

God grew tired of us:
a memoir by john bul
dau



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In John Bul Dau's memoir, *God Grew Tired of Us*, he tells the inspiring and heart wrenching story of the Lost Boys of Sudan. This two hundred and eighty one page book was published in 2008 in the USA. John's moving story begins by explaining the tense political situation in his beloved homeland, Sudan. Sudan is a country located in Northern Africa. John was born in 1974 into the Dinka tribe in the agricultural and cattle raising farm of Duk County. The environment of southern Sudan is scorching hot and dry, however the farmers and herders in Sudan, including the one's in John's own village, adapted to their surroundings by using different techniques to hunt and grow produce varying on the season. He grew up in his peaceful village very content with the simple, traditional ways of the Dinka and his Christian faith. However, when the tension between the tyrant Arabs in the north and the minority Christian tribes in the South escalates into a civil war, his life changes to one of constant fear and panic. The adults in the village know that it is only a matter of time before the Civil War reaches their village; however, they soon realize there is no place for them to run.

One night when the northern soldiers, nicknamed "Djellabas" for their Arab clothing, shelled and attacked his village. During the violent attack, John runs out of view from the soldiers and hides with the man whom he thought was his father. Once the attacks end, John finds himself alone and naked, with a family friend from his village that he had mistaken for his father named Abraham. The two flee into the scorching hot desert and begin to walk east towards Ethiopia to find safety.

Along the way, John meets up with tens of thousands of other Lost Boys and Girls, the name given to all children of Sudan who had lost their families in the civil war of Sudan. Along their tiring journey, they face deadly threats every day such as disease, famine, rape, northern Government troops, hostile tribes, and famine. Sometimes the boys would get so thirsty that they begged others to urinate in a cup for them so that they could have something to drink.

By the end of 1987, when John was barely thirteen years old, the Lost Boys finally cross into Ethiopia to a camp called Pinyudu after an almost 500 mile trek by foot. The adult caretakers in the camp put John in charge of over one thousand other boys in the camp. Even in the safe haven of Ethiopia, John still has to deal with hunger, disease, and overwhelming heat. Just as donations and food rations begin coming in from the UN and other relief organizations and life at the camp starts improving, the entire camp is forced to evacuate the camp during an attack from hostile Ethiopian soldiers.

The Lost Boys then trekked an additional five hundred miles to Kenya, searching for safety. By the time he arrived in the refugee camp of Kakuma, John is eighteen. His days are occupied by learning in the school provided by missionaries at Kakuma. After nine years of living in the camp, John has completed his years of schooling and decides to apply for a resettlement program in America. He gets accepted into the program, and after several months of orientation classes, he settles in Syracuse New York.

Once John arrives, he gets sponsored by a local church, who furnish his apartment, teach him American customs, and drive him to school and work

before he gets a car. John soon realizes that America is a place where educated, hard-workers will become successful. He works two and sometimes three jobs at once so that he can afford an education and send money to the Dinka back in Kenya and Sudan. He comes to terms with the fact that he was never lost, for God had found him.

In this book, John Bul Dau conveys several life lessons to the reader. The two which stuck out to me the most are that you should always have pride of where you come from and that hope should never be lost, even in the worst of situations. Through demonstrating a constant pride in his Dinka heritage, a strong faith in God and a positive and hardworking attitude, John proved himself as an excellent role model for all people.

While John wanders through the desert and in and out of a few refugee camps, it would have been easy to forget his Dinka heritage and become ashamed of who he was. After all, the reason he was in danger was because of his religious beliefs and Dinka culture. Yet, John continues in his Dinka ways by surrounding himself with other Dinka in the camps singing Dinka songs, sending money to his village from America when it would have been easier to only support himself, and finding a Dinka wife. Not only did John overcome incredible odds, he did so with pride in who he was.

Through the most difficult situations possible, John somehow retains his faith in God and a positive outlook on life. One example of this occurs when John was about to begin his march from Ethiopia to Kenya, hoping to find safety in Kakuma. Before embarking on this journey, he and the other lost boys sang a prayer in high spirits, " Lord bless our journey, give us joy and peace... We

thank you and worship because your words we have listened to. Help us believe in you in our heart and life, now and forever." When placed in a situation as difficult as John's, it would be so easy to give up and lose hope, however John would not. I strongly believe that it was this complete faith that kept John alive and eventually got him to America.

The five themes of geography are very prevalent in God Grew Tired of Us and play a huge role in John's life story. Sudan's relative location is south of Egypt and west of Ethiopia. It is a dry, desert land that is scattered with lush oases. The people living with in this North African region have very strong religious beliefs and are known for there story telling. Likewise, in God Grew Tired of Us, John recounts many stories he remembers hearing from his elders. Sudan is one of the most diverse countries in all of africa, with nearly six hundred tribes that speak over one hundred languages. There is also a very unique way in which these people interact with their environment. The natives in Sudan some how produce crops in very dry weather and raise cattle to survive. I believe that johns life was in some way affected by his surroundings as a child.

I was really moved by the heart wrenching story told in God Grew Tired of Us. It opened my eyes to how massive the struggles for freedom still are around the world, and that the fight for justice is not over yet. One thing that really stuck out to me was that the time that John was coming to America was almost parallel to when I was born. In our modern society, I never realized how bad some situations are in other places besides America.

Reading this book has given me a new outlook on how I should appreciate

everything I have. Overall, I thought that this novel was informative, inspiring and I would definitely recommend reading it to anyone.