



‘God Grew Tired of Us’: Lost Boys Finding Their Place in the World
Ann Hornaday. The Washington Post. Jan 19, 2007

The title of the documentary “God Grew Tired of Us” is a paraphrase of a poignant observation made by one of the film’s main characters, a tall, charismatic man named John Bul Dau. As one of the 27,000 “Lost Boys” who took the torturous trek from Sudan to Ethiopia to Kenya to avoid being slaughtered in the course of Sudan’s 20-year civil war, Dau embodies not just the ravages of that distant war, but the indomitable will to survive.

This sobering, inspiring film -- an audience favorite and award-winner at last year’s Sundance Film Festival -- is a must-see, if only to remind viewers of the courage, enterprise and integrity that are so often obscured in discussions about immigration.

Dau, who possesses the tall, reed-thin frame characteristic of his native Dinka tribe, is one of three Sudanese refugees whose resettlement in the United States is chronicled in “God Grew Tired of Us,” written and directed by Christopher Quinn. While Dau is getting settled in Syracuse, N.Y., Daniel Abol Pach and his best friend, Panther Bior, are moving to Pittsburgh, where they must learn about such new concepts as electricity, potato chips and their first lesson in the American idiom, “Time is money.” (For his part, Dau is startled by the iconic status reserved for Santa Claus during Christmas, modestly noting that in Africa, he and his fellow Christians experienced the season as a time for spiritual reflection and preparation, of all things.)

Plunging headlong into their new lives, often holding down two or three jobs to make ends meet, they never forget the devastation they’ve left behind, or the family and friends with whom they desperately want to reunite. One of the most moving subplots in “God Grew Tired of Us” has to do with Dau’s search for his mother and siblings back in Africa, and his efforts to bring them to the United States. With Nicole Kidman providing an understated, soothing narration, Quinn tells the men’s stories primarily with indelible images, from their Biblical exodus from their native country to escape a Herod-like directive to kill all the region’s males, to their first glimpses of Western culture and modernity. Indeed, watching them navigate the technological and dietary novelties of their first airplane flight -- not to mention escalators, cellophane-wrapped supermarket produce and pink-sprinkled doughnuts -- evokes some chastening comparisons to similar encounters that were played for such uproarious comedy in “Borat” last year.

There are no laughs here, just deep empathy, as Quinn gracefully observes these cultural clashes without overplaying them as fish-out-of-water set pieces. Instead, he limns with economy and subtlety the struggles of three brave, resilient, quietly heroic young men who start out with a lot to learn, but wind up having much more to teach.

God Grew Tired of Us (89 minutes, at Landmark's E Street Cinema) is rated PG for thematic elements and disturbing images.