A Game Changed

Tani’s family came to America with nothing. A year later, he became a chess champ and everything changed.

AS YOU READ
Think about how Tani might have felt when he arrived in the U.S. How did playing chess help him?

It would all come down to one move. Tani Adewumi took a deep breath and studied the game board. He was competing in the last round of a 2019 chess championship in New York. He had already beaten 72 opponents. Now he faced his last challenger—and made his final move.

Tani won! He was named the best in his age group. His life was about to change.

Escaping Danger

Less than two years earlier, Tani and his family had been living in Nigeria. It’s a country in Africa. A violent group there was trying to take over the government. Deadly attacks were common. Tani’s family lived in fear. They knew they had to escape the danger. They left Nigeria in 2017.

“We didn’t carry that much with us,” Tani says. “We just left for a new life.”

The family arrived in New York City in December 2017. Tani’s parents both got jobs. But they couldn’t afford to rent a house or an apartment. They moved into a homeless shelter.

Tani and his brother lived on a different floor than their

Everyone needs help sometimes. If someone helps you, try to do the same for others.

Don’t give up. The first tournament I played in didn’t go well. But I kept trying.

Talent alone won’t get you far. You might get lucky once in a while, but it takes hard work to succeed.
parents. They didn’t have a TV or a fridge to store snacks.

“It was rough,” Tani says.

**Game Changer**

Tani went to a new school. He didn’t know anyone. But he found a group to connect with: the chess club.

Tani met with the chess club on Thursdays. Every night, he would lie on the floor of the shelter and practice.

Tani had low scores at first. Still, he kept practicing. His hard work paid off. He took home the trophy at the championship last year.

“It was so big, I couldn’t carry it!” Tani says.

**A New Home**

Tani wound up with more than just a trophy. His story made the news. Soon people **donated** more than $200,000 to help the Adewumis.

But the family didn’t keep the money. Instead, they used it to help other refugees like them.

The family did keep one thing—a home. Someone paid for a year’s rent on an apartment. Tani finally had a new home to call his own! Now Tani has a kitchen where his mom cooks his favorite meals. He even has a laptop to practice chess on. He hopes to do well in this year’s championship. But last year’s win will be hard to top.

“It changed my life completely,” Tani says.

—by Tricia Culligan

**Refugees and Immigrants**

Each year, more than a million people around the world leave their homes to move to the U.S.

*Refugees*, like Tani, are forced to leave their country in order to escape danger, such as war or violence. They leave behind their homes and most of their belongings. Most will never be able to return home. It would be unsafe.

*Immigrants* choose to leave their homes. They want to settle in a new place with more opportunities, like better jobs or schools. Unlike refugees, they usually have time to plan their travel. They can pack and say goodbye to friends and family.

**Words to Know**

*opponents*: people or teams that compete against others in a game or contest

*donated*: gave to a cause