



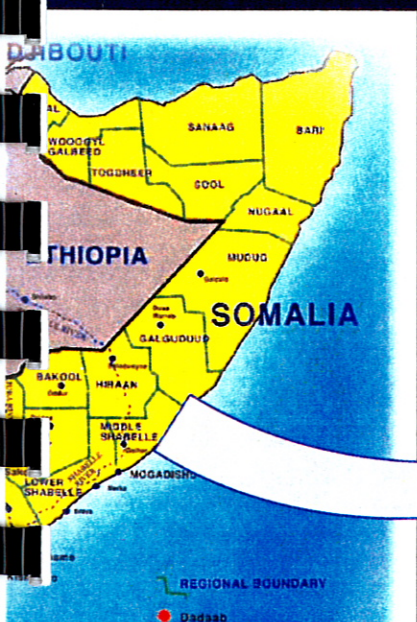
# Finding The Lost

A Study of African Refugees in Springfield



Springfield Expeditionary Learning School

Class of 2010





# Table of Contents

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"I hope one day we can renovate society all together."  
-Anthony student

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Acknowledgements.....	2
I. Introduction.....	3
II. Who are Refugees? .....	7
III. Who are Refugees in Springfield? .....	9
IV. What has Led to African Refugees in Springfield? .....	22
V. What Can We Do to Help Refugees? .....	27
VI. Raps on the Lost Boys of Sudan.....	30

# Acknowledgements

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“Leaving Sudan because their home is in war,  
resources and power are what they fought for.”  
-Jelissa student

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We, the ninth grade class of Springfield Expeditionary Learning School, and our teachers would like to thank the following community members for coming in to our school to share their life stories with us: Hidig, Daiko, Haji, Tamador Gibreel, Abdi, Suban, Omar, Ibris, Mumino, Maryamo, Warsame, and Hasaan. We appreciate your courage to share your personal information with us. Without you, this book wouldn't be possible. Thank you to the Jewish Family Services staff, Father Bill and the High School of Commerce teacher Pamela Grant for collaborating with us to work on this project. We would also like to thank Professor Holly Hanson of Mount Holyoke College and her students for allowing us to visit their class and learn more about African history. We wish to thank Katie Jones for coming to our school to teach us about Darfur and for working with us to create the display for Sudance. Thank you to Ron Berger and Jill Mirman for encouraging and supporting us to publish this book, and to our own Dr. Mahoney for being positive and proud of the work we were accomplishing. Without all of you, we wouldn't have had a book to share with the community.

# I

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## Land of Screams

By Chad

I woke up from the deep slumber in the middle of an African summer  
From the bang I heard in the distance  
I knew it must have been shots from the resistance  
They were coming, coming to ruin my life  
They busted down the door and stabbed my mother with a knife  
I didn't know what to do, but ask, "Why me?"  
And then I felt a feeling deep inside; you see,  
It was a feeling of hatred  
They destroyed the land I used to call sacred  
My land of dreams  
Now it seems that, that place is now a land of screams  
What was I to do?  
I only had one option and that was to run  
I knew that they were never ever gonna be done  
I ended up in a camp  
My whole body damp with sweat  
I was alone, lost  
So they called me a lost boy  
I read Anne Frank  
And now I feel like a Holocaust boy

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# Introduction

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“A land free of war is for what they fought.”  
-Henry student

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By Brittany Angel Lee and Angelina

In the late 1900s, wars spread across Africa, forcing innocent people out of their homes. The wars started because some Africans wanted power, and the structures of their governments were unstable. Due to these wars, families were lost, people were separated, and homes were burned down. One day everything was normal, and the next they were fighting for their lives. People fled their homes to live a life of fear. The lucky ones made it to refugee camps, where millions of people live in poor conditions and do not have enough food to survive. Only a handful of people from African refugee camps get the chance to come to another country in search of a place to call home and a place for their children to grow, without fear of being shot or losing all hope. There are some of these people within the Springfield community today, each with his or her own story. It is important for all of us to know about them, so we can learn more about our community and the world around us.

Over the past few months, the ninth grade Springfield Expeditionary Learning School students focused their expedition on the stories of African refugees in Springfield. We wanted to connect what we learned in social studies to the lives of people in our community. In order to research the experiences of refugees in Springfield, we watched movies such as *Rain in a Dry Land* and the *Lost Boys Documentary*. We also read and explored documents about refugees, published books such as *They Poured Fire On Us From The Sky* and other stories about the Lost Boys in certain parts of Africa.

In order to do proper research, one cannot always rely on written sources of information. We didn't go to Africa and ask refugees about their lives, but we did

interview some refugees that came to Springfield because of the wars in Africa. The stories ranged from a person who saw her mother shot, to refugees who have seen their sisters raped and families killed, to a loving mother who had to leave her precious daughters behind when going to a new country. In this book, you can read their stories and feel their experiences through the memoirs we wrote based on our interviews with refugees from Sudan and Somalia.

Section II of this book, *Who are Refugees?* defines the word "refugee." Section III, *Who are Refugees in Springfield?* contains the memoirs of local refugees. Section IV of this book connects their stories to the historical forces that forced them to leave their countries. It will supply you with the historical information you will need to learn more about why African refugees had to leave their countries. Section V, *What Can We Do to Help Refugees?* provides information and resources to support refugees.

Each section of our book begins with a rap, written by one of us, that describes the life of a refugee from Somalia or Sudan. Many of the raps are about Lost Boys, boys from Sudan who became orphans and refugees because of the civil war. We feel that rap is an appropriate way to express our thoughts about refugees because the history of rap connects to the history of Africa and to the history of social change.



# II

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## Reaching Kenya

By Jacob

Lost boys, runnin' away,  
Dodging bullets everyday,  
There's nothing left, their families, their cattle, their dreams,  
All that's left is their families' screams.

These boys hated running away,  
And wanted to stay,  
They don't know what's gonna happen,  
Tomorrow or today.

They must flee to Kakuma,  
A camp that will keep them safe,  
Where the government airplanes cannot strafe,  
It will be a long journey; they must stay on the down low,  
They start right now, to Kenya they go.

Everyday passing,  
Its gets harder and harder,  
Less and less food and water,  
Its not easy running away,  
Dangers getting larger and larger.

Finally reaching Kenya,  
It was a relief off their chest,  
Living wasn't easy but they did their best,  
Little food and water, what else is new?  
People fighting each other, screaming "What clan are you!?"

Kenya and Sudan are all the same!  
They need to get out of this camp before they go insane.  
But there is hope, a sign-up sheet for refugees,  
To America, a land with new hopes and dreams.

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# Who are refugees?

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“Bang Bang. Oh well, it’s just a kid, just a mom, just a relative.”

-Richaud student

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By Celso

Chris

Julian

Dashay

A refugee is a person who flees for refuge or safety to a foreign country in time of political upheaval, war, natural disaster, or fear of persecution. There are twenty-one million refugees in the world today. Over eight million are refugees who have fled their countries due to civil wars and ethnic, tribal and religious violence and who cannot return home. Most people get refugees, immigrants, and IDPs (internationally displaced people) confused with one another. An immigrant is a person who chooses to leave their country to go to another, usually for permanent residence. Internationally displaced people have been forced to leave their home for reasons such as religious or political persecution, war, or natural disaster, but have not crossed an international border. Civil wars and human rights abuses force over 8,000 people a day to flee their homes (without leaving their country) and relocate within their country origin. Over 500,000 refugees come to the United States each year hoping to rekindle a lost sense of peace.



# III

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## Nightmare

By Natalia

War is a horror, a nightmare.  
Children were scared, parents were aware.  
They were attacked,  
Rebels came behind their backs,  
Little boys separated from family, little girls raped, what a tragedy,  
Having no food to eat, trying to find sanctuary,  
Eyes revealed what was meant to stay unreal,  
Some were saved, but they still remember from this day,  
How can people be this way?  
Togetherness is what we need.  
We should try to forget the bad memory.  
Blood spread, people screamed,  
Many cried, what an awful scene.  
We can make a difference, we can make a change.  
We can save some people starting from today.  
I wish I could make it clearer; you probably don't understand.  
Help out! give them a hand!

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# Haji Adan

P r o u d f a t h e r a n d h u s b a n d



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“Going back to Somalia would be taking steps back, and I only want to move forward.”

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By Ashley Dawn Lee and Avery

*Nebeda!* My name is Haji Adan and I am a refugee from Buale, Somalia who came to America because of drought, famine, and most importantly, civil war. I remember when I was in Somalia, before the war started. I was very young, but I still remember my house made out of cow dung, mud, sticks, and grass. Our life was good and our village was considered wealthy because we had goats, cows, and chickens. When the war had started in 1992, I was around eight years old. I remember the clans that would come to our village and take our food. We usually gave them what they wanted because they'd cause havoc if we didn't.

One night, in the middle of the night, I awoke to soldiers surrounding us. They were trying to scare us so we'd come out and get shot, but I stayed in the hut. Bullets started flying from every direction. Screams and cries were the only noises heard in the darkness. Some people stayed in the hut and used it for protection, but others ran. My father was killed that night by militiamen. My mother and brothers were with me. My mother decided that we should run. I took hold of her hand and we ran. She ran so fast, it was hard to keep up. Then she made a decision which may have saved my life. She let go and ran off with my brothers in her arms. I found refuge in the bush that night,



wondering, hoping, and praying that my mother and brothers were still alive. I have yet to see or hear from them to this day.

I knew I had to get away from the violence, so I walked. Sometimes I traveled in a group and other times I traveled alone. I heard about the refugee camps and knew that I had to get to one to survive. From my hometown of Buale, Somalia I went to the Libio refugee camp, then the Dadaab refugee camp, and then finally to Kakuma in Kenya. However, Kakuma wasn't a safe haven at all. Security was horrible. Rapes and robberies occurred often when I was in the refugee camp. Agencies such as UNHCR sent food to refugee camps, but it's not much. We would be given three kilograms of maize for fifteen days and every month five or six people would die from hunger. I tried hard to learn all the English I could. Once I got really good I was given a job to teach others English. I graduated from high school in Kenya in 2001.

I found out I was going to America after nineteen years in the refugee camp. I had to go through an extensive screening process before coming to the U.S. They taught me about American rules and culture. From May 17 to 24, 2006, I had an appointment with the INS and flew to America. At first I ended up in Bridgeport, Connecticut but soon realized that not many Somalis lived there, and I decided to move. I then went to Hartford where more Somalis lived.

Now I am 25; I have a wife and three kids who are enrolled in school. When people ask me whether or not I would return to Somalia, my answer is: I would never return. Going back to Somalia would be taking steps back, and I only want to move forward. I've learned a lot about my "adopted" culture and I love the fact that I am able to live a happy peaceful life in a country that embraces so many different cultures. I'm trying to get into college, but it's so hard with rent being so high. To get enough money to go to college would be the icing on the cake. *Mahadsantahay.*



# Tamador Gibreel

Caseworker for Sudanese Refugees at  
Jewish Family Services



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"Peace be upon you."

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By Lee      Francesca      Amanda      Rebecca      and Christa

*As-Salāmu `Alaykum* means "peace be upon you" in Arabic, the language spoken in my village. My name is Tamador, and I am a Sudanese refugee who came to America to start a better life. Before I left Sudan, I lived in a lovely brick house with a beautiful yard and a gate that surrounded it. I had ten brothers and sisters, so it was very crowded. There were separate rooms for both men and women. Not everyone had their own room, though. The girls had to share a bedroom and dresser where all their clothes were placed, as did the boys.

My dad was a democratic education teacher while the rest of my family members were, and still are, celebrity singers or musicians. I used to be a producer for a theater, and when northern Sudan started attacking southern Sudan and mistreating them, I wrote a play about the injustices the southern Sudanese were facing and the wickedness of the government. The government was and still is fundamentalist. They took power by force on June 30, 1989 and became corrupted. The message of my play was subtle, but most people knew what was being implied. The government, however, didn't see the message for several weeks. When they did, finally, on the fortieth day, they started



to question some of the actors and myself. The government officials oppressed the staff that worked with me because they either were Muslim or they couldn't speak Arabic well. Finally, we were brought us to a building that was used for interrogations. We were lucky; they didn't torture us. We were put in a room and left alone while on the other side we could hear the blood-curdling screams of people being tortured.

I went to the American embassy and asked for a green card and asylum. I was able to move from Sudan to America to start a new life. It was scary to come to a country and not know the language, but I slowly adjusted. My brothers and their friends helped me resettle here. I went through marital problems and was all alone in Massachusetts, until I got help from women who were very supportive. I'm happy here. I'm happy to be able to connect with American people and tell them about the problems in Sudan. Refugees need everything. They especially need people to teach them, because it isn't that easy to leave your home country. That is where my job comes in. I am a case worker for the Jewish Family Services, which helps refugees from places like war torn Sudan settle into American life. My job is to teach the refugees how to live in America. American life is very different from life in Sudan, and often times the "American Life" classes the refugees attend in the refugee camps before coming over teach them things that aren't necessarily true. I help the refugees with everything from getting a job and paying bills to using a phone and checking mail. Unfortunately, I cannot teach them everything they need to know. Many adults know very little English. The biggest need Sudanese refugees have in America is their need to be taught.



# Hidig

## Somali refugee awaiting the arrival of his family

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"It is the worst place to send a human being."

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By Alexa            Isaiah            Jennifer            Robert            and Lee

It seems like only yesterday I was back home in Somalia. Home in the city where the streets were bustling with people, cars, and camels. People were buying and selling many goods. Only yesterday was I an elementary school teacher in a school filled with children eager to learn. This was before the terror came, before my students had to flee from their own homes, from their own country.

Somalia was not always the treacherous place that it has developed into now. Life was once peaceful and civilized. However, life soon turned into chaos and turmoil for everyone. For many years, the government had turned against its own people and favored just one clan. The favoritism was causing unrest which led to rebellion against the government. People, young and old, men and women, were being innocently slaughtered. Somalia was not a safe place for my family and me anymore. We had no choice but to flee.

Our destination was Kenya; we were seeking shelter and safety in a refugee camp called Kakuma. I ran with my wife and children in the dark. Keeping my children quiet to avoid government soldiers was a daunting and difficult task. My wife and I carried them the whole way because we were all fearful of what roamed in the jungle, lions and humans alike.

The refugee camps were horrible. It is the worst place to send a human being. The heat is unbearable, the food is scarce, and the people are many. There was a

minimal amount of food. We were responsible for building our own homes out of wood, similar to the Somali countryside. We spent our days trying to survive, praying that we would make it through the day. All anyone ever wanted was to get out of the camps and hopefully embark on a journey to America.

I believed that going to the United States would be like going to heaven. Now that I am here, I see that money doesn't grow on trees, but I am thankful for the opportunity here. I am particularly proud of the education I have taken advantage of at community colleges in the U.S. My niece Deko is also taking advantage of the education here. She attends Holyoke Community College and is pursuing a medical degree. There are many Somalis here in Springfield. We are united as Somalis. I will not tell you my clan because clan fighting has caused so many problems in Somalia. Here, I am Somali.

I am happy here. But I won't be completely happy until my wife and children join me. They are still in Kakuma, and I have not seen them in nine years. It would be my worst nightmare to discover that they had not survived the horrors of the camp.



# Medina

S o m a l i m o t h e r i n S p r i n g f i e l d , f r o m  
t h e m o v i e *R a i n i n a D r y L a n d*

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"I walked over the wall and found my mother shot."

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By Manuela            and Breahn

It was a normal day in my village. I didn't know that the beautiful morning was going to be the worst day of my life. I was outside of my house when I heard people screaming. I ran back inside my house and saw my parents get killed. There were gunshots everywhere. People were scattering like the sand.

People that survived the attack got together, and we all started walking. What I didn't know was that the worst part of my life was just beginning. As I walked, I remembered when my parents were murdered. I felt like someone had grabbed my heart and ripped it out of my chest; I thought my life was going to end. But my heart was telling me to have hope and keep going. After two days of walking, five men came up to me. Three of them raped me, and two just stood and watched them. I couldn't believe there were such evil people in the world.

After several days of walking, we finally arrived at a refugee camp in Kenya. In the refugee camp we had more freedom, but it would never be the same as being home. Being in a refugee camp is like being in hell. We didn't have enough food or water. How were we supposed to survive? But I was glad that I had a roof over my head and a place to stay. All I knew was that I wanted to have a safe place for my family and myself. At the refugee camp we tried to have a regular life; my kids went to school, and my husband and I took English classes. My dream was to come to America with my family to have a better life. After spending a year and a half at the camp, my husband



and I started filling out papers so we could come to the U.S. Before we would know if we were coming to America we had to wait six months.

Six months later, one of the coordinators of the refugee camp brought the papers. I was so scared to open the big yellow envelope. First I gathered all my family. Then I opened the envelope, and found out I was approved to come to the U.S. I was so happy I thought I was going to die out of sheer joy. Two weeks after receiving my visa to come to America, the refugee coordinator told me that my plane ticket was ready and that my family and I were going to leave the next day. I was so excited the next morning when we arrived at the plane. At first I was scared to board the plane, but I knew there was a new journey beginning.

The United States is a lot better than the refugee camp. I can eat anytime and still have enough food. It makes me feel so free. But all of my bills are overdue. I never knew that living this good life would cost so much. I am still traumatized over my mother's death, but now I need to go to school for an education and so that I can get a good job. Once I get my job I shouldn't have these money problems with the bills and the rent. For now, the welfare helps me with the food that I need for my family.



# Somali Refugees from the High School of Commerce

Young men and women who are pursuing their educational careers



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“Stay inside the fence and you will have protection. Outside the fence, you are on your own.”

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By Jelissa

The ninth grade students of Springfield Expeditionary Learning School (SELS) spent one morning getting to know Somali refugees who attend the High School of Commerce. While we made personal connections with the Commerce students, it was a challenge to gather information about Africa, refugee camps, and their journey to America. This may have been because some facts were too painful for the interviewees to share, or that it was hard for the Commerce students to express themselves in English and for us to understand them.

When the Commerce students came into the classrooms, we played an Ice Breaker, a game that helped ease any discomfort that they may have had while getting to know us. Then we were all split into groups of about ten or twelve SELS students

with about two refugee students. We worked together to interview our guests. The interviews were fun, but challenging. Some of the questions we had prepared in advance ended up being too personal, and sometimes the Commerce students didn't answer our questions because they were uncomfortable. Realizing their discomfort, we didn't push them to answer all of our questions. In addition, language was a larger barrier than we had anticipated. We learned how complicated it can be to ask others for their stories, but we hope to continue to become friends with them.

## H a s s a n

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By Joey                      and Keturah

I came to America from Kenya when I was eleven years old. America is very beautiful; every culture you can think of is here. You can be African-American, Caucasian, Latino, or any other ethnicity and no one will judge you. School is also very different. When you come to school late in America you don't get hit like you do in Kenya. I like to play basketball and soccer here but I couldn't play for the Commerce soccer team because I came to Springfield after soccer season. I hope to stay in America because it is extremely beautiful and accepting. I could do something wrong one day and the next day everyone will forgive me and I would have learned my lesson. It is a lot better than Kenya. I never want to go back.

## M u m i n o

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By Jessica                      Carlina                      , and Rosalba

My name is Mumino. I'm a nineteen year old 10<sup>th</sup> grader at the High School of Commerce. I have six month old twins and my husband is seventeen. I am from a village called Hamar in Somalia. I don't remember Somalia because my family and I left

when I was about two years old. My family took me to Kenya to go to the Kakuma refugee camp.

Life in Kakuma was okay. My mother stayed home and took care of my brothers, my father worked, and I went to school. At school, if you didn't do your homework you would get hit. After school I would play basketball with my Sudanese friends. One thing I didn't like about Kakuma was the violence. We usually had food, but sometimes we went without for several days in a row.

After being in Kakuma for about fifteen years, I finally got the chance to go to America. The thought of going to America was scary; people at orientation told me when I got there never to fight or touch the Americans or else I would be arrested. They also told me not to marry Americans and to keep my doors and windows shut so that people would not come and steal from me. Some of these stories were true and some were lies. Being chosen to come here was one of the best things that had ever happened to me and my family. The culture is different, but I still practice many traditions.

## M a r i a m o

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By Remy

and Briana

I lived in Somalia for a year and a half; it seemed as though nothing would go wrong, but then the war came and my father and I had to flee our country. Unfortunately, he died while trying to escape. I was only three years old when I left Somalia and moved to a village named Hirabear in Kenya. It was much easier for me in Kenya because the village provided food for us while back in Somalia you had to buy your own. You would also have to share a car or cell phone. Men were the only ones that were able to do hard work.

I finally came to the U.S. when my family wrote an essay telling them why we wanted to leave. It wasn't hard for me to leave Kenya and I wasn't scared to come to the U.S either. I felt as though a new life had been given to me, that I could start over



again, so I found no reason to be angry. Most people were scared to come to America but not me. I don't know why, but I knew that I was coming to a country that had no war and more freedom.

## Warsame

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By Danielle Laurien and Melissa

I don't remember how old I was; all I know is I was young, too young to remember fleeing Somalia. What I do remember are the refugee camps. We would stay at each refugee camp for about two years, then leave and travel to a different camp. Once we left the camp, we were not the United Nation's responsibility anymore and we could be arrested. The UN would walk around the camps and say, "Stay inside the fence and you will have protection. Outside the fence, you're on your own." Life in the refugee camps was hard. We would get food about every fifteen days. All we ate in the refugee camps was porridge, dried corn kernels, or bread. We received 50 liters of water everyday; it was barely enough for our family. In order to receive our food and water, we would have to have our ration card and recite the exact identification number that was on it. If we messed up on one number, we would not receive food or water. In the camps you had to build your own houses out of cement. I didn't go to school, but I had neighbors that taught me Arabic. Part of reason to come to America was for help with my reading and writing. In Kenya, I liked playing soccer all the time, even though it was extremely hot. The refugee camps were not the "luxury life," but they were the closest thing I had to home until I came to America. I came to America on March 18, 2004. It was about a 24 hour flight and my first time ever on a plane. I was nervous and excited at the same time. Now I am in America and very happy with the opportunities I have.



# IV

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## Survival

By Jelissa

Hundreds of hundreds of thousands of lost boys  
Animals were feral not running from toys  
Too wild to tame they chased all the kids  
Kids getting hurt, God forbid  
They had to walk for miles with no domicile  
Kids caring for kids when they're only a child  
Their feet hurt but what were they to do  
Walking barefoot, they had no shoes  
Had a distance to cover it all seemed abject, hopeless  
Courage and support had to be put in effect  
The life they once had was now defunct, gone  
No more playing, laughing, or watching cattle  
Their life became hard, now it's a battle  
Some boys became lost, some were disjointed  
They were in the situation together, tried not to be disappointed

They abhor everything that they had to do  
Walking on and on some felt there was no use  
Their home was attacked it wasn't their fault  
Their fun life was put to a halt  
Leaving Sudan because their home is in war  
Resources and power are what they fought for

A serious situation none of the boys were derelict  
As they kept walking into other districts  
Some refugee camps after a while became destitute broke  
Having the boys go out and search for food  
They ate plants and leaves and twigs from trees  
Their stomachs didn't agree with most of these  
Definitely was a daunting task make it, survive  
Taken to the United States to be happy and thrive

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# History of Africa

What historical forces have led to African refugees today?

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"Africa might as well not be on the map."  
-Amanda student

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By Steven Ashley Victor Avery Patrick  
Angel Manuela Billy Zainab Bethany  
Nick Joe Yashira Mercedes Christa  
Alexa and Cody

The problems faced by different societies today—along with the ones we will discover in the future—are slowly but inevitably connecting the world. We have yet to see the future of Africa and its refugees, but it has become clear that their presence is now connecting with America and the rest of the world. Refugees from Africa are pouring into the U.S in the thousands, as a direct result of wars over precious resources, religion, power, and difference. As historians, the following questions come to mind: "How did Africans get into this situation in the first place?" and "What historical forces have led to present day African refugees?" A few factors come into play when discussing the causes of the present day destruction of Africa, starting with the changes in Europe after the Middle Ages, followed by the slave trade, imperialism, and the independence of the continent.

In the early fourteenth century, Europe was beginning to undergo a change in its society. It was a time of cultural reawakening and scientific discovery. Europeans wanted to know more about the world around them and they wanted explanations for things that occurred. The Renaissance was a time of advances in the arts, technology, government, medicine, and scientific knowledge. As time continued, reliance on religion decreased, and more scientific knowledge about the universe was gained.

Europeans were expanding their trade routes and exploring the unknown world. New lands, like the Americas, were discovered, and Europeans sailed around the tip of Africa. As the size of the unknown world decreased and the power of European countries strengthened, the demand for resources and luxuries increased. Europeans turned to the continent of Africa to supply them with gold, diamonds, slaves and other precious materials. At first, the trade was friendly and some African leaders even enjoyed it. However, the greed of the Europeans took over, and the friendly relationship was soon lost. The slave trade grew more and more brutal as the demand for labor in European colonies substantially grew.

The slave trade had an important impact on the present state of Africa. Before the Europeans began to buy and sell African slaves, a different type of slavery existed in Africa. Slavery in Africa was less harsh; the slaves were treated very similarly to an average African citizen. They could own property and other slaves. When the Europeans came to Africa to trade for resources, the Africans traded prisoners of war, enemies to their tribe, and captured civilians, as slaves to Europeans. Not knowing what the fate of the traded Africans was, they shipped them off to their destination: the Americas. They had to work on the dreaded plantation fields where they were under constant supervision, were beaten and lashed with whips, and had no breaks. Some Africans prospered from the slave trade, but many Africans saw the problems with it. In fact, King Affonso of the Kongo wrote a letter to King John III of Portugal in 1526,

“Concerning the trade on this coast, we notified your highness that nowadays the natives no longer occupy themselves with search for gold; but rather make war on each other in order to furnish slaves... The gold coast has changed into a complete slave coast.”

The document is an article written by William De La Palma the director the director of Dutch West Indian Co. on September 5, 1705. The purpose was to explain the history of the European slave trade and how its started in Africa. It explains how slave trade caused conflict in Africa.

concerning the damaging effects the slave trade had on his people. Slowly, the deportation of Africans had damaged the economy and trust of Africans, only leading to violence and bloodshed.

By the late 1800s, the slave trade had ended. However, European countries were still playing a major role in Africa. Imperialism is another word for colonization,



or the taking over of another country. This often involves the spreading of a new way of life. In 1884, leaders from countries in Europe gathered in Berlin, Germany, for the Berlin Conference. They divided up Africa (without the input of Africans themselves) country by country until they had completely dominated it. They wanted to "civilize" the so called "beasts of burden," take their resources, and spread the word of the Christian God. When the Europeans



This photo was taken in the 1880's before poaching in Africa was illegal. It was taken in Zanzibarr, Africa and it shows men standing in front of ivory, one of the African treasures most pay hundreds for. This photo is a great example of how Africa's resources were controlled and how other countries profited from their resources. It provides evidence for why Africa is in such a poor condition now.

invaded, they made borders to signify their property but by doing so they split up families, tribes and clans, causing conflict all over the continent today. For example, when the Europeans created the national borders of present day Sudan, they split the country into opposing halves which led to one side wanting to own the other. This created chaos and a civil war that is still causing problems today.

Exactly why did the Europeans want to colonize the African continent? The answer is natural resources. Gold, diamonds, cotton, ivory, and other resources were shipped back to Europe. This wasn't all bad because the gathering of the raw materials fueled the Industrial Revolution. New machines were introduced into society which increased the luxury and quality of life. Nevertheless, Europeans did harm by taking land without permission and eventually forcing Africans into societies organized and controlled by Europeans.

Much of Africa got its independence from Europe in the 1950's and 60's. When African countries became free, many problems came along with that freedom. Previously, Europe had governed almost all of Africa for about a century. In some countries, like Rwanda, the European leaders showed favoritism between tribes, giving only one of the tribes good education and jobs. Before the Europeans left, they hastily conducted democratic elections for the Africans but did not stay much longer than that.

After the elections, many times the losing sides were not satisfied, so conflicts started over control of the country. Many African countries could not rebuild their governments because there was often one tribe or group of people who wanted to rule over everyone else. After a while, civil wars started to break out between people in the same countries.

Corrupt dictators, financial imbalances, tribal and religious conflicts, power struggles, civil wars, and blood diamonds have since plagued Africa. The tribes within African countries have different backgrounds which can cause conflict between one another. In Sudan, Christians and Muslims are having

“In 1990, things got really bad. Gunshots could be heard all the time. People started forming gangs. The city was totally unstable.”

This quotation is from a document titled, “Abdi, The Simpler Things in Life.” This document came from a book called *Teenage Refugees in Somalia Speak Out* by Ikram Hussein. The purpose of this document is to tell others how the Somalis were affected by the civil war.

feuds over which religion is dominant, who should govern, and who should control valuable natural resources in Sudan. In many countries, people have been subjected to corrupt and ineffective governments. The rebels fight in order to bring peace to the country and its government, but only cause more conflict, issues, and death.

Africa is known as the birthplace of mankind, and yet we find ourselves in the cradle of life, killing each other over gold, diamonds, religion, and power. We can spend countless hours blaming either the Europeans for their conquests, or maybe even the Africans themselves for the current civil wars. When we see the day that we work together as one society, we will begin to solve some of these problems.

# V

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## Children's Battle

By Victor

There was a group called the Lost Boys of Sudan  
Who had to leave there home without a plan  
Because these bad men left their home derelict, run-down, defunct, no longer in use  
Keep listening 'cause this is where I get loose  
And now it's just a big wreck  
And after a while...  
These boys had no absolute domicile  
No place to live, nowhere to eat, no place to sleep  
And all that time, had no shoes on their feet  
Now along the way they had to sleep with feral beasts  
Cause the only bed they had...was the dirt  
'n' it probably hurt

Wandering through the woods the boys were destitute, dirt poor  
Which is one of things that I would completely abhor 'n' hate

Not knowing what's their fate  
In the end it was a daunting task  
To make it past  
At that point it couldn't get more abject  
and at this point I'm wondering, dude what the heck?!?!

Verse numba two  
What ya gonna do  
Why can't these dudes just get a flippin break?  
Its very important that ya'll don't hate  
Cause I got the skillz  
The kind that get you sick like the boys who had no pillz  
To cure their aches and wounds  
At least we got our nice n cozy rooms  
When all they had were tents  
That they called a home

So make sure that you stop to appreciate  
And listen up son, because I won't abbreviate  
The fact that you live a lucky life doesn't mean  
That you shouldn't be yourself; look at me I'm a G!

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# What can we do to help refugees?

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"Even after death, life still goes on."  
-Julian student

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By Stephanie

That is the question. Many people in the world today are trying to help refugees. Others want to help, but don't know what they can do. We have learned how many refugees have struggled and have heard the stories that have led them to where they are now. Their stories are amazing. Getting that to the public is one way to help. If more people knew what they have gone through and what others are still going through, there would be more understanding. When we watched a documentary about Somali refugees in Lewistown, Maine, there were many people speaking out against them and saying they are no good for American society. We were surprised at how serious these people were. It made us think, what have they done to us to deserve this horrible treatment? By telling the stories of refugees, we will promote cultural sensitivity and tolerance.

## Other Things You Can Do To Help

- Tutor refugees.
- Talk to a teacher about creating a club that supports refugees.
- Learn how to say, "Hello" and "How are you?" in the refugees' languages. You would be surprised that it brings a smile to their faces when you know something from their language.
  - In Somalia, "Nabat" means "Hello." "Iska waren" means "How are you?"
  - In Arabic (Northern Africa), "Ahlen" means "Hello."

- There are already many refugees in Springfield. Talk to them; get to know them. Who knows, you could make a new friend.
- Make donations to organizations that help refugees.
- Participate in community group meetings that support refugees.
- Check out the website [www.arcrelief.org](http://www.arcrelief.org).
  - When you visit this website, send an ARC E-Card to a friend or family member. E-Cards include a photo of a refugee and their story. Help tell the stories of survivors from around the world.
- Volunteer and help raise awareness about the conditions that the refugees and displaced people face. Help your community by volunteering with ARC.
- Write a letter to your senators or representatives.
- Support organizations that support Sudan.
- Support organization the wants to end genocide.
- Promote cultural sensitivity and tolerance.

### **You can help!**

*Together, we can help survivors of global tragedies.*

Even a small act of kindness makes a big difference for someone forced to flee their home. Your support and effort could help people with no place else to turn.



# VI

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## Give this Generation Peace

By Angelina

This is the story of the three lost boys  
Back in Africa, they knew of no toys.  
They wish they had their moms, brothers, and sisters  
As they walk from country to country, their feet form full of blisters.  
They walked with courage, dignity, and strength  
The groups were split with boys of different lengths.  
Tall, skinny, sickly, deadly  
No matter what the situation, they were always friendly.  
They were always told to be ready for daunting tasks  
The people who attacked their village were just feral creatures.  
Maybe it would have never happened if they got baptized by some preachers  
I knew those boys had to abhor those people.  
Who separated their families for no obvious reason?  
Maybe it was the people north of Sudan  
They had no chance to enjoy the next season.  
They were already destitute and had a hard time making it  
All they needed was a little bit.  
A little bit of help from others who cared  
Within their family they could have evenly shared.  
Those who where already sick and had to escape were already abject  
There was no hope for them, nothing could help them, not even a doctor's object.  
They missed their domicile like they missed their mother  
The only one who they maybe had was their brother.  
Their brain was defunct since the time their home was damaged.  
Now their village was derelict  
Now why don't we give this generation peace.  
Give this generation peace.

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# Why Rap?

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“Why are they fighting? I don’t understand.  
They fought more than P Diddy and his band.  
They even fought more than the Ku Klux Klan.”  
-Lenny Rodriguez

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Since the time of slavery, music has been a way for African-Americans to fight oppression and to get messages across. Rap and hip-hop songs today are derived from beats originating from Africa and songs sung on plantations as a way to fight the white masters’ oppression. Hip-Hop, rap, and African songs have a lot of similarities. African rhythms and drums are replicated in rap using electronic beats and real instruments. These rhythms come in handy when conveying a message to the masses. Take *Blood Diamonds*, a song from Kanye West, which was a chart topper, is a song about the conflict in Sierra Leone over the profitable diamonds being sold in America and the rest of the world; Americans buy them unaware of whom the diamond were stolen from and who was killed for the diamonds. People who listen to hip-hop can’t help but learn this vital information.

Another song, Nas’ “Shine on ‘Em,” inspired from the original soundtrack of the movie *Blood Diamond*, also discusses the horrors of conflict diamonds and the lives that are sacrificed to profit from digging up diamonds:

They dug me out the soil in the Mines of the Motherland  
Now I’m misplaced, one hand to another hand  
Illegal smugglin’, people strugglin’  
Wish they could just throw me back in the mud again  
Yeah, guess that’s how we got here  
Slave Trade then the Diamond Trade

Nas’ portrayal of the “conflict diamonds” is chillingly close to the reality that goes on in some African countries. Hip-Hop artists such as Kanye West and Nas use

their music to give a message to the youth of today that the diamonds you buy from the jewelers might just hold a disturbing history.

For our book, we thought rap was an appropriate way to show the experiences of refugees. Rap is one of the most popular types of music and is often used to send a message to all that will listen. Also, rap is deeply rooted within Africa's history all the way back to the tribal songs they sang. Rap is a part of African history and African-American culture; refugees coming from Africa to America today are definitely part of this combined story. For those reasons, we believe rap was an appropriate musical genre to use in this project on African refugees.

Hopefully, after reading our book, you will understand the experiences of African refugees in Springfield, the reasons why they became refugees, and why we should all help them.

# Holding On

By Jennifer

Cries and screams rumbled in my ears,  
I laid in my bed soaked in tears,  
Wondering if I should run and flee,  
And leave my family behind me,  
I never thought the night would come,  
When all I did was run and run,  
I sat and thought of what my father said, "If you don't run, you'll be dead."  
I started to run far away,  
In my heart I knew, I couldn't stay,  
I turned around and looked back,  
To see my village getting attacked,  
The smell of burnt bodies filled the air,  
That smell was a smell even I couldn't bare,  
As I woke up hoping it wasn't all what it seemed,  
Hoping it was an awful dream,  
I had to walk many miles with nothing to eat,  
Threw the muddy swamps so thick and deep,  
Even though I was a boy I quickly became a man,  
Not having anyone offer a helping hand,  
This journey wasn't easy for me,  
But I had to hold on for my family,  
I arrived in Kenya hoping to find,  
A refugee camp with my family inside,  
I turned and looked to see them there,  
All looking the same as they last appeared,  
I ran and hugged them and they hugged me,  
This was finally the end of my journey.

# Refugees

By Dawn

Have you ever heard about the lost boys of Africa?

No...

Well listen up, 'cause here I go,  
I'm gonna tell you some things that you need to know...

First, you should know that this is real...

It's not like it's some kind of fairytale...

These boys, well their lives are abject,  
Living every day knowing that they're derelict  
Abandoned,

Because of the feral war going on,  
Their domiciles were defunct so they had to be gone,  
That's why people call them the lost boys of Sudan.

And two, they have no food, clothes or shelter,  
They're destitute,

What happens next isn't absolute,  
All they know for sure is that this ain't a grand tour,  
They had to see there people die, suffer, and more,  
When they left their villages there plans were obscure,  
all through the long journey they never felt secure.

Many of them caught diseases that have no cure,  
Malaria, cancer, aids, and more.

You'll never really know what they had to endure.

When they got to the refugee camps it was no better,

Right now, I'm gonna spell you out the letters:

R- Risk was high, especially if you weren't a guy.

E- Every one was scared, some protection, oh wait let me make a correction, no protection.

F- Food was scarce, 15 day rations, that weren't even prepared.

U- Utterly absurd, I can't even express my feelings in words.

G- Gross is the word to describe it, but they were strong, and a lot survived it.

E- Even though it was hard, they couldn't change the card, they were dealt.

E- Eternity is how long it felt, the boys had to wait forever for somebody to pick them,  
to go to America, and get out if the war fill place called Africa.

When they came to America, it sure was great,  
They were going to start off their lives with a brand new slate.  
Although they couldn't speak good English, they learned to adapt,  
The beauty of America was unwrapped!

# Good-bye

By David

"The tuk, tuk, tuk, of nearby shots made me jump from my bed"<sup>1</sup>

I had that feeling in my stomach

The feeling of being dead

Now the shots again, the noise hurting my head

Why did this happen, all of this I dread?

Mommy and daddy told me to run

Get out of the house

Then the bad man shot mommy with a gun

Then I ran, silent as a mouse.

I jumped into the bushes trying to hide

I saw the bad people outside

And the ones who died

I made no noise as I cried.

Fire burned the trees, houses and filled the sky

I wondered and wondered

Why? Why?

Is this how life shall end, will I die?

And still I wondered

Will I ever get to tell my family good-bye?

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<sup>1</sup> Deng, Alephonsian, Benson Deng and Benjamin Ajak. They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky. New York,: Public Affairs, 2005.



# The First Night

By Ben

They be walkin' long to the dawn,  
Their enemies wanna' kill them,  
The guns are bein' fired now-  
artillery is rippin',  
Strangers are chasin'-  
the boys from razed, destroyed homes,  
A daunting journey waiting,  
In the darkness their group roams.

They run through the bowels of the village remains,  
Knowing what the dark far from the destruction sustains,  
Sudden fear grips them in its pitch black chains,  
As a lion roars death followed by thousands of refrains.

The situation is so critical,  
They feel the genocide arise,  
They need to keep moving,  
Or the AK's be their demise,  
The strangers still chasin'-  
the boys from razed, destroyed homes,  
A daunting journey approaching,  
In the darkness their group roams.

# World in Pieces

By Amanda

Dem boys livin' on the overseas cap  
Africa might as well not be on the map  
Before rebels plagued the land  
Before war got the upper hand  
Lost boys weren't so lost  
They had families and lives before they were crisscrossed  
Livin' destitute feelin' like they ain't worth jack  
Feral rebels come around pursuing their attack  
Crack, crack, everything is whack  
Run from your domicile and carry an orphan on your back  
Passing by your derelict town looking like a nightmare  
It's nothing but a fright there  
It's defunct, you gotta move  
If you don't it's your life you gon' lose  
Sleeping in the day, running at night  
Wild animals hunting on campsites  
Abhor the government cuz they don't care  
Lift a finger they won't even dare  
Livin' on a hill sippin' lemonade  
While the villages are raided  
Hated for all they done  
Mothers crying, looking for their sons  
Daunting situations are everywhere  
Somebody wake the earth of this nightmare

I had to make a requisition a demand for the government to care  
I tried to scream, shout but all that came out was air  
People were fallin down left and right  
I'm tired but I can't sleep at night  
My brain is dilapidated from all the images I've seen  
And people ask why I'm so cold; why I'm so mean  
I wish people could pacify the lice in my hair  
Allay the children who only have enough energy for a blank stare  
Assuage the war that caused this all  
Get on my knees and pray for the affluent people to fall  
They are benefiting from this war  
People who supply the weapons and allow this gore  
The government says we exacerbate the situation  
The only thing we should be responsible for is determination