

## Lost Boys find new homes on campus

By Alexis Blue  
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While many of the Lost Boys of Sudan continue to live together in their Tucson homes, a few who started classes at the UA this semester decided to move on campus in August, hoping life in the residence halls would help them improve their English and teach them more about American culture.

Peter Ayuen, a political science junior who came to Tucson in 2001, lived in a house with seven of his best friends before moving into Babcock Residence Hall in August. Ayuen said he chose to move to campus because it would force him to speak English on a more regular basis.

“I bother myself to go to school because I want something out of it. I know I have this opportunity so I want to use it.”

— Peter Ayuen

“Living with my friends, what we all do every time is speak our own dialect, Dinka,” he said. “That was not helping us to get our English improved.”

Ayuen said he also hoped living in a residence hall would allow him to interact with people of different cultures.

“This is the first time I’ve lived with a person of a different color,” Ayuen said. “Since I was born, I lived around my people, Sudanese, even though we left home. (My roommate) Yali is the first man who is from a different ethnicity, a different color and a different culture, that I have lived with.”

Yali Corea-Levy, a philosophy junior who transferred to the UA this semester from a

community college in San Francisco, said he was surprised when he found out his roommate was from Sudan.

“Just looking at the demographics in Arizona and at the UA, I imagined my roommate would be white,” he said.

Corea-Levy, who is half Nicaraguan, said Ayuen told him that he was from Sudan over the phone before the two met.

He said although he wondered if Ayuen was a refugee, it wasn’t until both men had moved into the residence hall that Ayuen confirmed he was one of the Lost Boys.

Corea-Levy said he was excited to live with someone from a different culture and looked forward to helping him learn more about life in America.

“I grew up in another country, so I know what it’s like to make that transition,” said Corea-Levy, who spent the first seven years of his life in Nicaragua. “It’s not the same (as Peter) but I’m not completely isolated from that experience.”

Ayuen said after living with Corea-Levy for a little more than a month, his English is already improving and he is learning new things every day.

“I think I am stepping a little bit more ahead of what I used to know, and it is because of living with Yali,” he said.

Ayuen said the day he moved into Babcock, Corea-Levy was out of the room when he arrived but had left him a note offering him a bottle of root beer in the refrigerator.

“I did not drink the root beer because it is a ‘root’ plus ‘beer’ and I did not know what it was,” Ayuen said. “I do not drink any cold beer or anything with alcohol in it. I kept quiet for some time and did not talk about the root beer.”

It wasn’t until later, during a trip to Wal-Mart with his roommate that he learned what the drink was.

Ayuen said Corea-Levy

was about to buy a pack of six bottles of root beer when Ayuen warned his roommate they were only allowed to have two beers in the refrigerator.

Ayuen said, with a laugh, that after Corea-Levy explained, he was ready to buy and try the soda.

“Those were the kinds of experiences I was longing for,” Ayuen said.

Like Ayuen, Jok Mabior, a nursing junior who moved into Graham-Greenlee Residence Hall in August, also hoped living on campus would help him improve his English and encourage him to meet other people.

Mabior, who used to live in a house with Ayuen and six other roommates, said when he took classes at Pima Community College, he spoke English at school, but spoke only Dinka at home.

Mabior said he now speaks English regularly in the residence hall and said he and others who live on his floor often gather in the hallway at night to talk.

“I learn a lot here and interact with people I did not know before,” Mabior said. “I feel guilty sometimes because they all know my name and they all look alike so it will take me a while to know your name well.”

Mabior’s roommate, Dave Lesser, a pre-pharmacy freshman said he didn’t know the story of the Lost Boys of Sudan before meeting Mabior and had no idea what to expect when he found out his roommate was from Sudan.

Lesser said he was apprehensive to move in with someone from another country because he thought his roommate might not be able to give him the help he needed as a freshman.

But after living with Mabior for more than a month, he says the experience has been nothing but positive.

“It definitely hasn’t hindered me at all. He’s a good influence on me. He has really good study habits and a good work ethic, and he’s more mature than me,” he said.

Lesser said Mabior has been very open about his past, and is even letting him retype an essay he wrote about his life to send to Lesser’s parents in Colorado.

“He’s very open about it. It just amazes me,” Lesser said. “It’s heightened my world awareness. It made me wish I’d paid a little more attention in world history class.” □

Peter Ayuen (right), a political science junior, sits in his dorm room at Babcock Residence Hall in September with his roommate Yali Corea-Levy, a philosophy junior. Ayuen is one of four Lost Boys in UA residence halls.



The Lost Boys also remain concerned for the people struggling through life on another continent.

They check Web sites like sudan.net or splintoday.com daily for news on Sudan.

After a Wildcat football game a few weeks ago, they turned to CNN Headline News.

As headlines and stories cycled across the screen, a short story on the genocide in Darfur, Sudan, came on.

The room of men, who were all talking at once, immediately fell silent.

Everyone listened as the news update reported 50,000 had been killed and at least 1 million had been forced from their homes since the intense fighting began there.

As they listened, Bior’s only reply was, “Damn.”

When it was over, Peter Arok, a civil engineering junior, asked, “Where will they all go?”

### — Education —

“The Lost Boys’ goal is to get education and go back to Sudan,” Bior said.

John started school at Pima Community College in August 2001, just two months after he got to the United States. He graduated with honors as the valedictorian of the class of 2003.

Most of the other Lost Boys started school in