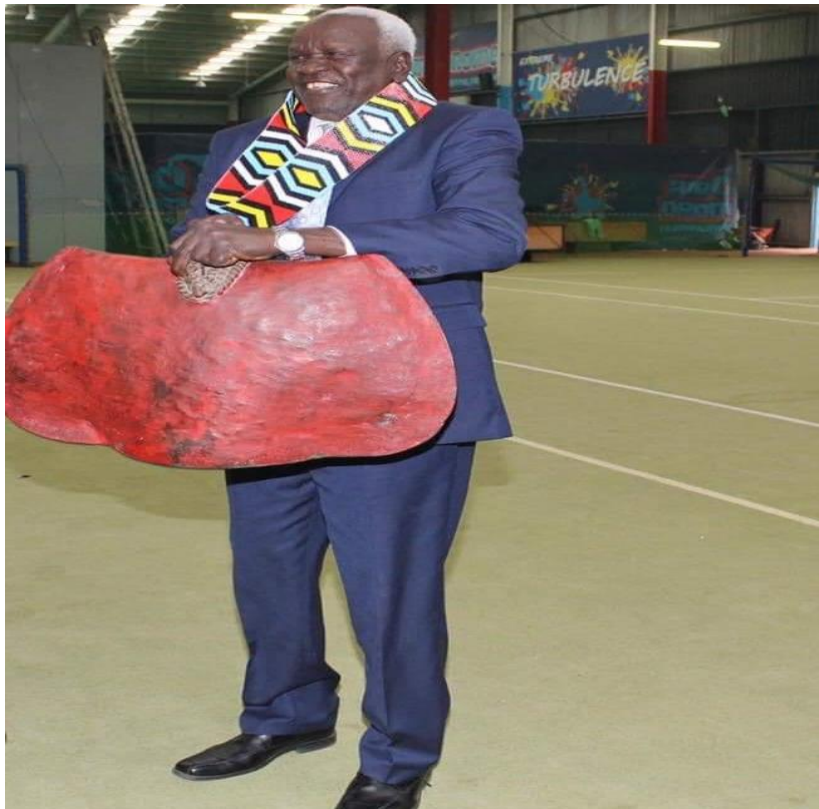


## **The Historic Visit of Mechak Ajang Alaak to the United States and Canada in April 2023**

*The Pioneer, The Former Director of Education in The Refugee Camps, Mechak Ajang Alaak Visited the United States and Canada and Echoed the Important of The Technological Know How for South Sudanese Community*

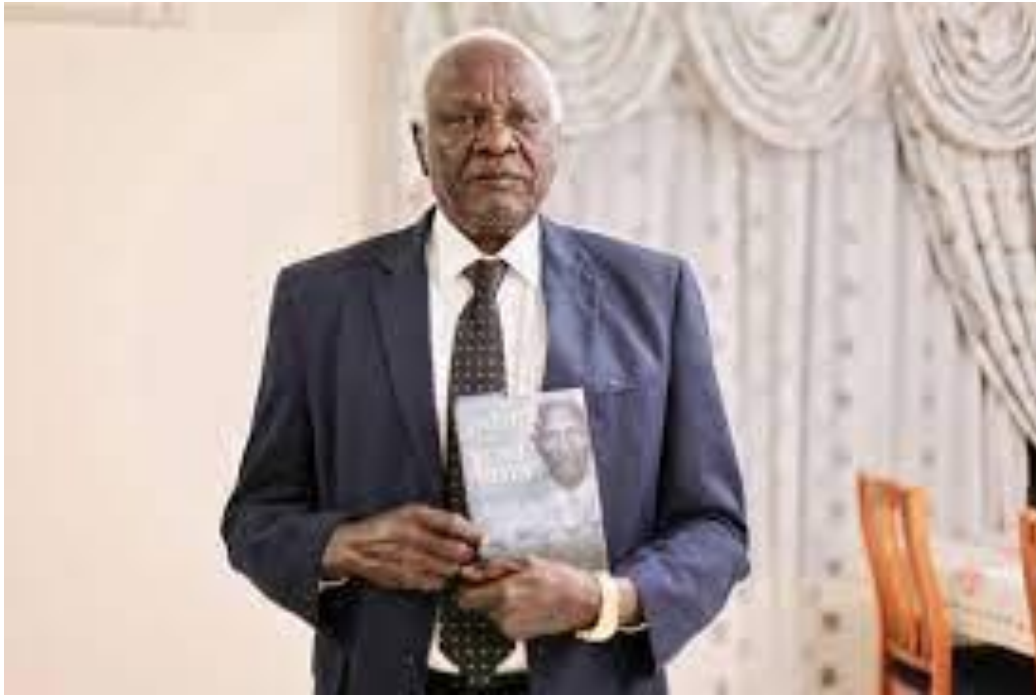
**Wednesday, April 19, 2023 (PW)** -- Mr. Alaak arrived in New York City, United States, on April 06, 2023. He will visit the South Sudanese in various states and Canada. More schedules of his state visit and times will be revealed. The Current schedules indicated that he would tour the Eastern Seaboard States, Midwest and northern parts of the United States. Mr. Alaak is currently in New York. He will visit Dallas Texas, Omaha Nebraska, California and the Twin Cities of Minnesota and more Schedules including the schedules of his visits to Canada would be revealed. In York City, Mr. Alaak reunited with former lost boys and girls whom he helped to teach in Ethiopia and Kenya and reemphasized the importance of education and technological knowledge.

### HEAR THE SOUND OF THE BELL



Mecak Ajang Alaak is superbly known as the father of the lost boys and girls. In the above picture, he is again ringing a traditional bell to reawaken the South Sudanese youth in diaspora Australia, USA and Canada to make use of the full power of the pen to manage resources, ensure a flourishing education and developmental goals to keep South Sudan as a new rising star among African nations.

### **Brief Biography of: Mecak Ajang Alaak**



*Mecak Ajang Alaak – 2020*

Mecak Ajang Alaak was born in 1944 at Kongor in Jonglei State, South Sudan and educated in Malek Primary School under the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Rumbek Senior Secondary School. He later proceeded to the University of Liberia, West Africa, where he studied Mathematics and Physics. He then went for further studies at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom, obtaining an advanced degree in Education Management. He also studied French at Lumbubashi University in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

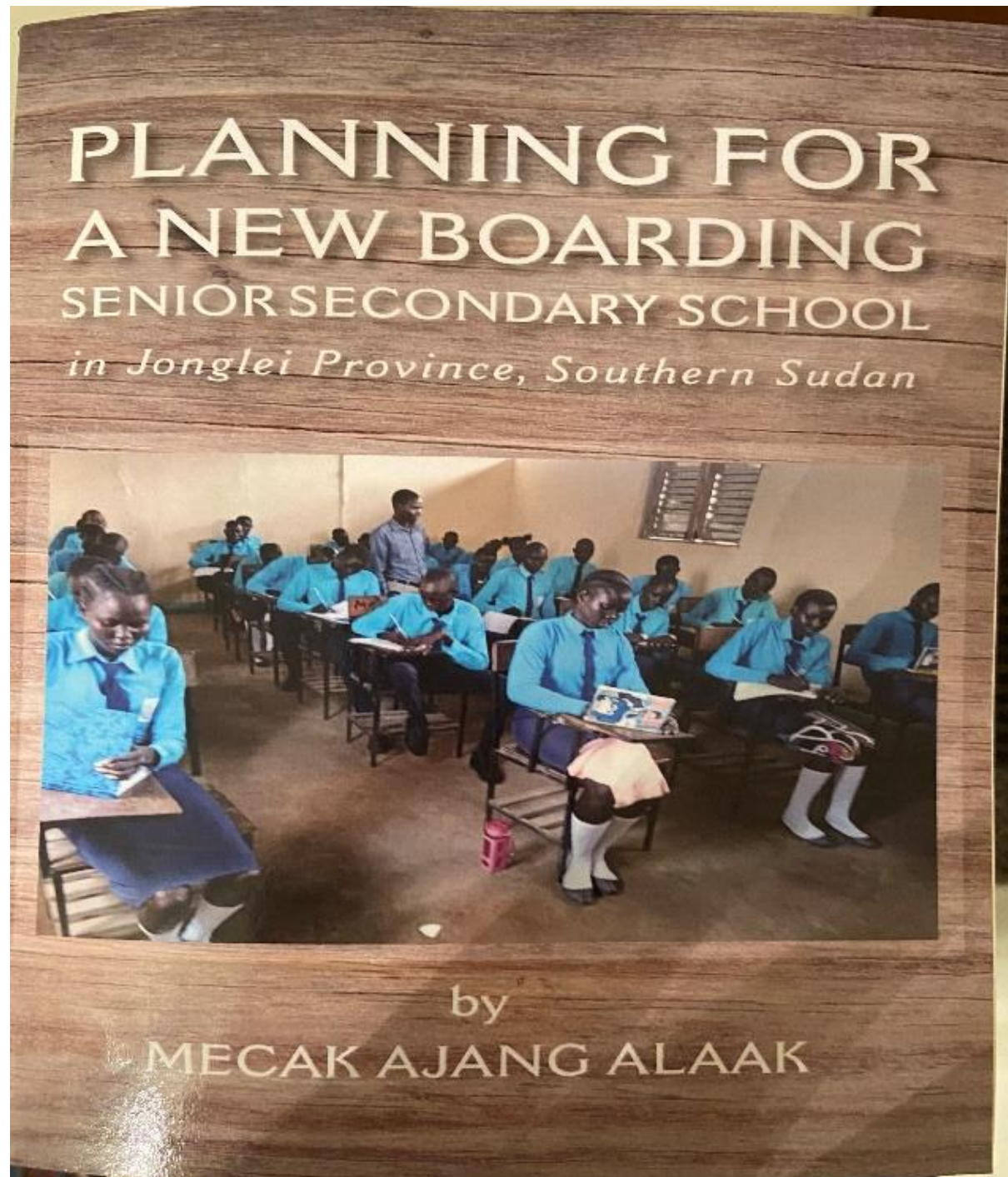
Mr. Alaak is currently serving as the Chairperson of the Jonglei State High Election Commission. Before he became a refugee in Ethiopia, he served in many capacities in the Sudanese Ministry of Education in Khartoum. He taught Mathematics and Physics at Alma Master Rumbek Senior Secondary School before he became the first Headmaster of Malek Senior Secondary School in Jonglei State. He served on the special committee which researched the area where Jonglei Canal was to be carried out. He also served as the Director for Educational Planning, Development and Scholarships for South Sudanese.

Mr. Alaak was the founder and director of refugee schools in Ethiopia and Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya, which served the educational needs of the now famous Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan. His care for this special group of refugees rightfully earned him the title of the “Father of the Lost Boys”.

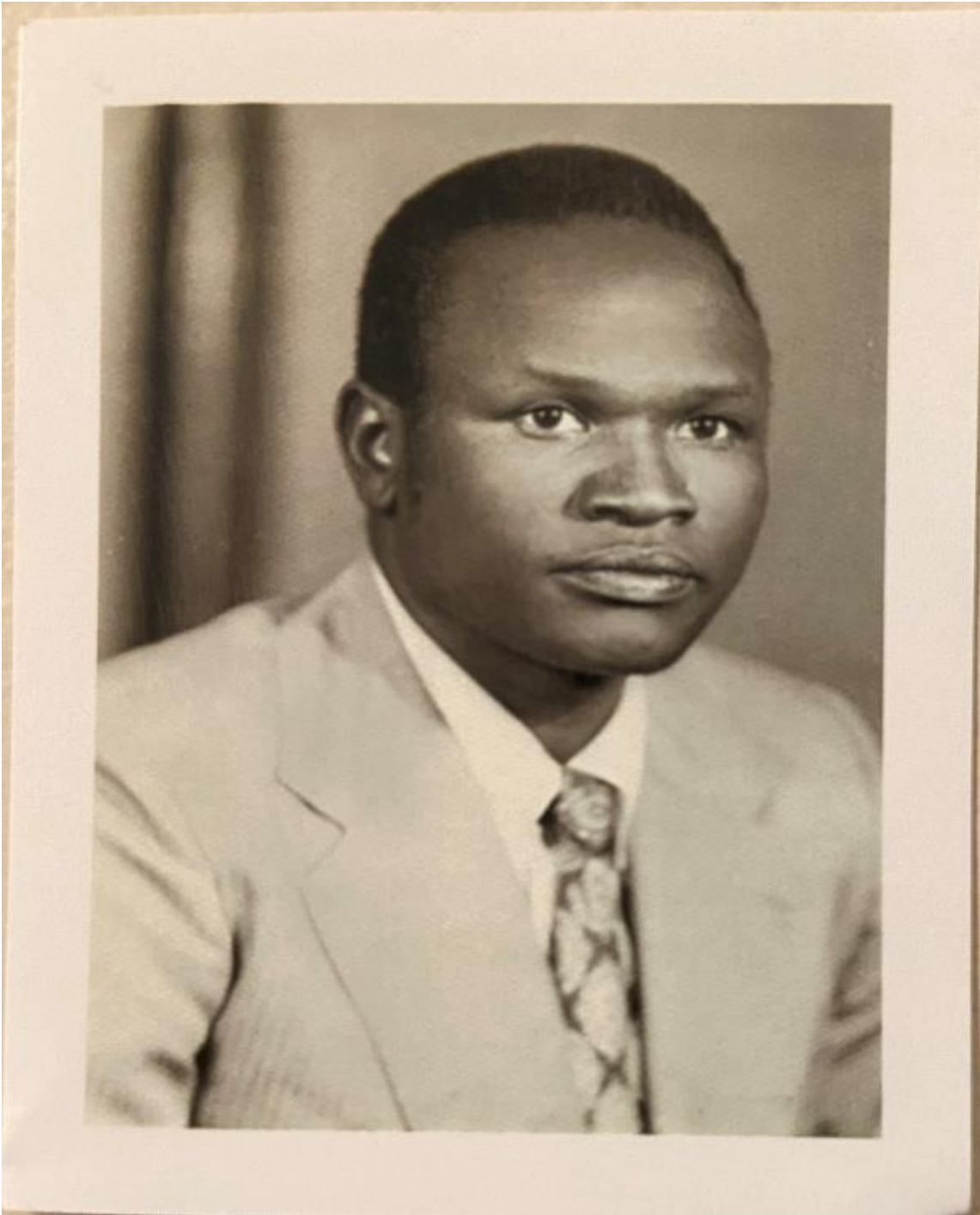
In Australia Mr. Alaak was the former lay member of the Anglican Church Synod of South Australia (1998 – 2005). He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Australian Refugee Association, South Australia. Because of his works with refugees, he was awarded Austcare Paul Cullen Humanitarian Award and Caritas Australia award as a recognition for his peace and reconciliation around the world.

Mr. Alaak is a father and grandfather and also a great sportsman. He was a great wrestler among his Dinka peers and held a record in high jump (1.85 meters) in the African Athletic Competition, which was organized in Addis Ababa in 1967. Mr. Alaak authored this book “Planning for A New Boarding Senior Secondary School In Jonglei State province.”

**PLANNING FOR A NEW BOARDING SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL IN  
JONGLEI, PROVINCE**





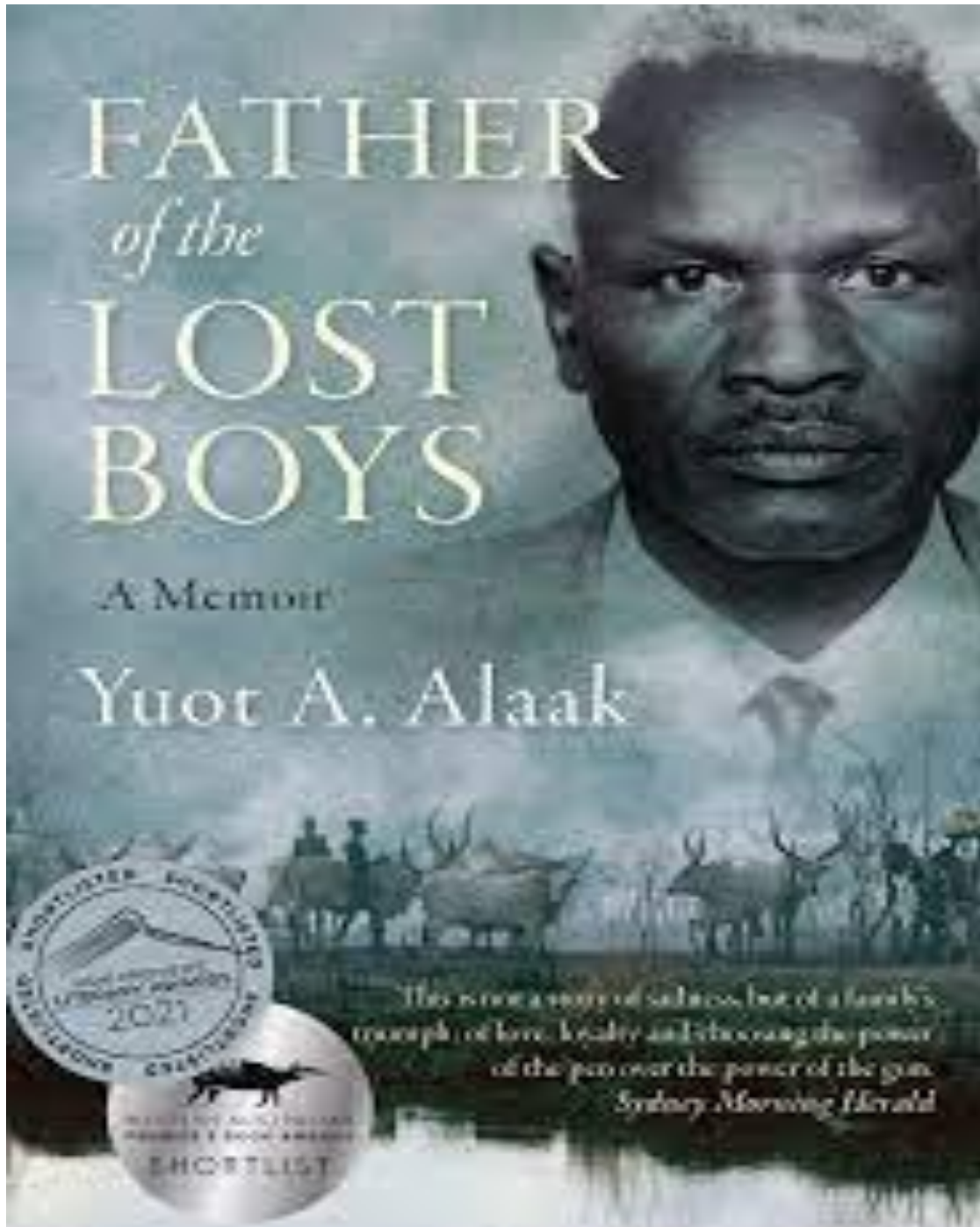


*Mecak Ajang Alaak at Leeds University, UK, in 1980*

This book's purpose concerns the plan for building a boarding senior secondary school in Jonglei Province, Southern Sudan. The book was prepared to provide educational reality and statistics of the area, lacking from the plan and survey of the Jonglei Canal. The little development in the area happened during the 10 years of peace following the Addis Ababa Agreement (1972 – 1983). The eruption of the war in 1983 shattered the dream and did not ensure the construction of the planned boarding school. The war dragged on for several years and resulted in the killing and displacement of millions of civil populations. The schooling activities came to a complete stop in the South. The Sudanese armies occupied the premises that accommodated the school, and the teachers and students fled for their lives.

Appendix A, B and C were provided to show how the Sudanese policy makers prioritized northern region more than the southern in the educational area; thus, creating educational gaps between the North and the South. The issue of unequal development in the country and the imposition of Islamic Sheria laws were the main causes of the two wars.

**FATHER OF THE LOST BOYS: A Memoir by Yuot Ajang Alaak**



*Father of the Lost Boys*



*Author : Yuot Ajang Alaak*

Father of the Lost Boys tells the story of Mecak Ajang Alaak, who led almost 20,000 unaccompanied minors out of danger during African's longest civil war (the Second Sudanese Civil War 1983 – 2011). This memoir was written by his son, Yuot Ajang Alaak, who was the eyewitness of this account and was once trained as a child soldier at the age of 12 years old.

Before taking on his role with the now-famous Lost Boys of Sudan, Mecak Ajang Alaak was a prominent educator imprisoned by a government that served its own propaganda interests and announced his death over the radio. The family conducted his funeral, only to discover he was still alive. The story follows the Lost Boys as they journey through rainforest, savannah and desert to escape a genocidal war and devastation,

His son, Yuot Ajang Alaak and his parents migrated to Australia as refugees in 1995. He first lived in Adelaide before his mining dream materialised and his career as a geosciences engineer took him to Western Australia almost a decade ago. This is the extraordinary true story of Mecak Ajang Alaak, who never ceased to believe that the pen is mightier than the gun.

**MY VISION FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN OF SOUTH SUDAN**

In 1952, at age of 8 years, my parents nominated me for a school. As traditional elders, their vision was for me to serve as a translator in their negotiations with the Anglo – Egyptian rulers that governed the Sudan. Additionally, they wanted me to be the court clerk of Pan – Alek (aburkamin Pan – Alek) to record their cases and coordinate the collection of poll taxes. The authority of the day levied poll taxes on every adult male, without reference to their income or resources. In March 1952, I entered Kongor Bush school (it was dubbed bush school because of its remoteness) and remained there until I completed 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. In March 1955, I entered Malek Primary School third and fourth grades. Then in 1958, I enrolled in Obel Intermediate School for four years, and joined Rumbek Secondary School in 1962.

Until I enrolled in Rumbek Secondary School, I strongly remained faithful to the vision that my community set out for me. I developed a different vision for myself in Rumbek. Although the focus was still on serving people, I decided to expand the scope to include the whole of South Sudan. I wanted to serve in the same manner my community chief served our people. My family background was that Kongor Community gave them the responsibility of being the chief of the cattle camp (bany de wut), and my great-grandfather, Pager Yuot Ajang, was the one given that responsibility. The role of the chief of the cattle camp is to organise the people to herd their animals well, make sure that they are taken to places of good green pastures with plenty of fresh water sources so that their animals are healthy, produce more with plenty of milk. The chief of the cattle camp is not paid, and nothing is contributed to him, his main aim and mission is the services of the people without a reward, only their welfare. This is where I got the idea of providing services to people without reward.

At Rumbek Secondary School in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year in the light of my great results, particularly in mathematics and physics. I concluded that my vision would include educating the children of South Sudan in the field of sciences and technology to have industries so that our local resources can be utilised for the management and development of our nation.

At the start of the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983 – 2011) in June 1983, I was the headmaster of Malek Senior Secondary School in Bor, Jonglei Province. My task at that time was the management and establishment of the only new secondary school in the province. Jonglei was also where the construction of the Jonglei Canal was the topic and the focus of the day. This area has faced tribal conflict, reducing Jonglei State to a poverty zone. The difficulties of educating the few that were to get an education in that institution were many and complex. At the beginning of the war in Bor, the Sudanese Armies occupied the premises that accommodated the school, and the teachers and students fled. South was divided into three regions, and Islamic Sharia was the country's law.

I went to Juba, where things were a little calm and from there, I was transferred to the education department in Malakal, where some education was going on. In Malakal, the underground movement for the south asked me to organise a group there in coordination with Dr Lam Akol in Khartoum. In June 1986, I was imprisoned for eight months being accused of being the fifth column of the Sudan People Liberation Army (SPLA). After my imprisonment, I was transferred by the security authorities to Khartoum. On my arrival in Khartoum, I was invited to a secret celebration for all the prisoners in Sudan who came out of prison and were awarded certificates of national struggle by Philip Abbas Khabush.

While in Khartoum, the politics of Sudan became clear to me. I found out that the support of the SPLA was above average because all the marginalised groups were in support, and the nation of South Sudan was to be achieved. The majority of the people were in the bush armed to the teeth, and at that time, it became very clear to me that what the South needed was



educated manpower with the capacity to manage and develop the very nation we were fighting for.



*Mecak Ajang Alaak in Cairo, Egypt in 1989*

While in Khartoum I got the information that there were underage unaccompanied minors including my children in the refugee camps of Itang, Pinyudu, Dimo etc. in Ethiopia. From that day I started praying that if I had the chance of being there, I would execute my educational goals and vision that I began working on in Malek Secondary School in Bor. I knew that I will be trained as an officer by the SPLA but because of my age and experience I would be assigned the role of educating young children. In November 1988, God answered my prayers when I was nominated by the government of South Sudan in Khartoum to go to Cairo and organized the intake of 300 students of the south to Egyptian universities with scholarships from Egyptian



government. My approval to travel to Cairo was given by Prime Minister, Sadiq al – Mahdi even though other cabinet ministers opposed it according to their security reports about me. In December the same year I went to Cairo for the above assignment. After the completion of my



assignment in February 1989, I left for Addis Ababa and declared myself a refugee there. I did not stay in Addis Ababa for long but went to Pinyudu Refugee Camp in Ethiopia near South Sudan border where my family was with those unaccompanied minors.

#### *My family in Pinyudu Refugee Camp in 1990*

My vision became crystal clear after visiting 16,000 unaccompanied minors' parts of the camp. I saw that the liberation of the country was being concluded and the new nation of South Sudan was very near. What was needed was the education to produce the manpower to manage and develop it. In the camp I started my voluntary work without any assignment and after few months I was nominated for the officer's military training in Bongo. After my graduation in July 1990 I was commissioned as a captain officer in the SPLA and assigned to manage the education of those children in Pinyudu Refugee Camp and that was the start of my work with the lost boys and girls.

#### **THE SETTLEMENT OF KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP IN JULY 1992**

When refugees from South Sudan arrived in the refugee camps of Itang, Pinyudu, Dimo and other camps in Ethiopia they were immediately given plots of land and that created a good mix

of the settlement of the communities. After the Ethiopian rebels got control of the country and ousted Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam, who gave the refugees protection. We had no choice but to leave Ethiopia. On the way out the refugees grouped themselves according to their related communities until they arrived in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Northern Kenya in July 1992. To separate them and settled them differently was difficult and nobody in the camp attamed to do so.

The camp was a refugee camp and the plans were according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) laws and regulations. We in the education of the camp did not have problem with the children to be with their parents or near relatives. It is also known that any education of any child in the world is done with the full support and contribution of the parents or direct relatives. Children's education and wellbeing was the key priority of the whole community and was given the full support by the South Sudanese education authorities in the camp. History, culture and the mother tongue were provided by the community. Strong understanding of the inner spirit of the individual child keeps our families strong and our communities strong. If our communities are strong then our country is strong. The family is the subset of the international community. It was also good for these children to be far from the culture of the gun violence which was threatening the stability of our tribal communities.



*Wikipedia: School children in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya*

The major hurdles to education which were faced by the Headmaster of Malek Senior Secondary School- in Bor, Jonglei Province and who later served as the Direction of the Refugee Education in Kakuma- were all totally solved by UNHCR. Students' accommodation and feeding was with their parents or direct relatives. Trained teachers from Kenya and some of the refugee teachers were appointed and paid for. Learning spaces were erected and learning materials were provided. Extra work to keep order during the free hours of the students while in schools was planned and paid for.



*UN Credit: © UNHCR/Betty Press*

The type of education in Kakuma was made to be a gate way to the western world. Even though the person who planned this type of education was pushed out from Kakuma by those who had other plans for these children, it was difficult for them to alter it because it was a well thought and grounded system. Our country will not get this type of education again even now when we are liberated.



*First Classes in Kakuma Refugee Camp in 1993*

## A WORD OF ADVICE TO THE DIASPORA FROM SOUTH SUDAN

### 1- Make use of your being in the diaspora

God has brought you here in the diaspora, so please make use of being here. There are many things you can do and some are mentioned here.

- a) Educate yourself even if you did not have a chance of going to school back home. Please start anywhere and continue gradually.
- b) Bring up your family the way you believe that they will be useful people of the future, who will be fathers and mothers of the future generations.
- c) Make money if you are strong because money will be the solution to your future plans.
- d) Make properties because the world is a small village and the property you have here now where you are will help you were ever you want to be in the future.

### 2- Education of your children

You have to work hard with the local community around you and the school your children go to. Offer to them full opportunity to thrive at school, transition to higher education and / or employment, and contribute fully to the country of their residence society. They have also to contribute for the family back home in Africa and themselves for their own benefits. Part of the type of education is mentioned in technical education page 12.

### 3- Keep your culture and mother tongue

As a family, please teach your children their geography, history, culture and mother tongue.

### 4- If you want to join politics

Politics is a contested space where things are done by concession and you must be prepared for that. If you want to be a leader at any level you want, please make sure you have the following attributes:

- a) A good character.
- b) A very clear vision.
- c) A good education.
- d) very good orator.
- e) A very good cooperative partner to back you up of what you are doing.
- f) Be a good team member of the group working with you. Making politics in not in isolation, you must have a group you are working with.  
Below are few points any team working together for their betterment and success should watch out:
  - Where there is friction, no work is done.
  - If two people who are given a job to perform do quarrel, the reasons could be one is a thief and the other one does not know what to do.
- g) Basic wealth to support your vision. This wealth must not be stolen ones by you or your parents, it must be from own sweat and hard work.
- h) A good home where your supporters and friends meet you.



## 5- Unity of the South Sudanese in the diaspora

The South Sudanese in the diaspora should know their strength: They have the population, the capacity, and the wealth. What they need is the unity and peace among themselves and work as a team. They can rescue their homeland from the crisis and violence it is in. They can also manage and develop it, if they are united without leaning to their local, tribal identities and alignment.

### **The natural resources we have**

The following natural resources are available in our country, but we remain poor because of wars and lack of technical knowledge have resulted in them not being utilized:

1. Good agricultural land
2. The water resources (Sudd system)
3. Forest (Thau, gum, timber, fruits, and others)
4. Wildlife and tourism
5. Fish and fisheries
6. River transport and river port (Dhiam-Dhiam)
7. Livestock (cows, sheep, and goats)
8. Soil, sand, and grass
9. Solar energy
10. Oil and gas
11. Minerals

### **The technical education we need for our youth for development goals.**

Technical Education is industrial, practical, or mechanical arts and applied sciences. In other words, technology is the application of practical or mechanical sciences to industry or commerce. With the training of our people in Technology, Science and Engineering, the resources we have in our country can be developed fast. “We must use what we have to get what we want”. Some of our South Sudanese youth here in the diaspora and back home have done well in their studies, but achievements have been predominately in the arts. Southern Sudanese people who have finished their university education in Australia, few of the people are in their field of studies, the rest, who are physically fit are working in manual jobs.

Most of our children do not take up technical subjects or accept to go to trade schools because the parents and the community do not encourage them to do so. The reasons are many, but I will mention only a few:

1. The community and parents discourage their youth from taking these technical subjects, because they don't result in degrees.
2. The children's basic knowledge about literacy and numeracy skills are low at the primary level.
3. At secondary level, our children's level is very low in Mathematics and Sciences.
4. Many children complete secondary school without a clear plan about their future careers and the courses they should take at the university level.

### **Recommendation**

The way forward to encourage our youth to take up technical subjects is for the parents and the community to do the followings 10 steps:

- 1- Educate the parents and the community about the importance of technical education.
- 2- Children in the primary school to have good literacy and numeracy skills.
- 3- Children in secondary school to have a good mathematics and science base.
- 4- Community and the parents to have very good link with the schools where the children are studying.
- 5- Children in secondary school to be helped by the community and the schools to have good career choices in technical subjects.
- 6- During holidays the parent and the community should help the secondary school students to get holiday's jobs in technical fields.
- 7- The South Sudanese communities to form committees in their states to support the youth in their studies of technical subjects.
- 8- The leadership of South Sudanese at federal level to coordinate the work of the state's communities.
- 9- Community members in the diaspora to support their young relatives in Africa to study technical subjects, with incentives, financial or otherwise.
- 10- The leadership of the communities in the diaspora to encourage the Government of South Sudan and people to establish technical education institutions.

The above 10 points might appear difficult, but I tell you:

“You never try, you never know.”

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