



A Story of Hope: From Slavery to Freedom

John

I am 17 years old and I'm from Ghana. When I was 10 my older brother and I went to Libya, the journey took a long time. When we arrived my brother put me at work as a bricklayer for an Arab man. The work was very hard for my young age and I have always suffered back pains. I have never earned any money, my brother took it all, I only had the right to have a meal, and I worked from 5 am to midnight.

After Gheddafi's death my brother went back to Ghana and left me alone with the Arab man. He had promised me that we would have gone back home together and that I would have gone to school, they were lies. When I called him he told me "what are you going to do in Ghana? Stay there and work for that man". I trusted my senior brother, so I stayed there. I managed to save 2,000 dollars. When my brother got aware of the sum he persuaded me to give him the money so that he could bring me back to Ghana. Sometime ago I discovered that he opened a shop for his wife and bought a new car instead.

The war exploded and I managed to save other 1,000 dollars to pay the only escape route, a rubber boat across the Mediterranean. They stamped a number on my arm, that number allowed me to enter the boat, we were 120 people on a rubber boat that could carry 80 people.

When I arrived in Lampedusa they brought me to Asti in a shelter run by the Pope John XXIII Association in partnership with the local Caritas. After three months in the shelter I have been transferred in a family that belongs to the Association, in which I still live. Together with the couple that run the family (the wife is Nigerian while the husband is Italian) I'm trying to find my place here. I attended Italian lessons, I did voluntary work with a disabled boy and hand labour. I also worked in a farm as a hired hand during tomatoes harvest because I have a humanitarian residence permit that allows me to work. In future I would like to attend a vocational school, so that I can learn a profession, and get my driving license, in order to finally find a good job.