



**Family:
Khamisa Abdalla,
Mohammad
Kambal &
Family**

**Artist:
Caitlin
Applegate**

Khamisa handed me the tools I needed to bring forward this piece in physical form. An artist herself, she described her journey to me with a series of symbols. From the few things she brought with her from Sudan, her own drawings adorning the house, and she herself a sculpture, I learned how to express this family in one figure. The small figure she carries is from a drawing of a woman Khamisa met in Sudan. This woman is to Khamisa a symbol of strength. I placed this figure in the palm of her hand to express the courage she herself had to bring all her children safely to this country. The opening in her chest is from a small gourd sculpture a cousin sent her from home. Inside is a mirror, itself a reminder of Africa. I placed a butterfly inside the cavity of the sculpture because Khamisa described to me how she found a symbol of hope in the colors of butterflies. Her faith was renewed when she saw one. I could not and still can't, fathom the experiences of war. The resilience of the children, the strength of the mother, and the eloquence of the father all played roles in the outcome of this piece.

I was humbled by this family's journey. I found that my own enormous sense of displacement is miniscule in comparison. The Arabic writing on the base of my piece describes the idea that home is not where you reside, it is where you are safe, where you find comfort; it is your family. During the course of a relationship that grew over nine months, I found that despite our remarkable differences, there are many similarities, and Lincoln marks the common ground.

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Khamisa Abdalla says it is painful to think about the civil war that caused her family to leave the Nuba Mountain of Sudan. All those horrible things run in my mind like a movie, she says. I see how my family was threatened, the faces of my students who became spies on me, the day I sold my home and land for money to travel, the shadow of pain on my son's face when the soldiers took him away to join their regime. But, the big screen picture still alive in my mind is my old Mom waving with weak and thin hand, with a rain of tears flooding her wrinkled face.

Photo: Khamisa Abdalla and Mohammad Kambal

Photo Credit: Johanna Sawyer

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