Vandi- from Freetown, Sierra Leone

Hi, my name is Vandi and I was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone. There was a war in my home country, so we had to leave. When I was six, my family was living in a refugee camp in Liberia, which is a country that neighbors Sierra Leone. We were picked by some officials there to come to America. I was really sad because I had to leave my family and friends; I will not get to see them again until I am grown and can go back to Liberia as an adult.

Leaving was hard, but my mom made me feel better by telling me that in America we would learn to use the telephone to keep in touch. Now, I can call my family and talk to them by phone. They speak Mende, and I speak English to them to help them learn my new language, too.

I have been in America for six years now, so I don't speak Mende much anymore. Coming here was amazing. It was my first time being in a real plane. My first impression of America was, "Wow! This is huge!"

I like living in America. The education is better. The teachers here help me more than the teachers in Liberia. I had trouble learning in school in Liberia. Here is different.

I am a Muslim and that's really different, too. We don't celebrate Christmas, but the day after Christmas, my mom and dad go and buy me presents. I go out with my sister on Halloween, and we get candy. We celebrate Valentine's Day. On Thanksgiving Day my mom cooks a turkey. We didn't do that in Liberia.

The United States has lots of roads and sidewalks, which we don't have in Liberia. To go anywhere in Liberia you walk on the flat land. Our house in Liberia was only one room. In America, our house is huge. We can spread out in different rooms.

In America, I play football, soccer, basketball, and go on Facebook with my friends. I also play dodgeball, which I love. We didn't have any of those games in Liberia. I like to read books like The Bridge to Terabithia and Amulet. I also read comics. My favorite American foods are hamburgers and pizza. My favorite food from Liberia is a spinach and rice dish. In my home country we ate rice with every meal.

Although I was sad to leave, coming here was amazing. It was my first time being in a real plane. My first impression of America was, “Wow! This is huge! It's really big!” Now I can work hard in school and learn to be a lawyer and help people when I grow up.