

## Features

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# Omar Bah '10



**Omar Bah** was nearly beaten to death in a jail cell in Gambia a decade ago. His crime? Writing newspaper stories about the country's brutal dictator. Here in America, we take freedom of the press for granted. In the West African nation, it doesn't exist.

Bah risked his life to tell the truth, but the beatings and threats eventually forced him to flee. After a perilous journey, he landed in Providence to forge a new life, thanks to his persistence and hard work. Guiding him along the way was the University of Rhode Island. He attended the Providence Feinstein Campus, majored in communication studies, earned a bachelor's degree—and learned that anything is possible in a democracy.

Although he worked several jobs, refugees were always on his mind. Their story is his story, and he wanted to help. Today, he's founder and director of the [Refugee Dream Center](#) in Providence, a nonprofit organization that is quickly becoming the go-to place for refugees seeking support.

The Center educates refugees about healthcare and job opportunities, offers English language classes for adults, organizes after-school and mentoring programs for children and even makes house calls. Trauma counseling is also available—a must for many who have been tortured or raped.

Bah also lectures throughout the country about the challenges refugees and immigrants face, represents Rhode Island and the Northeast at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and is the author of the memoir *Africa's Hell on Earth: The Ordeal of an African Journalist*.

“I want to be an example for other refugees,” says Bah. “Despite all the challenges, opportunities are here. Refugees can do it.”

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