

Ousmane Diarra

(Speech given at LVGH Volunteer Reception)



Good evening,

My name is Ousmane Diarra and I have been a student at Literacy Volunteers since 2019. I am nervous but I am so happy to share my experience with you.

I came to the United States from Mali in 2000. I started in New York City but then I came here to Connecticut because my brother was already here. My brother helped me find a job and I worked at a Dollar Store for many years.

I used to drive a taxi and I would drop a lady off at Literacy Volunteers for classes. I wanted to know more but I didn't think I could qualify to be in classes. My ex-wife did some research for me and told me to come here and start studying. At that time in my life, I couldn't really read or write more than a few words in English.

I got my CDL and was working as a truck driver but every time I needed to paperwork, I needed to ask a coworker for help. It was embarrassing and I wanted to be more independent.

When I got to Literacy Volunteers, I got the best treatment I could ask for. When I came here for classes I had no self-worth or confidence. I wasn't thinking about my future, I was just surviving. Now I see myself and the world so differently. I am able to do so many more things independently and I know I can do so many things in my future now.

Since I started classes I became a citizen. I bought an investment home here in Hartford. I bought land in Mali to build my mother a house, I created a business with my brother to prepare for my retirement one day and I also bought land to build my own house.

Coming here and getting help with reading and writing was the best thing that has ever happened to me. If I could tell someone about Literacy Volunteers I would say: Come and start your life. This is the place to start, and I have proof. You can get help with everything you need for your future.

Thank you for everything you are doing to help your students. I am proof that it's working!

- Student since 2019
- I came to U.S. from Mali in 2000
- I had difficulty reading and writing in English
- I always needed help with paperwork.
- Since coming to classes, I became a citizen, bought a house in Hartford, bought land and started a business for retirement in Mali
- I see the world differently now. I see myself differently.
- Now I am planning for a future.
- Coming to Literacy Volunteers was the best thing that ever happened to me.