

African Graffiti as a driver for change
Zambia
Oberlin College
Mufalo Mufalo

Summary

- I team up with artists from my native land, Zambia, and together, we create murals in different neighborhoods. These murals aim to motivate aspiring artists and enhance the visual appeal of our communities while raising awareness of certain issues.

Project description

- **How did you decide what issue(s) you wanted to address and what approach(es) or strategies you chose to implement in your project?**

I had always been troubled by the limited recognition of visual arts in my homeland. Coming from a family that held art in high regard, I often felt disheartened by the scarcity of individuals who shared my passion when I ventured outside. As I delved further into the world of art and realized its profound impact, I became increasingly cognizant of the void in my community and the consequences it bore. This awareness led me to a decision: I wanted to utilize art as a means to reshape people's self-perception and their perception of others.

- **Why did you choose your host site? In what ways did local relationships support you or contribute to the project?**

When I left my country for the first time, I was captivated by the profound beauty inherent in murals. It was then that I made a profound decision to create as many murals as possible in my native country. Throughout the summer, I collaborated with a diverse group of local artists and community centers, and I was fortunate to receive immense support from the entire community, particularly from those who graciously allowed me to adorn their properties with these artworks.

Another form of support that I found deeply meaningful came from the youngest members of our community, children no older than ten, who would visit the sites where I was working and observe me as I painted. This experience shed light on a profound realization: with adequate resources,

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many of these children could nurture and cultivate their inherent artistic talents, fostering a deeper connection to the world of the arts.

- **What changes or adjustments did you make to your original plans, and why?**

At first, my intention was to focus on political subjects for my murals. Yet, I made a deliberate choice to shift my artistic direction towards creating murals that celebrated the inherent beauty within those communities, as opposed to subjects that could potentially evoke divisive sentiments among the residents.

- **Are there opportunities for continuing your work on this issue? If so, please describe.**

Many of the collaborators I teamed up with expressed a strong willingness to collaborate on future projects. I see myself pasting more murals across our nation and, with optimism, extend this artistic endeavor to other regions of the continent in the years to come.

Reflection

- **How do you define peace?**

I believe peace represents a state of balance and unity within oneself, with the surrounding environment, and in one's interactions with others.

- **In what ways might your project contribute to peace? What changes occurred?
Short-term? Long-term?**

While working on the murals, I could already see how they were positively affecting the communities. Many people, even those seemingly stressed with their businesses, would stop and watch us. It was as if they forgot about their own problems and were fully present in the moment. A lot of them asked if we could do similar work in their neighborhoods. In addition to fostering community connections, we also established contacts with potential clients, recognizing this as a valuable opportunity to promote our work. It is noteworthy that scientific studies have

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substantiated the therapeutic aspect of art appreciation, akin to a form of mindfulness, which induces a heightened sense of well-being. This effect alone holds the potential to brighten someone's day and bolster their daily pursuits.

- **Identify a significant conflict you observed or encountered in your work (it could be any level of relationship: intra- or inter-personal, community/group based, and/or societal/global). How did you navigate the conflict and what would you like to learn more about as a result.**

One significant challenge I encountered was coordinating schedules, as my availability often clashed with that of my teammates, who had their own commitments. Nevertheless, we consistently found a mutually suitable time that allowed us to complete our work by the end of the program.

- **Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has the project changed, challenged, or inspired you?**

A few years ago, I held the belief that most people simply had little interest in the arts. However, this experience has enlightened me to the fact that people's limited exposure to art, rather than a lack of interest, was the primary issue – and this wasn't necessarily their fault. It became evident to me that all it took was a few murals in each neighborhood to reveal that people genuinely value art but face constraints due to the scarcity of resources dedicated to promoting it.

Personal statement

- **A brief statement, suitable for use as a quotation, addressing the value of this project and what you have learned. Indicate the student's name (yours or your teammates') for quote attribution.**

I am now more confident than ever in the transformative potential of art and its ability to impact the world. I am deeply grateful for the valuable lessons I've gained from my colleagues, including Alvin Lungu and Kaluwe Mwananyambe, as well as everyone who contributed to the realization of this project. When I started this project three years ago, I couldn't have imagined it would reach the level of recognition it has now, being appreciated by thousands of people in my home country. The thought that my work is out there, brightening someone's day, fills me with happiness.