

## Identities, Mobility and the Recapturing of the Creative Self through Literacy

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the lives of 3 female Dinka Sudanese teenagers in Cairo, Egypt to call attention to the complexities of forced migration on young women within the larger debate about statelessness. Such an inquiry adds to our understanding of the myriad experiences forced migrants endure at different stages of their lives, regardless of their geographical location. In my interrogation of African diaspora communities in Egypt, critical attempts are made to trace these young women's experiences from their initial flight from their homeland of Sudan to resettlement and non-citizenship while attending classes at the American University in Cairo. In their written expressions, each compose narratives that describe their exilic status while also attempting to maintain a sense of their own identity in a nation that often rejects them. This research is grounded in a critical sociocultural theory of literacy, which draws on elements of postcolonial feminism, including cultural studies consisting of theories of migration; diaspora and citizenship are used as a theoretical framework. As I analyzed the stories of these young women, I discovered they are undertaking a formidable task to achieve freedom of expression, which often contradicts finding in some of the literature ascribed to Sudanese women in exile. Therefore, theory alone cannot explain the totality of the forced migration experience. With these critical points in mind, I further examine how these young women use language in ways to negotiate identity, agency, and power. The findings illustrate how they construct complex identities that include individual perspectives on cultural belonging, family, as well as their affinities to their “mother tongue” through literacy practices. Accordingly, this study seeks to fill a deficit, which focuses a critical lens on the proactive construction of literacy for young Sudanese women who are embarking upon a courageous journey to find normalcy in their host nation while living in exile.