

## Bittersweet homecomings in war-torn Sudan

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flies, the pounding sun and the lack of electricity. He was of marrying age, but he couldn't flirt with women. Not without asking the girl's father to set up a supervised tea on market day, he lamented, his eyes rolling, his head shaking.

As many as 4 million Sudanese have been displaced in 20 years of fighting. Now, with a peace accord apparently within reach, hundreds of thousands are returning to homes across southern and central Sudan that they fled beginning in the late 1980s. In the Nuba Mountains alone, an estimated 150,000 people have made the journey back from Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda since a cease-fire was declared in the region last year.

The future of Sudan can be seen in the triumphs and challenges of those who have come home. Like Badradin, some are finding the return as disorienting as the exodus. The battles of the war — for control of commerce, religion and culture — are reflected in the stories of those who are trying to return to a life they don't seem to recognize.

"It's nothing like Nairobi," Badradin said recently as he watched the market scene: barefoot women collecting

water from a muddy stream, a camel strutting past a goat, a goat lounging in the lap of a drunk village elder. Badradin adjusted his baggy jeans and took out a cigarette.

A few days after he returned, he said, he sat down in the soft grass, placed his head in his hands and began to weep. He was home. But it was unrecognizable.

### Two cultures

Behind Sudan's war is the story of two cultures trying to share one country, of people as different as chalk and cheese, as the Sudanese like to say. They reflect Sudan's unique place between black sub-Saharan Africa and Arab North Africa. Even the landscapes seem to clash, almost as different in appearance as the inhabitants.

Southern Sudan's flat, bushy terrain is populated with some of the darkest-skinned tribes on the continent: the tall, willowy Dinkas and Nuers.

In the northern desert, where the capital, Khartoum, is located, the government has been dominated by Arab elites, most of them light-skinned, who have backed a policy that treats southerners like second-class citizens, limiting their access to jobs, education and development.

Although fighting has gone on for all but a decade since Sudan's independence in 1956, the current civil war began in 1983, when a group of southerners formed the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) to fight the northern government and its imposition of Islamic law.

About 2 million people are estimated to have died, many of starvation and disease, during the past 20 years. The government bombed civilian areas in the central and southern regions and backed the killing of local officials believed to be supporting the rebels, according to human rights groups. Soldiers on both sides were accused of raping and looting.

The SPLA is still the main rebel force in the war and controls large areas of the south. The government holds some of the major southern towns and cities.

Caught in the crossfire are the African people of the Nuba Mountains, a buffer area between north and south. Some are Christian. Some are Muslim. Many follow traditional beliefs. But all believe they represent a distinct and rich culture, famous for wrestling and an isolated lifestyle in landlocked villages.

In 1992, the government declared jihad on the Nuba, taking land and conducting

slave raids. People were rounded up and put into camps, where they were forced to convert to Islam and give up African customs.

A recent round of talks in Kenya has brought the country close to peace. Under pressure from the United States, the two sides have agreed that the south will vote for self-determination after six years of rule by the central government.

After a peace deal is signed, millions of southern Sudanese — from inside the country and from its neighbors — are expected to return to their homes in a new Sudan.

### Standing out

"You want me to marry, who?" James Badradin protested. He had been home for 10 days and had already been introduced to four girls. But his hipster jeans and his music, items that would appeal to women in Nairobi, caused no ripple here in the isolated Nuba Mountains. And there was another problem: None of the girls could read or write.

"No," he said, recounting his argument with his father. "I just can't marry someone who doesn't know words."

"Don't you want a woman who will carry water?" his father asked him.

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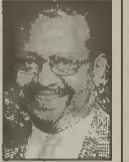
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## Church news: Mass choir auditions

Continued from page 8B

The Charlotte New Covenant Mass Choir hosts interviews and auditions for the newly formed mass choir at 4 p.m. at Silver Mount Baptist Church at 501 W.

Arrowood Road. For information call (704) 583-2341 or (704) 535-1066.

### January 24

The District III Ushers will hold its quarterly meeting at 10 a.m. at Reeder Memorial

Baptist Church at 3725 Beatties Ford Road.

### February 9-10

Liberty Baptist Church at 3000 Sam Wilson Road will hold its revival conference at 7 p.m.

## Fear won't always deter sexuality

Continued from page 8B

are fat and continue to overeat come down front" or "Those who didn't pay their bills on time come down for prayer because you are a cheat."

I think the most unloving thing I have heard a preacher say is keep having sex outside of wedlock. There's some diseases out there that will stop you. Can you believe that? I have never heard this minister say to his obese and gossiping following keep on eating like you do — heart disease or diabetes will stop you. Or warn if you keep lying somebody may shoot you.

If you listen to people, Jesus forgives a multitude of sins except sexual sins. I'm a living witness that God will even pardon a sin the rest of the world thinks is unpardonable. Not only will God forgive you, he will protect you in the physical if you trust Him. Just like he has saved the lives of many liars, cheaters, thieves, gluttons and murderers who once felt like they couldn't stop.

For my clarity and the sake of others like me I request Christians let me know how you feel about sexuality.

There's a secular song that's called "21 Questions," in which the artist asks a female a series of questions about her loyalty. Since sexuality is such a taboo issue in the church, I have nine questions for Christians about sex and the Christian single.

- What do you do about a person that is active in the church but is also sexually active?

- Do you inform the single adult community about safe sex?

- If a person is single and having sex can they get married in your church?

- Would you pass out condoms at your church to adults?

- Do you think people who are having sex are saved?

- What do you say to a sexually active person who is praying for deliverance?

- Are homosexuals in your church allowed to hold posi-

tions or offices?

- If a woman is single, pregnant and holds a position in the church is she removed from office?

- Do you believe HIV/AIDS

is God punishing fornicators?

E-mail your comments to [artellia.burch@thecharlottpost.com](mailto:artellia.burch@thecharlottpost.com) or fax answers to (704) 342-2160.

### Greater Mt. Moriah Primitive Baptist Church



will host its

### Fourth Annual Growth Seminar

Friday, January 9, 2004, 6:30pm

and

Saturday, January 10, 2004, 9am

- featuring -

Guest Lecturer: **Rev. Larry Covington**  
Pastor, Ebenezer United Church of Christ • Burlington, NC

and  
Guest Speaker: **Rev. Timothy Lyons**  
Pastor, Exodus Progressive Primitive Baptist Church  
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### WORLD Women Of Real Destiny Conference 2004

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Pastor Joecilyn Alexander  
Founder and Speaker

### No Registration

Contact: Evangelist Janice Wilson  
704-747-5059 or  
Sister Jeanenne Fontenot  
704-451-3831

Conference Agenda	
Thursday Night 7:00pm	Pastor Joecilyn Alexander
Friday Night 7:00pm	Dr. Lorraine Peeler
Saturday Symposium 9:00am	includes Lunch \$15.00
	Dr. Renee Gilmore Elder Joylette McCray Minister Diane Morgan Bishop Anthony Ray.
Saturday Night 7:00pm	Dr. Lorraine Peeler



Dr. Lorraine Peeler  
Covenant Truth Center  
Guest Speaker

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