than the prospect of independence. It held out hope that war would never again ravage his homeland.

As a child, Deng Duot had endured the horrors of a civil war that began in 1983. Separated from family and home, he became one of the tens of thousands of "Lost Boys of Sudan." Without food, water, parental care or protection, these displaced children fought to survive as they made their way through hostile environments to refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya. Eventually, 3,800 boys, including Deng Duot, resettled in the United States.

When he came to Villanova to pursue a master's degree in political science, Deng Duot found a community institutionally invested in helping him tell his story and advocate for peace. In classrooms and other venues, he was invited to share insights into genocide, politics and life as a refugee. Speaking at a vigil organized by the Office for Mission and Ministry, Deng Duot and other Lost Boys stirred the hearts of attendees, many of whom contacted the White House to urge support for Sudan's peace-building efforts.

"People want to help but don't always know how," Deng Duot says. "I wanted to motivate others to speak out so that no one ever has to experience what we did."

Supported by faculty and administrators, Deng Duot also helped get out the vote. He encouraged fellow Sudanese to travel with him—on buses provided by Villanova—to Virginia to register for, and then to participate in, what would become a landslide victory for independence. "I was excited, not because I wanted to see the country divided but because separation will bring, we hope, lasting peace."



Malual Deng Duot '11 MA, who as a child was one of the tens of thousands of "Lost Boys of Sudan"