**FAQ’s (Frequently Asked Questions)**

**How Are Peter and Santino and the Other Lost Boys Now?**

**Santino Majok Chuor** has left the factory night shift and Texas and recently relocated to San Jose, CA. He has enrolled full-time in community college with a generous scholarship from one of the film's viewers. Santino did successfully pass his drivers test. Since coming to the U.S., he has discovered that siblings he had not heard from for many years are still alive and living in other African refugee camps.With Santino’s financial support, one of his brothers has gathered the family and is working to take them back to their home village in Yirol. Santino has traveled a great deal with the film participating in media interviews, school screenings and panel discussions in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Indianapolis and Dallas.

**Peter Nyarol Dut** graduated from Olathe East High School in June of 2003. He is currently a student at Green Mountain College in Vermont with a full scholarship. Along with his studies, Peter is happily playing basketball again. Since the film’s release Peter has participated in meetings with the Congressional Refugee and Human Rights Caucuses, the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Migration and Refugees, the Kansas State Board of Education and CARE.

**The Lost Boys Group** The “Lost Boys” group was resettled all across the U.S. there are Sudanese youth in nearly every state. Some of the largest groups are in Phoenix, Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Grand Rapids, Lansing, Chicago, Salt Lake, Houston, Dallas, San Diego, Kansas City, Richmond, Nashville and Louisville. The “Lost Boys” are strong individuals rather than a homogenous group, so it is impossible to give an update on them all. But as a whole the group is doing well, connecting more with their communities and finding the educational opportunities they are so focused on. Two of the young men who worked with us as translators on the film have enrolled this fall at the prestigious universities, Stanford and American. They are among many Sudanese youth finding academic success. Unfortunately, the successes are accompanied by heart-breaking stories of “Lost Boys” who have been victims of violence in the U.S. The “Lost Boys” are survivors and we are convinced that they will make the most of the opportunities America has to offer them and in the process make this a better country.

**Why Did You Want to Make This Film?**

The Lost Boys story appealed to us for a number of reasons. As filmmakers that like to work in long form observational documentary, we are constantly looking around the world for stories that can be told visually, that have a lot of layers to them and compelling characters. This just screamed out visual storytelling, it’s a classic filmic journey tale, the story touches on a whole range of themes, the “Lost Boys” are engaging and articulate and the list just went on.   
  
We saw the film as a way to tell the story of an underreported civil war in Sudan, an important international story. But we also felt like through the eyes of these young men coming to our country, it would be a unique way to look at ourselves and reveal this crazy modern world we’ve created in the U.S. The newcomer story is so central to who we are as a country. We all know the classic story of immigration in the United States. The myth is that the boat comes in to Ellis Island or to San Francisco Bay. The coasts have communities of immigrants, our big cities have Chinatowns and Little Italys and Japantowns. But the story of immigration in this new century is very much planes landing in small towns and medium-sized cities all over the country. That is exactly what happened to the Lost Boys group, they are living all across the U.S. in nearly every state. We hope that viewers will get a real sense of what it means for us to be a land of immigrants. Who are Americans today? What does that mean? And we feel like the Lost Boys story really reveals that.

**Why Didn’t the Lost Boys Get More Help in the U.S.?**

There are 10 agencies that are officially subcontracted by the U.S. government’s Refugee Program to resettle refugees. Their mandate is to provide basic services to newly arrived refugees such as airport reception, housing for at least one month, household goods and clothing, assistance with applications for medical and cash assistance, referrals to English language courses and job placement services. Their initial period of providing assistance is 90-days, though many agencies work with their refugee clients for much longer and offer many more programs, but the goal is to make refugees self-sufficient. The agencies work with very small staff and tight budgets, receiving only a portion of their funding from the federal government. In our experience the most successful resettlement agencies are the ones that know how to connect with the communities they are working in. Many agencies collaborate with universities and church groups and have mentor programs to help facilitate personal connections and help refugees find education and quality employment opportunities. During our time with the “Lost Boys” we came to understand that the single most helpful thing for a newcomer to this country is a friend, someone to help them navigate their new life. Some immigrants and refugees arrive and have a strong immigrant network to plug into, others like the “Lost Boys” have very few personal connections.

**How Did You Choose Peter and Santino?**

When we arrived in the Kakuma Kenya refugee camp, the UNHCR staff had provided us with a list of 100 young men that would be flying out the following Sunday. We set out with that list to find the young men who would be the main characters of the film. We spoke with 80 of the 100 young men on the list. We had a few criteria: we wanted at least two guys in one location in case one of them decided part way through that they didn’t want to be part of the film; we wanted to follow guys going somewhere in the middle of the country as we felt that was more representative of the “Lost Boys” experience and modern refugee resettlement in general; we were looking for youth whose English level was pretty strong so that they would be more likely to interact with Americans, but most importantly we were looking for strong, interesting individuals. And we found that in Peter Dut and Santino Chuor. Peter and Santino stood out to us from the beginning. Peter impressed us with his energy, practicality and focus, Santino with his warmth and sensitivity. They struck us as two very distinct individuals who would approach life in America differently. They also seemed like two people we would enjoy spending the next year of our life with, and they were.

**Where Did They Get the Name Lost Boys?**

The name “Lost Boys of Sudan” was given to the group of Southern Sudanese youth, by United Nations aid workers who were monitoring their flight from Sudan. The name stuck and though the youth are no longer “lost” or “boys” it is how the youth often refer to themselves. For some it is a badge of honor. They commonly say we are “lost” from our parents, but we were never lost from God or each other.

**What About the Girls?**

When thousands of children fled civil war in Sudan in the late 1980’s the group was predominately boys. Of the 3,800 “lost boys” that were resettled in the U.S. less than 100 were girls. There are several reasons for this. When villages were attacked, the men will killed first with women and girls often being taken captive. Many of the boys in Dinka culture spend time away from the village in cattle camps, they would return to find their families killed and villages destroyed. Others were encouraged by their elders to flee instead of being captured and forced to become soldiers. But there were girls among the boys fleeing the war. Once the youth were settled into the UN refugee camp the girls were placed with Sudanese families, while the boys stayed on their own. Once it became time to identify the girls who were part of the original “Lost Boys” group, Kakuma camp had grown to know be home to 80,000 refugees. It was difficult to identify who the ‘lost girls” were, compounded by the fact that girls are valuable in Dinka culture as they bring a bride prize and families that had taken the girls in were often not eager to have the girls sent to the U.S.

**How Old Are Peter and Santino?**

Peter and Santino are in their early 20’s. Many of the “Lost Boys” genuinely don’t know their ages for a series of reasons. First an individual birth date is not given the same importance in their culture as it is in the U.S. Additionally, birth records were not kept in most of the villages where the boys were born. Since many of the youth lost their parents when they were very young, they didn’t have anyone to keep track of their birthdate. When the group arrived at the UN refugee camps, they were assigned ages, the aid workers made their best guess at the youth’s ages and assigned them all the birthdate of January 1st, with whatever corresponding year seemed appropriate.

**What Was the Hardest Part of Making the Film?**

The most challenging part of making Lost Boys of Sudan, beyond the usual filmmaking struggles of fundraising, permissions and distribution, was not being able to be the friends that Peter and Santino so desperately needed. As filmmakers trying to give an honest portrayal of the struggle to start life in a new, strange country, we had to keep a certain degree of distance from and intervene in their lives as little as possible. It wasn’t an easy thing to do. It was so tempting to just help the guys find good jobs, sign up for community college and make new friends and discuss with them the breadth of who we are as a country. We knew if we did that, we would make life for Peter and Santino better, but not come away with a film that could help people all across the U.S. understand the challenges of being a newcomer to America. We explained that to Peter and Santino during production, but there were many days where seemingly simple things weighed heavily on them and that was hard to watch. Happily, now that the film is finished we can have a real friendship with Peter and Santino and offer them some of the help we had to hold back on. We are so gratified to see that the film does motivate people to extend themselves to newcomers.

**Were Peter and Santino Paid To Be in the Film?**

No, Peter and Santino were not paid to participate in the film. Like journalists, it is not customary for documentary filmmakers to pay their subjects. Peter and Santino signed on because they felt that their story was an important one to share, that the world needed to know how Sudan was suffering and understood that their story was representative of not only the “Lost Boys” group, but refugees and immigrants more broadly. They have had a range of interesting travel and educational experiences with the film from Capitol Hill to Hollywood and everything in between. Through speaking engagements they have made some good personal contacts who have been generous helping them with their education. But both Peter and Santino are still working very long hours and struggling to put themselves through school. One way the film has benefited the “Lost Boys” group in general is that groups across the country have used the film for fundraisers and several thousand dollars has been raised for the IRC’s National Lost Boys Education Fund, though much more is needed to make a real impact for the nearly 4,000 “Lost Boys and Girls” in the U.S. Click here for more information on the National Lost Boys Education Fund.

**Why Didn’t the Lost Boys Feel More Connection with African Americans?**

There is not a simple answer to that question. There is a whole range of experience and opinion among the “Lost Boys” group. We saw that while we were filming and made sure that was honestly represented in the film. One of the things that came up consistently was the Sudanese youth’s searching for what their identity in America would be. Including some of the critical and potentially hurtful statements some of the youth made about their impressions of African Americans was not something we took lightly, especially as white filmmakers. But our goal was to be faithful to the experience of the young men we were following. Unfortunately, the “Lost Boys” arrived with some of their own preconceived ideas about who we are as Americans. While we were in the camp, several of the young men we spoke with asked us if it was true that all black men in America were in jail. It was a sad realization for us of just how powerfully stereotypes travel. The “Lost Boys” we spent most of our time with in Houston had pretty insulated lives during their first year and were slow to make personal connections with native-born Americans. Without that personal connection ideas are slow to change. One of the happy things we’ve experienced with the film is how quickly the “Lost Boys” abandon their stereotypes when they are able to get to know people on a personal level. Many African Americans have commented to us at screenings that they feel like the black community has let these guys down, our take on that is that most people let newcomers down. In what can often be an alienating modern America, many of us don’t take the time to greet our neighbors let alone get to know refugees.

**Will They Go Back?**

Officially, refugees can become permanent residents after a year and apply for citizenship after five years. Every “Lost Boy” has a different answer to the question of whether they’ll go back to Sudan. Some say they will go back as soon as there is peace. Others say that they left Sudan so long ago and have no family to go back to. Most of the youth say that they will return, but not for good, the U.S. is their home now and they recognize that they have opportunities here that will enable them to support their family and their country.

**Is What Is Happening in Darfur Related to the Lost Boys Story?**

The government-sponsored militia attacks that destroyed the “Lost Boys” families and villages and forced them to flee Sudan is a near carbon copy of the firebombing, raping, and plunder of Darfur— today considered the world’s worst current humanitarian crisis. Again government-backed Janjaweed militia are devastating villages. There are of course differences. While both populations are ethnically African, the people of the South are predominantly Christian and Animist while the people of Darfur are mainly Muslim. But the similarities are strong and again there is a whole generation of children enduring unimaginable horrors and losing their families and their childhoods to war.

**What Can I Do to Help?**

There are numerous ways to get involved. You can donate to the Lost Boys Education Fund to help support the youth’s pursuit of education. You can volunteer to be a mentor to a newly arriving refugee. You can help build awareness and advocate for an end to the crisis in Darfur. Visit the [Take Action](http://www.LostBoysFIlm.com/take.html) page to learn more about effective steps you can take to make a difference.