

# Lopez Lomong

## The Lost Boy of Sudan



Photo by Spencer Allen

When Lopez Lomong was 6 years old, he was one of more than 100 young boys kidnapped by government soldiers from Sunday Catholic mass in his native country, Sudan. They were taken to a prison where they were trained as child soldiers. However, Lopez escaped with three friends through a narrow gap in the prison fence and ran for three days until they crossed the border into Kenya. They spent 10 years in a Kenyan refugee camp run by Catholic missionaries. At the refugee camp, Lopez had only one meal a day. He played soccer to forget about his hunger.

Lopez lived as a refugee for more than a decade, convinced he would spend his life at the camp. Despite being separated from his family, he considered himself lucky.

Thousands of boys drowned, were eaten by wild animals, or were shot by military forces in Sudan. With the help of the Catholic Refugees Relief Operation, Lopez was among 3,800 Sudanese boys to arrive in the United States in a program that would be known as the “Lost Boys of Sudan.”

Once in the U.S., Lopez became a naturalized citizen and started running. He won a New York state high school championship, and went on to college at Northern Arizona University. He was the NCAA indoor champion at 3000 meters, and the outdoor champion at 1500 meters.

One year after gaining his U.S. citizenship, Lopez qualified for the U.S. Olympic team in the 1500 meters and also finished fifth in the 800-meter final during the 2008 U.S. Olympic Trials. Lopez was chosen by the team captains of the U.S. Olympic team to carry the U.S. flag in the opening ceremony at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China. The U.S. Olympians felt that he deserved the honor of flag bearer because he had overcome so many hardships and was so proud of his U.S. citizenship.

As a “Lost Boy of Sudan,” Lopez Lomong overcame many challenges to survive, let alone become one of the world’s top runners. His story of his race for freedom and his determination to succeed is an inspiration throughout the world.

### Questions for Thought:

1. Think of the hardships that Lopez went through as a child to survive. How did that affect his determination?
2. How easy would it have been for Lopez to give up? How easily do you give up on things?
3. Lopez was elected to carry the flag because of his immense pride to be a U.S. citizen. What does pride mean to you?