

[Article] Creativity from Chaos: Meaning-Making Through Musicking in Mozambique



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**“The discipline of creation, be it to paint, compose, write, is an effort towards wholeness.”
(Madeleine L’Engle)**

Introduction

“Povo no poder!” Thousands of people crowded the streets of Maputo, surrounding Azagaia’s¹ funeral cortege, fists and voices raised, singing, “Tu não vês, não querem saber de ti, não querem saber de ti. Vampiros. Os vampiros!” (“You don’t see, they don’t want to know about you, they don’t want to know about you. Vampires. The vampires!”). This unprecedented mass demonstration of grief and honor for a modern Mozambican prophet and cultural icon widely acclaimed in Mozambique as the voice of the youth did not go unnoticed by the government. Riot police attacked young people across the country as they marked the death of this popular rapper, continuing to impose a “culture of fear” rather than active citizenship.

Mozambique was a “late joiner” as an independent African nation (1975) with the help of Marxist regimes (namely, China and Russia). This threatened neighboring apartheid South Africa and white-led Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and led to an immediate proxy war of destabilization for almost twenty years, decimating the country with guerilla-style warfare and wanton landmines. Once the peace accord was signed in Lusaka in 1992, Mozambique began the arduous journey of national development. Children born after the peace accord grew up in hopes of a brighter future than their parents had. However, since 2017, regional, religious, and ethnic tensions have erupted in an “Al-Shabab” style of insurgency that continues to spread from Cabo Delgado in Northern Mozambique, resulting in an IDP population topping one million people. Researchers² note that internal grievances among disenfranchised youth are at the heart of this conflict.

¹ Edson Amândio Maria Lopes da Luz (May 6, 1984–March 9, 2023), better known by his stage name Azagaia, was a Mozambican rapper known for his songs about political issues and social justice in Mozambique. In 2014, he was described as “the most influential Mozambican rapper,” and his death in 2023 led to widespread marches throughout the country in his honor as well as in support of his political ideas.

² This study was based on a month of fieldwork of Islamic cleric Sheik Saide Habibe, IESE director Salvador Forquilha, and João Pereira, assistant professor at Eduardo Mondlane University and director of MASC. IESE is the Social and Economic Research Institute, and MASC is the Civil Society Support Mechanism. Preliminary results were presented on May 22, 2018, at the Universidade Pedagógica in Maputo (Hanlon, May 29, 2018).



Within this oppressive context, what role does music arts play in shaping emotions, constructing memories, and affecting patterns of thought and changes in behavior? How might youth benefit from musicking together and finding alternate routes to peace? As an ethnomusicologist (researcher and practitioner) living and working in Mozambique since 2009, I used a capability approach,³ founded on applied ethnomusicological concepts of cultural participation, communities of practice, and empowerment, to develop the “Cura da Criatividade” (Creativity Cure) project, encouraging youth to share their lived and told experiences and to creatively communicate their story to a broader audience through communal creation. This project teaches Mozambican youth to be the voice of positive change and social healing in their communities.

This paper begins with a description of the state of youth in Mozambique and the role of music in healing in Mozambique. A brief exploration of the research approach, the Creativity Cure Project, and outcomes follows, concluding with some suggestions for further research. Mozambique’s recent popular demonstrations and police brutality attest to the fact that youth are increasingly restive and pressing for solutions to persistent problems of poverty and corruption. Rather than sit idly by, researchers, practitioners, and community activists can creatively engage in a transformative process by providing real skills and increased leadership opportunities to youth within and beyond Mozambique. Applied music arts projects like Creativity Cure can become a means of empowerment through expressive agency, allowing youth to voice a counternarrative of hope and build a bridge for peace.

Despresados: State of Youth in Mozambique

Unlike the United States culture that idolizes youth, African youth are minimized by a surrounding authoritarian society in which power and influence accrue with age. Stuck in between childhood and adulthood, the prevailing state for youth in sub-Saharan Africa is “waithood” (Honwana 2014, 28–40). It is important to note here that Africa is young, the quality most widely shared across the vast continent. “Seventy percent of sub-Saharan Africa’s population is less than thirty years old—the highest proportion in the world” (Olopade 2014, 191). Mozambique’s median age is 17.6. Youth make up 37 percent of the working-age population but 60 percent of the unemployed. Even if youth have the means to pursue education past secondary school, job opportunities outside of the informal economy are rare. “Even as hierarchical societies insist that the young defer to elders and wait their turn, they also fail to provide adequate support, training, and engagement for eventual leadership” (Olopade 2014, 194). It’s a recipe for frustration for the youth cohort of Africa and the very dynamic that has instigated recent violence in Mozambique.

With these facts in mind, I conducted two semi-structured group interviews (March 25 and April 2, 2023) with five youth—participants in a Creativity Cure pilot project. I was curious to learn about the lived experiences of these grim statistics. There were four questions:

1. How are youth viewed in Mozambique?
2. How do youth (you) self-identify?
3. What are the most pressing issues for youth in Mozambique?
4. What are agencies (NGOs, government programs, churches) doing to reach youth?

³ “The capability approach is a theoretical framework that entails two guiding principles: first, the freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance and, second, that well-being should be understood in terms of people’s capabilities and functionings” (Stanford 2020).

In response to the first question, one stated, “(Youth) are viewed as rebellious, because we don’t follow our parents the way that our parents followed their parents.” Another said, “We’re the strength of the nation, a change. When society views this, there’s not an acceptance to implement [the change]. I don’t know why. Youth don’t have much access, there is a barrier, if [opportunities] exist, they’re hidden.” A third said, “I don’t know how to start, our future is different. We’re learning new things, which has become a threat. We don’t follow the old traditions, but we’re also a solution.”

I commented that it seems that youth are viewed with ambiguity. One responded, “It’s a thing of weakness, I don’t believe that people see [youth] as the future, if this were true, they would invest [in us]. It’s one thing for adults to invest in their children. We’re seen as resources to be used for a certain end [police, military]. In fact, we’re marginalized, on the sidelines, only used when show of force is needed.”

When I asked, “How then do you see yourself [as a youth],” one said, “I can do something for my generation and for the future. This depends on what I’m doing now. I hope I see myself as an opportunity, a space for another generation.” A second said, “I’m a creative youth, I like to create. I see myself as a good youth, that perhaps one day can change some things, to help.” Another said, “I don’t see myself as a threat. I like to study and learn. I am someone society should like; I want to give my contribution in a very positive way. I don’t see myself the way society sees me. I can be very helpful in society.” The difference between participants’ self-perception and impressions of society’s view of youth was stark.⁴

I then asked the group to list and rank youth concerns in Mozambique. Job opportunities were ranked as the most pressing concern, followed by autonomy, the ability to leave one’s parents’ house and live independently, achieved through education. This discussion clearly illustrated an urgent felt need to leave the *espera eterna* (eternal waitness) and enter adulthood. Achieving autonomy and independence from parents—through education and a job—is the primary concern of Mozambican youth. Mozambican youth are restive and pressing for change.

When asked, “What are agencies doing to reach youth?,” the response was overwhelmingly negative. One said, “The church is doing nothing tangible—neither for youth, nor for artists (musicians). The church only wants youth to fill the seats; there’s not a habit of mentorship or youth development. This is also true in society at large. Having older people listen to youth, like you’re doing with us, is rare.”

Surprised by the comment, I clarified, “But isn’t there a tradition of circumcision rituals or coming of age ceremonies where older men or women pass on the wisdom of the ancestors and youth are trained in how to function in society?” They agreed that traditions of coming-of-age ceremonies exist and are still practiced in rural communities, but one participant cited technology and electricity, while another blamed globalization and urbanization, as major factors in the breakdown of traditional forms of education and raising youth, especially in the multi-cultural urban context. Participants began reminiscing about the weeks after Idai,⁵ when there was no electricity nor cell phone service. They spoke fondly of how people returned to their roots, sitting and storytelling around a candlelit table. One said, “We’re only interested in being distracted by watching what other people are living. Our heads are confused. We’re not doing the right things at the right times in the right ways.” Another added,

⁴ Honwana, Alcinda. 2014. “Waithood: Youth Transitions and Social Change,” in *Development and Equity: An Interdisciplinary Exploration by Ten Scholars from Africa, Asia, and Latin America*. booksandjournals.brillonline.com, 28–40.

⁵ Cyclone Idai, considered the worst tropical cyclone to affect Southern Africa on record, made landfall on March 15, 2019, destroying most of the buildings in Beira.

“We’re losing our *convivência* (way of relating to others), our social values. We still have time to recover, but we’ll lose this soon.”

From my perspective, addressing the generational gap that plagues the African continent is a vital need—specifically, encouraging older adults to mentor the youth. “What happens to these youth matters—mischief and misfortune often occupy the space left behind by lack of work and structure” (Olopade 2014, 195). This is clearly evidenced in the ongoing conflicts in northern Mozambique, where marginalized youth are weary of watching economic opportunities slip through their fingers. With millions of youths stalling in the march to adulthood across the continent, discovering how to engage young people is an urgent task for nation building and development in Africa.

Creativity and Culture: “Music Is Medicine”⁶

What does it mean to be creative within a certain cultural context? Furthermore, what happens when one attempts to bring healing to a certain society? In the case of health and well-being in Mozambique, this is particularly poignant. Belief in *feitiço* (witchcraft or sorcery) is practically universal among Mozambicans (including Christians, and regardless of class).⁷ All types of misfortune are attributed to it. Practitioners of witchcraft or sorcery are commonly called *feiticeiros*—hereditary hosts to the spirit of an ancestor endowed with special powers, or sorcerers who have procured malevolent power through purchasing powerful medicines. These are different from the traditional healers/diviners or herbalists, *curandeiros*, although there is often an overlap of roles, means, and methods.⁸

Mozambican traditional religion is transmitted orally and communicated through the arts, primarily music and dance. In fact, spirits are called (invoked) through the arts. In her article about prophetic healers in Central Mozambique, Tracy Luedke articulates that music is the means to connection with the spirit world. In preparation for a consultation with a patient, a healer calls her spirits through the singing of hymns. “Whatever the circumstances of the consultation . . . healers made a point of involving multiple voices in the act of singing to call the spirits . . . there was something in the combining of singing voices that carried the power to call the spirit to its host’s body” (Luedke 2011, 171). There is a vast field of research at the crossroads of music arts, culture, and healing.

Barz, in his seminal work *Singing for Life*, pioneered the young subfield of medical ethnomusicology, using music-making among HIV positive people in Uganda to encourage healing and disease prevention. Medical ethnomusicology is both integrative research and applied practice that studies the role of music arts in healing within a cultural context. Ethnomusicologists have discovered that music has positively impacted a broad range of health issues (Barz 2006; Barz 2011; Bakan 2009; Koen 2008; Van Buren 2010). Other musical interventions in social or spiritual contexts have led to the restoration of the community.

Applied ethnomusicologists must carefully consider local practices, particularly when seeking to bring about health and hope. “Epidemiology is greatly enhanced when deep cultural layers that contribute to diagnosis and care are acknowledged” (Barz 2006, 6). We don’t create or heal in a cultural vacuum. The change potential⁹ evident in

⁶ The idea that music and medicine are intertwined, noted by Barz in Uganda, is a common perspective in Mozambique.

⁷ “When one considers the adherents to all the religions . . . one could say that to be Mozambican is to be religious, and to be religious is to worship” (Meyers 2018, 15).

⁸ See Luedke’s article, “Intimacy and Alerity: Prophetic Selves and Spirit Others in Central Mozambique,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 41:154–179.

⁹ In this context, “change potential” refers to the various musical factors that influence an individual or a culture’s ability to change and adapt. Change potential is a term used in organizational contexts, systems and ecosystems.

music is clear. “Capability approach” is a social science framework focused on people’s real opportunities to live lives they value, emphasizing their agency and well-being beyond just income or resources. “Change potential” can refer to an organization’s ability to adapt and succeed through change, which could be enhanced by applying a capability approach to their employees. “When cultural institutions fail in their efforts to affect social change, artists step in. When technologies and organizational systems disappoint, musicians sing and dance, thereby creating meaning out of chaotic lives. If one person can make a difference in the ongoing struggle . . . it will be a musician, a dancer, or an actor” (Barz 2006: 5). I suggest that music and the arts can and must be applied to situations in which NGOs and governmental agencies have been challenged or unsuccessful.

Making Meaning Through Musicking Together

“All suffering is bearable if it is seen as part of a story.” (Isak Dinesen)

Cultural participation and production are fundamental human rights.¹⁰ UNESCO 2012 specifically promotes access to culture as creators or consumers through education and participation. Considering the present state of youth in Mozambique, and the nascent cultural perspective that music is medicine, I wondered how to develop a project for at-risk youth, especially those in IDP camps, that would promote a sense of belonging and purpose through group composing. Empowerment is multifaceted (Rappaport 1981), strengthening the capacity to determine one’s own life. A capability approach leads us to ask the question, “What can youth do?” (Robeyns 2017, 9), leading to an engaged or applied lens of ethnomusicology. Using a multifaceted capabilities approach drawing from principles of narrative therapy,¹¹ Trauma Healing Institute curriculum,¹² and a community of practice,¹³ I invited Pro-50, an existing group of youth, for an applied ethnomusicology pilot project called *Cura da Criatividade* (Creativity Cure). The project’s goal was to empower youth to creatively communicate their lived and told experiences, and, in so doing, make meaning and find purpose in their stories.

Pro-50 had been founded by a young rapper six months prior to launching the project. The goal of Pro-50 was to mentor younger friends and encourage them to develop their creative skills. Their voluntary participation in the pilot project gave focus to their creative efforts with specific assignments each week, and weekly peer review honed their composing efforts. As the weeks progressed, the participants gained experience and grew in a desire to share this experience with others in their neighborhoods.

During our first meeting (March 18, 2023), we got to know each other by way of a quick “icebreaker” game and then introductions. Later, I briefly explained the purpose of the group, to use the expressive arts to share our stories and be empowered. We discussed the fact that life is difficult, and that some challenges and life situations can even lead to trauma, which is a type of “heart” wound. We talked about the differences and similarities between physical

¹⁰ Article 27 of the United Nations’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations Human Right, 1948) states that “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits” (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012).

¹¹ Narrative Therapy is a strengths-based approach to psychotherapy with the goal of empowering clients to live the life they want through telling their story (Standish 2019).

¹² Trauma Healing Institute’s mission is “to address the effects of trauma and loss with resources that integrate biblical and mental health principles” (Trauma Healing Institute 2025).

¹³ Etienne Wenger developed theories about learning and development in a “community of practice” and related this learning community to levels of belonging and simultaneous identity construction (Wenger, 1998).

(exterior) wounds and wounds of the heart. They identified that both types of wounds need to be treated in a proper way in a proper time for healing to occur, that ignoring the wound will not heal it but could potentially make it worse.

Recognizing that speaking about a heart wound can begin the healing process, we broke up into groups of two and spent time sharing about a difficult situation. One person was supposed to be a good listener, asking the following questions:

1. What happened?
2. How did you feel?
3. What was the most difficult thing about that event?

After one person shared and the other listened, they switched roles so each could share, and each could listen. I asked each participant about their experience of sharing with someone else. Everyone said that it was not easy, but trusting their listening friend, they shared a painful story. Their immediate feelings were that of relief and gratitude to be able to share their sorrow with another.

We also talked about the old adage, “Moçambicanos não chora!” (“Mozambican men don’t cry!”), exploring why that cultural value exists, and how that impacts their ability to share openly and express their feelings. One participant said that to express feelings leaves one vulnerable, and a Mozambican man must be strong. Therefore, this value is self-protective, minimizing the risk of exposure and potential external threats—using information to further wound the victim.

I asked, “How then do you deal with big feelings? It is a threat to share, but it is also a threat to your emotional health *not* to share. How can a Mozambican man find equilibrium?” One participant said he wrote his feelings into his poetry; the strong negative feelings were fuel for his creativity. Yet, he carefully guarded these poems and kept them private. Another said he’d share his feelings, but only with a trusted friend who wouldn’t judge him or threaten him with exposure. Finally, one suggested that once we’ve come to some level of personal healing, sharing our painful life experiences with others can lead to their healing and growth. He shared a story of a rapper who gave him this advice early in his musical career: “Your lyrics are a mirror to your fans. They will be able to see who you are through what you write.” He elaborated, saying that he learned a valuable lesson from that interaction, to carefully consider the audience when creating lyrics.

We ended our first session together with homework—to create a title of their life story, chapter titles, and a one-sentence summary of the chapter. Their last chapter was to be about what they dreamed their life would be like in the future. They each agreed to work on the homework during the week and return for the next session ready to share with each other. We affirmed that the group would be a confidential closed group for the remainder of the sessions.

To conform to best practices of ethical human research, session two (March 25, 2023) started with a review of the purpose of the group and collecting consent forms from each participant. A semi-structured group interview followed:

1. How are youth viewed in Mozambique?
2. How do you self-identify or describe yourself as relates to being a youth?
3. What are the most pressing issues for Mozambican youth (in order of importance)?
4. What is the government/NGOs/churches doing for youth?

We also talked about Azagaia's recent death (March 9, 2023) and the demonstrations that had erupted across Mozambique. I asked why he was so popular among youth and wondered why the government was so threatened by a peaceful march that was initially authorized by civil authorities. One participant said, "Azagaia was able to express what many could not express, many [youth] identify with him." Another said, "He had a cause." Still another said, "In the middle of what's been happening [referring to Mozambique's current political climate], he was able to state what others were afraid to bring. He's admired. How could he do it? Yet, even though he's admired, people are fearful and quiet. Azagaia didn't just use his talent to get *pão* (bread)."¹⁴ A third stated, "He was a leader that led without people knowing they were being led. Azagaia's death brought a *choque de realidade* [reality check] and brings a courage to speak. We see outsiders [Portuguese, Brazilians] valuing him, but the prophet is ours. We should do more!"

While I'd hoped for the group to compose a lament for Azagaia, our time was running out. One participant offered a poem of grief he'd written for the fallen artist: "Epaaaa!" ("Heeey!"; a lament, protest, reprimand, expression of surprise):

Epaaaa!

But now how will we be?
Alone?
No! We are many, but you
You are great, you are the one who covered us
You are the one that brought us hope
Epaaaa!

The feelings of abandonment felt by this young poet who'd never met Azagaia personally but somehow saw him as a mentor and source of inspiration was palpable. He continued:

I'm in ruins like so many buildings controlled by the system
But your words in my mind only build me up
My tears inside I save to water my mother's fields
From there comes the tender shoots that were evicted by the municipality early in the morning

We need sustenance to fortify us in our new fight
In this moment they can be happy, they even be toasting . . .
The physical disappearance of Edson da Luz, but they are deceived
Because Azagaia still lives in our hearts
And we are fortified by his song

This young poet sees the potency of turning agony into artistic action, of using the arts to motivate and empower young people to rise above and beyond present pain. Homework for session three was to develop a "chapter" into a verse or an entire song. The remainder of our sessions together focused on developing the musical content, musicking together through peer review and feedback.

¹⁴ Mozambican youth use the term *pão* (bread) to refer to money for daily living.

By session three (April 1, 2023), everyone had a basic idea of their life arc storyline and had chosen at least one aspect to focus on and develop. Two participants shared rap songs. Both were initially nervous to “spit,” as they were new to the genre, and the songs were still in process. However, the group encouraged them to be bold, that we’re all artists learning together. After they shared and were affirmed, the participants gave honest feedback on how to improve the songs. Peer suggestions included everything from slowing down and breathing throughout the song, to adding more personal information to really drive the message home and communicate authenticity to the intended audience.

The participants agreed to meet without me (as I was traveling) to continue to hone their songs and prepare to present their songs for guests at our fourth session. It appeared that no one wanted to stop meeting and that some pilot project participants were willing to start a project in their own neighborhoods or in the IDP camps. “We should share this project at the camps. If you come, people will get the wrong idea about what this project represents. Youth there can relate to us and our stories, and they know we don’t have any money” (Interview, April 1, 2023).

By the fourth session (April 15, 2023), guests came to hear participant’s stories and their new songs. Although all the participants had expressed a desire to have an audience and had prepared in advance, they had to work through some unexpected performance anxiety when the session started. Each participant shared a brief life synopsis followed by a song explaining how their song fits into their larger life storyline. Though unprompted, each participant concluded their life synopsis with a vision for the future. One participant said, “I didn’t have a brother to look up to when I was growing up, though I always wanted one. I’m writing a song, ‘Seguindo os Passos de Alguem’ (“Following in Someone’s Footsteps”), that describes how I found an ‘older brother’ in my mentor. He’s the reason I started Pro-50, and I want to continue to be a ‘big brother’ to others in my neighborhood.” This statement showed that this participant now had a vision for the future, a sense of purpose and agency. Another participant said he started writing poetry and music after a friend committed suicide. “I regret not taking her seriously. Now I create verse to encourage people that there’s another way forward.” All the participants shared how this creative process helped them feel relief from the pain of internal “heart wounds” and how they are now eager to encourage others to pursue positive change and social healing in their own communities.

The last session (April 29, 2023) was a time of celebration. We invited family members, friends, and other members of Pro-50 who couldn’t participate in the pilot project for a mini-show. We were able to capture rudimentary videos of the presentations on cell phones, and most participants wanted to record some of their songs in a studio in the future. All expressed appreciation for the project, increased capacity and confidence for creation, and interest in continuing to participate in future projects.

As interest in continuing the project was high, I met with the leader of Pro50. He was eager to launch other groups with additional training and support. We recruited seven other mature musicians to participate in a two-session intensive training, with the goal of launching two to four new Creativity Cure projects in various neighborhoods around Beira. Since then, the Creativity Cure Clubs have been ongoing (with various levels of consistency), and I regularly meet with the project leaders to hear session feedback and to give support as needed.

Cura da Criatividade Outcomes

While the long-term impact of the pilot project is yet to be determined, there are a few notable immediate outcomes from this project. Each participant learned to value their own life story and to creatively express their lived experiences in a way that encouraged other youth. The group became a safe place to share painful stories and to

hone new songs. Perhaps the greatest outcome was the synergistic effect of participants supporting, encouraging, and empowering one another to grow in musicality. For some, the project launched the beginning of fulfilling a desire to make a difference. All learned to voice a counternarrative of hope, positively influencing their audience.

Two weeks after the mini-show, I conducted interviews with the participants to determine the initial impact of the project among the participants. Notable results were observed in three primary areas: confidence in craft, ongoing artistic engagement, and a caring community of peers. All the participants continue to create new songs, though the pilot project is completed. At least two are now leading projects in their own neighborhoods. All pilot project participants continue to regularly socialize and share new music with each other. Further research is needed to determine the long-term impact of the Creativity Cure project. Initial results, however, demonstrate a clear positive effect among the participants.

Critique of the Project

The Creativity Cure project was a multipronged approach drawing on ideas from narrative therapy and arts and trauma healing, using a group song-writing workshop method developed and described by Roberta King in *A Time to Sing* (King 1999). As I had limited prior exposure to arts and trauma healing, and I am not a music therapist, I knew I needed to tread carefully when dealing with potentially painful life experiences. I needed a method that could be quickly and easily transmitted in an oral context among youth with varied educational backgrounds and levels of musical experience. Having seen the method effectively used in similar contexts for similar purposes, as a facilitator I had confidence that the method would yield results.

Numerous factors contributed to the success of the workshop, including relational capital established over ten years. The founder of Pro-50 calls me “grandma,” as I have mentored his mentor. Therefore, when I suggested this idea to first his mentor and then to him, he readily agreed to allow Pro-50 to participate, even though he didn’t really understand the project. His trust in me also encouraged the other participants to engage in each session, leading them even to share experiences they had not previously told the others.

Other confounding variables—established relationships among participants, prior musical experience, and an “insider” facilitator—positively impacted the results.¹⁵ All of the pilot project participants were members of Pro-50 and were friends living in the same neighborhood. They’d gathered as a group six months prior to work together on their craft. Creativity Cure gave their gatherings some focus and guidance with an end goal of a presentation after six to eight weeks. They continue to meet to work on new music even though the project is finished.

Another key factor was an insider facilitator: my mentee. While he only attended about half of the Creativity Cure sessions, his presence for the first few sessions and the last session helped bridge the gap between “grandma” and the project participants. Though he is no longer technically a youth, having recently married and had a baby, he is a successful rapper of national renown. The participants clearly identified with him and aspired to be like him. Many times during the sessions, I would ask a question, and he would restate it to help the participants understand what I was trying to ask. As our relationship is long-standing, he is very comfortable sharing personal experiences

¹⁵ “A confounding variable is an outside influence that changes the effect of a dependent and independent variable. [It] is an extra variable entered into the equation that was not accounted for” (Softschools 2025).

with me. When we shared stories during the sessions, he set an example of openness, which demonstrated safety to the other participants.

Moving from the confounding variables that contributed to the success of the workshop, limitations of the method must also be addressed. Will this project be successful among nonmusical strangers? Will the leaders (prior participants) feel empowered and have enough training and experience to launch another project in a different neighborhood? Time will tell.

Conclusion

The communal process of identity creation and maintenance, visible in the Creativity Cure project, gives youth firm ground to stand on together while the sands of political upheaval and job insecurity shift around them. When one lives in a world where everything is negotiable and the margins of life are wider than the page, community practices and performances demonstrate that youth can flourish on the fringes.

The recent popular demonstrations and police brutality in Mozambique attest to the fact that youth are increasingly restive and pressing for solutions to persistent problems of poverty and corruption. Rather than sit idly by, we must creatively engage in this transformative process by providing real skills and increased leadership opportunities within and beyond Mozambique. Music arts can become a means of empowerment through expressive agency, allowing youth to voice a counternarrative of hope and build a bridge for peace.

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