Questions to think about before the Q&A and for discussion in the classroom:

- How do you think the concept of community affects John, Panther and Daniel’s experience in the US? What types of communities have they, by either necessity or voluntarily, become a part of?

- How realistic do you think it is for the Lost Boys living in the US to maintain their traditions and culture abroad? How much do you think would be too much to give up of your own culture, if you found yourself forced to move somewhere else? What concessions do you think John, Panther and Daniel (and others) have had to make because of their displacement and refugee status?

- The film covers several years of the Lost Boys lives – what changes do you see within them? What do these changes say about their experiences in Sudan? What do these changes in Panther, Daniel and John say about American Culture?

- Are you familiar with any political refugees in your own community (i.e. neighborhood, school, etc.)? If so, what reactions have those around you had to their experiences? If not, what do you think your community’s reaction would be to incorporating the displaced? Compassionate? Fearful? Hesitant?

- How much did you know about Sudan, the Lost Boys or the concept of refugees before this screening? What have you learned? How do you think that you can use this information in the future? What are some ideas for helping others that you can think of?
Study Guide: After the Screening

Now that you’ve seen the film, here’s more information about its subject matter and ways that you can keep thinking about the Sudanese conflict, displaced persons around the world and what YOU can do to help.

A short overview of conflict in Sudan:

The civil war in Sudan is usually characterized as a fight between the southern, non-Arab populations against the northern, Arab-dominated government. Kingdoms and great powers based along the Nile River have fought against the people of inland Sudan for centuries. Since at least the 17th century, central governments have attempted to regulate and exploit the cattle herders of southern and inland Sudan.

When the British ran Sudan as a colony they administered the northern and southern provinces separately. The south was held to be more similar to their other east-African colonies while northern Sudan was more similar to Arabic-speaking Egypt. Northerners were prevented from holding positions of power in the south, and trade was discouraged between the two areas.

However, in 1946 the British gave in to northern pressure to integrate the two areas. Arabic was made the language of administration in the south, and northerners began to hold positions there. After decolonization, most power was given to the northern elites based in Khartoum, causing unrest in the south. For the next 17 years, the southern region experienced civil strife, and various southern leaders agitated for regional autonomy or outright secession.

Another factor in the Second war was the natural resources of Sudan, particularly in the south, where there are significant oil fields. Oil revenues make up about 70% of Sudan’s export earnings. The south also has greater access to water, and is therefore more fertile. The north of the country is on the edge of the Sahara desert. The northern desire to control these resources, and the southern desire to maintain control of them, contributed to the war.

Throughout the war, villages were raided and huge numbers of Southern Sudanese were enslaved and murdered, as a result of this the ongoing civil war displaced millions southerners. Creating the phenomenon of the “Lost Boys of Sudan” and also huge refugee camps in Ethiopia and then Kenya. Some fled into southern cities, others trekked as far north as Khartoum and even into Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Egypt, and other neighboring countries.

The destruction plaguing Darfur, Sudan today is a near carbon copy of the government-sponsored violence that fueled a civil war that has left 2 million Sudanese dead and millions more displaced over the last twenty years. The situation in Darfur is considered the world’s worst current humanitarian crisis. Thousands of people have already been killed and the U.N. has said that up to 10,000 refugees are dying each month in camps lacking in food and clean water, but full of disease.
Who are the Lost Boys of Sudan?

In 1987, a civil war drove an estimated twenty thousand young boys from their families and villages in Southern Sudan. Most no more than six or seven years old, they fled to Ethiopia to escape death or induction into slavery and the northern army. Eventually forced to leave the Ethiopian camp after 3 years, these young boys walked further to the UN sponsored Kenyan refugee camp Kakuma. In the end, the boys walked a thousand miles through lion and crocodile country, eating mud to stave off thirst and starvation. Wandering for years, half of them died before reaching the Kenyan refugee camp, Kakuma. The survivors of this tragic exodus became known to the world as the “Lost Boys of Sudan.”

Through the next fourteen years of loss and suffering, these remarkable young men pursued their educational goals in the UN refugee camp. In 2001, nearly 4,000 “Lost Boys” came to the United States seeking peace, freedom, and education.

Refugees in the US

There are an estimated 14 million refugees and 22 million internally displaced people in the world. For many, returning to their home is not an option. America has a long history of welcoming refugees who have fled persecution in their home countries. Each year, the U.S. Refugee Program brings tens of thousands of refugees to towns and cities across the country to begin new lives in safety and dignity. The State Department works in partnership with 10 voluntary resettlement agencies that through their offices across the country work to make the transition to America a smooth one. The agencies work with small staffs and limited budgets relying on community members to help in the welcoming of new refugees. You can use the film to help educate and motivate your community to support refugees.

USA for UNHCR  www.unrefugees.org
U.S. Committee for Refugees  www.refugees.org
Women’s Commission for Refugee Women & Children  www.womenscommission.org
Refugee Council USA  www.refugeecouncilusa.org

Get involved! Learn More!
Links to more information about refugees, Sudan and the Lost Boys:

When thinking about how you can help with any of these crises – be it the Lost Boys, the conflict in Darfur or the widespread problem of refugees in general – it can be daunting. Maybe you don’t have enough money to send? Maybe you don’t know how to help? Well, be as creative as you can!

Hold a fundraiser at your school and send the proceeds to the organization you feel most aligned with. Call an organization and ask them what kind of help they could use from a high school student. Reach out to writers and filmmakers who produce work about Sudan or refugees and see if you can organize a community screening. Start a student group at your high school and brainstorm with other students about how you can help through your community. The sky’s the limit. And everything you do will be meaningful to the lives of others.
Remember, the organizations that aid people harmed by these important humanitarian crises need more than money – they need people to spread awareness and they need people to volunteer their time – so make sure you think outside of the box if you want to help.

Resources:

God Grew Tired of Us:  
www.godgrewtiredofus.com
The film’s official website, with information about the Lost Boys who appeared in the film, information about the crisis in Sudan and ways to become involved.

American Red Cross:  
A site containing information about and testimonials from the Lost boys of Sudan as well as information about how to help.

The International Rescue Committee:  
www.theirc.org
The International Rescue Committee serves refugees and communities victimized by oppression or violent conflict worldwide. Founded in 1933, the IRC is committed to freedom, human dignity, and self-reliance. This commitment is expressed in emergency relief, protection of human rights, post-conflict development, resettlement assistance, and advocacy.

Currently, due to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, the IRC is working extensively to assist Sudanese Refugees.

Save Darfur:  
www.savedarfur.org
A website devoted to aiding Sudanese involved in the current humanitarian crisis in Darfur. This website contains articles about the conflict, links to sites with more information and a great deal of information about how high schools can be involved.

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Further reading:

- **God Grew Tired of Us**, by John Bul Dau
- **What is the What**, by Dave Eggers
- **The Lost Boys of Sudan: An American Experience of the Refugee Experience**, by Mark Bixler
- **They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky**, by Alphonsion Deng, Benson Deng, Benjamin Ajak and Judy A. Bernstein

So be sure to visit your local library and do some further reading!