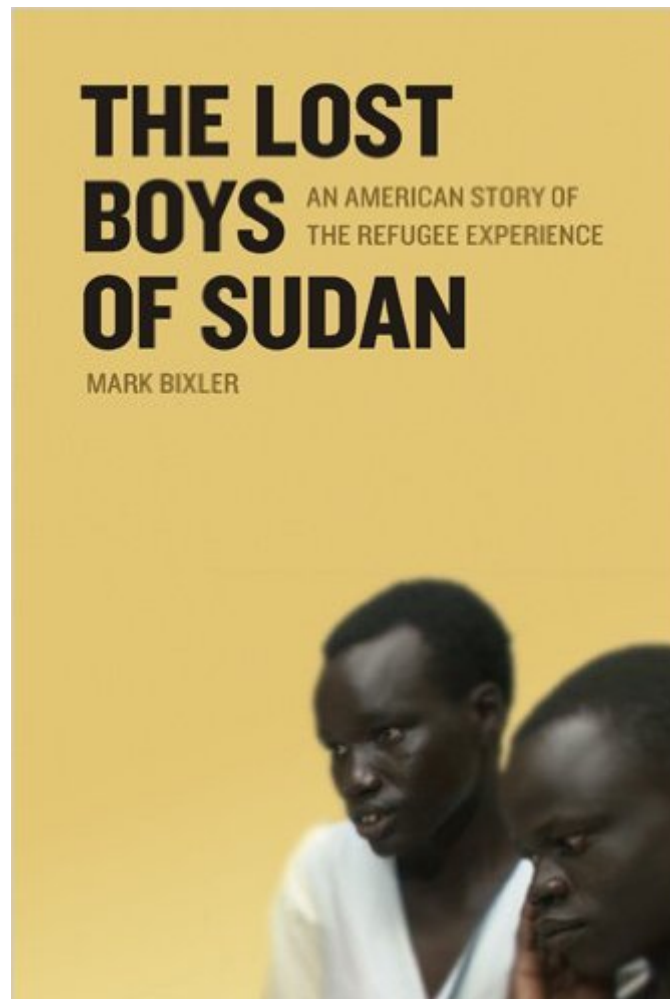


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The Lost Boys Of Sudan: An American Story Of The Refugee Experience



Synopsis

In 2000 the United States began accepting 3,800 refugees from one of Africa's longest civil wars. They were just some of the thousands of young men, known as "Lost Boys," who had been orphaned or otherwise separated from their families in the chaos of a brutal conflict that has ravaged Sudan since 1983. *The Lost Boys of Sudan* focuses on four of these refugees. Theirs, however, is a typical story, one that repeated itself wherever the Lost Boys could be found across America. Jacob Magot, Peter Anyang, Daniel Khoch, and Marko Ayii were among 150 or so Lost Boys who were resettled in Atlanta. Like most of their fellow refugees, they had never before turned on a light switch, used a kitchen appliance, or ridden in a car or subway train—much less held a job or balanced a checkbook. We relive their early excitement and disorientation, their growing despondency over fruitless job searches, adjustments they faced upon finally entering the workforce, their experiences of post-9/11 xenophobia, and their undying dreams of acquiring an education. As we immerse ourselves in the Lost Boys' daily lives, we also get to know the social services professionals and volunteers, celebrities, community leaders, and others who guided them—with occasional detours—toward self-sufficiency. Along the way author Mark Bixler looks closely at the ins and outs of U.S. refugee policy, the politics of international aid, the history of Sudan, and the radical Islamist underpinnings of its government. America is home to more foreign-born residents than ever before; the Lost Boys have repaid that gift in full through their example of unflagging resolve, hope, and faith.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In 1983, while the rest of the world looked away, a civil war broke out in Sudan between the Islamic controlled government in the north and the people of the south who were Christians or animists. This conflict would eventually result in the deaths of hundreds of thousands, more than five million people driven from their homes and would force two million Sudanese to seek refuge in neighboring countries. Among these refugees was a group of at least 20,000 children aged 7 to 17 years of age who were separated from their families and forced to make their way alone over hundreds of miles of an unforgiving wilderness until they finally arrived at the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Northwest Kenya where the United Nations Committee for refugees created a sanctuary for "The Lost Boys of Sudan." By that time, more than half were lost to starvation, disease, attacks by wild animals, and bandits. I first met the Lost Boys in Kakuma in February 1998, while on an inspection tour for the U.S. Department of State. I was amazed by their story and was even more amazed by their dedication to each other and to making the best of their existence at Kakuma. Even though there were food shortages in the camp. They asked if they could get more books and teachers because both were in short supply and education was the most important thing in their lives. I learned that they were still at risk in Kakuma and that hardly a week went by without one or more of the boys being kidnapped and forced to fight in the civil war. These were children to whom fate had dealt a cruel hand but who were adaptable enough to survive. As there was no future for them in Kakuma, I made the decision to recommend that they be resettled in the United States.

The Lost Boys of Sudan: An American Story of the Refugee Experience, by Mark Bixler. The University of Georgia Press, 2005. Pp. 261. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God (Leviticus 19:34) Imagine a cluster of tall, thin Sudanese young men waiting in an airport in Washington D.C. They are all wearing the same sweatshirt. They have spent the past four or five years of their life in refugee camps in Ethiopia. This is their first time traveling by air, seeing the U.S., eating chocolate. They are separated from their parents by war or death. They seem, as Mark Bixler remarks, "to have been plucked from another era and dropped into the hustle and bustle of contemporary America" (96). They anticipate another flight to Atlanta, Georgia, where they will begin a life they have been anticipating for some time- hard work in the hopes of saving up money, passing the GRE, attending college, and making a new life. And it just so happens that other boys like them, also from the Sudan, have been featured on the CBS program 60 Minutes II and in The New York Times Magazine. On CBS you learn that these young men are committed to hard work so they can receive an education. Bob Simon in the 60 Minutes interview asks one young man

how many hours he wants to work. The answer: Sixteen hours a day. Why? The answer: I need to have money so that I can go to school. In the New York Times, we see these opening words: This is snow. This is a can opener. This is a life free from terror." These are untypical, sympathetic men entering what is for them a strange new world.

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