

# Elizabeth's Story



- § I am from the Dinka clan in Sudan.
- § My life was torn apart by the civil war. My husband, my 3 year old son, and many family members were killed.
- § I ended up with my three children and two brothers at the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya in 1997. The children were kidnapped and taken to Uganda. I was put in the camp prison until UN representatives came and placed me in the Camp Protection Area.
- § More than 12 months later, with a new baby, I was reunited with my children.
- § Starting a new life in Wollongong in 2003:
  - Head of a household of 8
  - I could not speak, read or write English until I went to TAFE.
  - Slowly, I built a new life as a community leader.
- § Dinka culture
  - family structure, "so many cousins"; families with more than one wife
  - weddings & divorce, parenting

*I thank God for protecting me through these things  
and bringing me to safety in Australia.*

# ENDORPHIN HIGH



**THE TRUTH** – For nearly 27 years of my life, I believed my Mother had died from heart failure or cancer when I was young. She did not die from cancer; she actually killed herself by jumping from the Gap at Watson’s Bay in Sydney at the age of 29.

**DISCOVERING FAMILY LIFE** – My Father remarries and settles us in a house in Sydney’s Mount Druitt and we begin our upbringing as proud but impoverished ‘westies’. We spent most of our early childhood in a variety of “Wesley Mission Homes”.

**EXERCISE ADDICTION** – In this photo I was training around 40 hours a week. While I win competitions I am dangerously thin and unhealthy. My periods stop, my body frightens my friends, and yet I think I look great. I experience a nervous breakdown and attempt suicide.

**RECOVERY** – My journey of self-discovery and healing... from an obsessed and depressed little girl lost, to a healthy Mother with a blossoming and balanced life. Today I run a small home based business coaching people to live a sustainable healthy lifestyle.

# AN ENLIGHTENED LIFE



- What I thought was my greatest tragedy was when my sight began to fail eighteen years ago.
- My eyes have been opened to a world I'd never known; I don't see people as I once did.
- I feel warmth in their voice or a smile on their lips; yes, my world has changed.
- Then an experience occurred that I thought I would never survive - Post Traumatic Stress.
- I have adapted, also embraced, the wisdom along with compassion; a way that has enriched my life.
- I do not just stop to smell the roses; I feel their soft petals too.

# Thinking Happy Thoughts ~ A Fairy Tale ~



- ✓ A crisis of faith – growing up Gay
- ✓ The long breath - waiting to exhale
- ✓ University - a new start, new friends and new opportunities
- ✓ Coming out – a family affair
- ✓ My first Mardi Gras Parade - embracing myself and community
- ✓ Giving back - finding my place & being the Foundation Fellow of the Phenomenally Furtive Fellowship of Freely Flirtatious Frolicking Safe Sex Fairies

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