

# MUGISHA IS BUILDING A LIFE HE LOVES IN NWA

“My name is Saratiel Mugisha, I was born in Rwanda. I was young when I left in 1994, after the genocide.

## OUR MOTHER WAS EVERYTHING TO US.

When we left in 1994, we were separated from our father. As kids, our mother would feed us, make sure we went to school- and she was on her own.

When we were registering as refugees in the camp, we [realized] our father was in the same camp. The last time we [had seen] him was in '94. It was surprising- happy, and also shocking - to unite with him again in 2000.

## I WAS IN KENYA FOR 22 YEARS.

When I went to Kenya, I was something like nine years old. [When I left,] I had been in Kenya for 22 years. Of our eight siblings, our firstborn died when she was 12. Two others [went missing] on a big night for running away.

Being in the camp for more than 20 years is not easy. The camps are located in the northern part of Kenya, the desert, where no farming or cultivation can be done. Most of the people depend on donated food given by UNHCR. Political and religious insecurity is a big issue- Muslims who became Christians would be attacked as well as those who worked in politics. [It is dangerous] for people who are LGBTQ and for people who start a business because they are believed to have money. People die everyday in the camp because of the lack of medication and hospital facilities.

In 2017, they let me have my own case - as one person. My mom died in December of 2018 due to an issue of insecurity. My dad remained in the camp with my siblings.

## I CAME TO THE U.S. ON THE SECOND OF DECEMBER, 2021.

[When I got the call,] I was very excited and happy. I knew I was getting a chance to move to a place where I would feel safe.


In Africa, when you think about America, Canada, Australia, other countries, we feel excited. **I felt so happy when I arrived, but it was also a very big challenge.** I arrived during the winter season and there was nobody [who spoke] my language. For two weeks, I felt by myself with nowhere to go, no one to talk to. **I came to know my co-sponsors after two weeks, and they became my friends.**

## WITH TIME, I STARTED MEETING PEOPLE, I GOT A JOB, AND THINGS STARTED TO CHANGE.

Getting work as a Case Manager has made me forget some of the things that happened. **I appreciate Canopy a lot and I feel happy when I'm serving our clients or refugees because I know the life they underwent.**

It is important to me to exercise equality and treat people as the same. People in the community who may be refugees or may be outcast, when they are shown love and care, *you see they're just people.*



A man with a beard and short hair, wearing a dark jacket over a patterned shirt and jeans, stands on a grassy lawn. Behind him is a modern building with large glass windows reflecting the sky. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

**FROM RWANDA TO  
ARKANSAS AND MANY  
PLACES IN BETWEEN:**

**After living in a refugee campy for 22 years, Mugisha was excited and nervous to finally start a new life. Today, he serves as a Case Manager with Canopy, and his background gives him a personal connection to the new neighbors he works with every day.**