



John Bul Dau speaks at the “Finding Hope in Adversity” event at Mesa Community College’s Southern and Dobson Campus on April 17, 2024. (Photo courtesy of Kat Carlson)

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Human rights activist John Bul Dau speaks at Mesa Community College

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Human rights activist John Bul Dau spoke to Mesa Community College students on April 17 about his journey as one of the 27,000 “Lost Boys of Sudan” and the impact of his foundation.

Planned [weeks in advance by MCC’s own Psychology Department](#), the 7 p.m. event at the Southern and Dobson campus’ Performing Arts Center was a part of MCC’s evening lecture series and was free and open to the public.

Upon arrival, guests were given informative packets on the John Dau Foundation and the impact the charity has on South Sudan communities by providing health care services and nutrition relief to those in need.

The event began with residential faculty member Mia Palmer taking the stage to welcome Dau to MCC.

“I especially appreciate the support and encouragement from my colleagues and staff members in the psychological science department who have assisted me in the process of bringing John from Virginia to be with us here tonight,” stated Palmer in her opening remarks.

Palmer described that many years ago she began showing the award winning documentary ‘God Grew Tired of Us’ that highlights the experience of the Sudanese lost boys and girls.

“My goal is to teach concepts that relate to the culture of psychology. I underestimated the powerful impact that this story of survival would have on me and all of the students who watched this documentary,” added Palmer.

Palmer described Dau’s life story as a tale of hope and resilience. She adds that in Spite of the incredible challenges Dau faced, he emerged as a beacon of inspiration who’s experience shaped him into a passionate humanitarian.

Dau was greeted with much applause upon walking on stage where he told his story of being a young boy in Sudan in the middle of a war that led to his village being attacked and burned.

Dau spoke of fleeing, losing contact with his family and running into militias who assaulted him. Dau spent weeks dodging armed gangs and wild animals while naked, injured, and malnourished.

Dau was selected to emigrate to the United States and settled in Syracuse, New York, where he told stories of visiting a grocery store, seeing snow, and adapting to the culture all for the first time.

Dau later held an hour-long Q&A session for those in attendance where topics such as the future of Sudan, the state of Dau's family, and climate change emerged.

Esther Erick Malish was a young South Sudanese guest in attendance who asked Dau about the importance of maintaining culture even outside of your home country. Malish spoke to the Mesa Legend about representation of her people in Arizona.

"A lot of people don't know about its (Sudanese) culture, about its people and just the upbringings and the violence and what the people had to go through," stated Malish.

"An event like this really opened the eyes of many people to see there are people out there who are struggling, but together as the human race we can work together to make this world a better place for one another," Malish told the Mesa Legend.

After the event, Dau stood near the exit where he shook hands and took photos with many that were in attendance. Dau spoke to the Mesa Legend about coming to MCC and the general importance of community college for students.

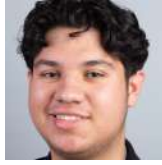
"I was amazed by the campus, I mean looking at the campus, how it was built, it's a nice place and a good place to study. It's very clean, very attractive, and I think anyone would like to come and study at Mesa Community College," stated Dau.

Dau recounted having the pleasure of visiting the college that morning and going from class to class to meet what he described as nothing but polite and smiling faces.

"Community college to me, I think is the incubator, it incubates young minds, incubates older minds and also incubates anyone in between," said Dau.

"It's a good place to study because the teachers are not only teachers but also they become counselors, they counsel you, they help understand things, they take it slowly for you to

understand, so community colleges are for everyone,” Dau added.



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News Editor for the Mesa Legend.



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