

May 5, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

I write this letter in support of Bryan Ripley Crandall who has worked as a volunteer with the Sudanese community in Syracuse since January 2008.

As research associate professor in the department of anthropology at Syracuse University I have worked with Bryan on a number of projects to facilitate community building among the Lost Boys of Sudan, a disenfranchised and traumatized group of young men living in our city. Through his dedicated and long-standing volunteer work with this group, Bryan has made numerous lasting contributions in the following ways:

- Initiator: Based on his previous work in Kentucky, Bryan gave us many ideas that expanded the Syracuse Cow Project which was initiated in 2008 to raise funds to meet the educational needs of Sudanese refugees. He worked with individual men to record their life stories, traditional songs and folk tales which enabled some of the men to create websites and to exhibit their texts and artwork at the Lost and Found Exhibit held in 2008 at the Center for New Americans. This exhibit explored narrative and material culture as "a way to redefine and to rearticulate personal significance through refugee's experiences of displacement and exile, especially when artifacts and/or narratives are removed from their "original context of production" and refashioned into a new one.
- Researcher: Bryan compiled information using his own photographs and designed several interpretive brochures related to the Cow Project as well as several other public programs at which the Sudanese men participated. He carefully reviewed academic articles on a variety of topics including the analysis of the use of narrative and folklore in literature, theoretical applications and ethical concerns pertaining to these public programming projects. In addition, as a result of his extensive teaching experience and knowledge I invited Bryan to speak about his applied research in my Honors undergraduate course, "Migrating Memories, Migrating Arts, which I teach regularly at Syracuse University.
- Advisor: As an advisory board member to the Sudanese Lost Boys in Syracuse, Bryan is actively involved at all meetings and in addressing the concerns of the young men. It would not be an overstatement to say that without Bryan's participation and consultation, our projects would have been less effective.

On a personal note, I can say that over the past year and a half I have very much come to enjoy the conversations Bryan and I have regularly had about a whole host of topics ranging from practical concerns about our public programming to some loftier exchanges about literature, social issues, ethics -- and life in general. Thus, for me as a scholar of applied anthropology and folklore and a fellow human being Bryan has made contributions in ways that continue to enrich me both personally and professionally.

In sum, Bryan Crandall is a highly regarded researcher and cultural worker whose work has been -- and continues to be -- a positive influence on the discipline of applied anthropology and community work in general. Simply put, one could not ask for a finer colleague.

Sincerely,

Felicia McMahon, Ph.D.  
Research Associate Professor