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Peacebuilding through Art and Technology

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*Lead #ASKotec trainers from #defyhatenow
South Sudan, Richard Maliamungu and Bior Ajang,
preparing for a workshop.
Photo by Laure Nganlay*

Peace through Art

In this chapter we will look at how art and technology can contribute to peacebuilding. We will also look at examples of how people are using art and technology to spread peace in their communities.

Throughout this chapter, the question we want to be asking ourselves is: **how can we use our art or tech skills to spread peace?**

Sometimes, when we hear the word art or artist, we think about someone else, perhaps someone who makes a living from art or someone who is famous. But that isn't what we are talking about in this chapter.

For us, everyone is an artist. We are all born with the desire to create and be creative. And anytime you use this creativity, especially to create something meaningful, that is art.

Cooking a beautiful meal is art.
Sewing is art, even if it is only to sew something lovely for you or your family.
Dance is art, even if it is only dancing with neighbors.
Writing a story is art.
Singing is art.
A child drawing a picture is art.

In short, even if we don't think of ourselves as artists, we are.

And so the question becomes:
How can we use our art to support and bring about peace?
How can we use art to contribute to the good of society?

► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◄
- **When you think of art, what do you think of most? Paintings? Music? Knitting? Dance?**
- **How can art contribute to peace?**
- **What is it about art that makes it easier to get the message across than with written text alone?**
- **Can you think of good examples of where art brought people together in harmony?**
- **Is all art peaceful?**

Starting Small

Below we are going to give examples of how art can be used in big ways to foster peace. But it is important to stress that smaller expressions of art can have a real and important impact as well.

So perhaps you draw pictures of peace and hope and hang them in a school or other building for people to see. Or you hang them outside your home. This fosters peace.

Perhaps you sew or knit something for someone in need. This fosters peace.

Perhaps you work together with others to cook meals for newly arriving displaced people. This fosters peace.

Perhaps you teach children how to dance in order to express their emotions. This fosters peace.

Perhaps you draw to work through your negative emotions instead of expressing them publicly on social media. This fosters peace.

Perhaps you act as a storyteller, spreading stories of hope and love. This fosters peace.

Start small. It all adds up.

► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◄
- **Think about your daily life: What small steps could you take to use your art to spread peace?**

Artivism

The term Artivism came about in the late 1990s and was first used by artists in East Los Angeles, USA (the Chicano/Mexican part of town) and artists from Mexico. Both groups were being oppressed and faced discrimination and wanted to create art that empowered others. They came up with the term artivism. It combines the terms **art** and **activism**.

What does it mean? Artivism is the use of art to make a political or social statement and to raise awareness of issues of inequality. Artivism includes both traditional forms of art, such as painting and dance, as well as things like Street Art and Spoken Word.

Artivism reinforces the idea that we are all artists and can all contribute to a cause such as peacebuilding through art of any kind. We do not need to be professional artists to create art and be part of the artivism movement.

The hashtag **#artivism** is used on social media platforms to bring attention to artivism in local communities.

#defyhatenow and #artivism

Below are three examples of how **#defyhatenow** has supported larger-scale #artivism projects that aim to use music and film to spread messages of peace online.

One Africa - spoken word against hate speech
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeYmSZUCqLU

One example of **#artivism** at work is this music video created by the **#PeaceVillage**. Their goal is to use music to send positive, educational messages to people and to discourage hate speech online and offline. This **#Peace4ALL** video was designed to break down the prejudices in South Sudanese communities and foster a culture of reconciliation. It was recorded in the Rhino camp refugee settlement in Uganda.

#ThinkB4UClick spoken word
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVYDJzT9iO0

#ThinkB4UClick (Think Before You Click) is an awareness campaign that points out the dangers of misinformation, fake news, and hate speech. It stresses the importance of thinking about what we share and like on social media.
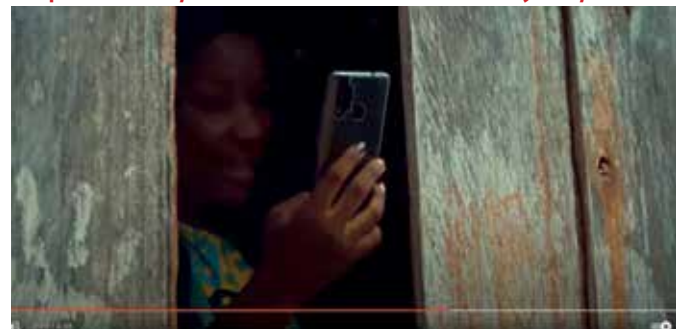
Mac Alunge wrote and performed this Spoken Word. The goal was to spread the message of needing to **#ThinkB4UClick** in order to reduce online and offline hate speech and possible incitement to violence in Cameroon.

DEFY! - a #defyhatenow film
https://youtu.be/9zdgsc2jrO8

The **#defyhatenow** film DEFY! tells the fictional story of a senior politician in South Sudan and his newly found passion for social media and the risks that come with using these platforms to spread propaganda and rumors.

DEFY the Act
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzuvjRMyHGU

Johnson Ebigwe created this short film to educate Cameroonians about the dangers of mis-, dis-, and malinformation and how spreading lies can incite violence in communities.

► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◄

- Do you like to sing? Is there a song you could write and record that would spread a positive message?
- If you don't sing but can write, could you write the words to a song?
- What would you write about? What do you think would help others?
- If you made a film, what story would it tell?

Illustrations for Peace

Felix Fokoua is a self-taught artist from Yaounde, Cameroon. He won the best Young African Designer Award in 2017 and the MasterCard Foundation Young African Artists Award in 2018. He has created illustrations to foster communication and messages of peace on social media.

Here are some of the illustrations he has done:

Impact of War Conflict shows the impact that war has on people and their children. It is meant to make us think about what legacy we are creating for the next generation.

Stand Against War depicts a woman standing under the protection of the unification symbol, praying for the souls of all of those who lost their lives due to the conflict. The woman's posture shows that we must stand still and stand firm in unity, not letting others divide and destroy Cameroon.

VivreEnsemble Gathering shows people coming together around food, thereby showing how communal meals create a sense of togetherness and oneness.

► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◄

- Could you use your drawings or illustrations to foster peace?
- Even if they are much simpler than these, what sort of art or drawings could you share?
- Do you use emojis to communicate positive messages online?

Video Games for Peace

A talk with Olivier Madiba of Kiro'o Games, who built the Aurion games series.
By Kendi Gikunda

How has Kiro'o Games helped reshape the minds of young people?
In the Aurion games you gain strength from building yourself up, (by believing in yourself and your skill set), and your purpose in life.
In the Aurion games you gain strength from building yourself up, [by believing in yourself and your skill set], and your purpose in life.

We are also creating a new game, "the public service game," where the player is a leader in Africa and in this case it's a politician. It was inspired by the corrupt practices in Cameroon. In the game, you build social services for your people and that's how you proceed to the next level. We aim to create disgust for corruption. This helps people think about how their behavior and actions impacts them and their society.

How does Kiro'o Games support peace and solidarity?
[The games] give young people who are idle [something to do instead of] engaging in hate speech online. They would rather play these games than go out wandering, which could lead to misconduct and delinquency.

We have tried to maintain an open dialog, starting at our office. We have Francophone and Anglophone speakers working with us. All our games and comic books are bilingual, including our website.

http://kiroogames.com/
http://aurionthegame.com/

► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◄
- Do you play video games or read comics?
- What messages do you get from video games? Are they positive or negative messages?
- How do the games you play either contribute to peace or foster a sense of violence?
- Do you think games are a good way to foster self-esteem and peace in young people? Why or why not?

Other #artivism Resources

Beautiful Rising is an international network of artist-activist-trainers helping grassroots movements become more creative and effective. A Pan-African guidebook is available. **https://beautifultrouble.org/beautiful-rising**

Amplifier
Amplifier is a US-based nonprofit design lab that builds art and media to amplify important social issues. While the content is often US-specific, there are posters that work in all contexts, especially those promoting tolerance and acceptance. Their artwork provides inspiration for how issues in Cameroon could be addressed through art.
https://amplifier.org/

► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◄
- Would you like to use art to be part of #artivism?
- What could you do to be part of this movement?

#peacejam

One of the activities that **#defyhatenow** participates in every year is the social media #peacejam.

What is a **#peacejam**? It is a community-based event where people get together to share their ideas, visions, and hopes for a more peaceful future. It is also a great place to make new friends and connections.

To "jam" is a term used in music. It is used when musicians get together to play, improvise, and just see what happens - without any idea ahead of time how the music will turn out. When you jam, you just let the energy and ideas bounce and add your ideas to the mix to see what happens. Jamming together is a way to create something new without a lot of planning. It lets ideas flow freely.

This is what the **#peacejam** aims to do as well in the context of peace. It is a space to let the energy and ideas flow in order to see what can be created through this free exchange. It is a space to experiment.

The **#peacejam** sessions can range from very loose gatherings of ordinary people to sessions that have hosts who bring together performers and activists. Regardless of how formal or informal, the sessions are a place to share ideas about how to engage in peacebuilding activities, especially in the context of social media, without needing to have a fully formed plan before you start contributing.

The main idea: Start where you are at, bounce ideas off others, share, and see what comes of it.

Start a #peacejam
Anyone can start a social media **#peacejam** by organizing an event or simply by sharing messages of peace online and adding your voice to the others also advocating for peace. Messages of peace can be posted every day of the year, but there are also holidays that work well to highlight the need for peace. Examples are the UN World Peace Day on September 21st, World Press Freedom Day on May 3rd, and International Women's Day on March 8th.

Hashtags to use are **#peacejam**, **#Acts4Peace237**, and **#defyhatenow**. This helps link your message to the wider messages of peace being spread online.

Here is an example from **#defyhatenow**

#peacejam2021. It is by Joyce Diko Duku, a feminist activist, spoken word poet, and an athlete. She uses poetry and spoken work to highlight injustices and uphold humanity. This is the Spoken Word she performed:

GOODBYE HUMANITY

You've always been the light
Now it's very dark
Goodbye humanity!

I miss you
I constantly find myself walking around
Hoping that maybe you will come around
The void in my soul is killing me slowly
I search the crowd for your face

How do I find you?
How do I find you when everyone wants to be Zol kebir at the expense of meskin
Here!
Where we value some paper they call money over life
So no surprise toronto have no mercy on the little I have
And yaba can't control his lust
Or is it the girls crazy over yaba?
It's the V8, it's the flashy lifestyle
When hotels are mushrooming, kristal is flowering the city monopolizing the Nile

How do I find you?
How do I find you when I live in a who do I know society?
When I'm struggling for nothing?
How do I find you?
How do I find you when my bank statement decrees the respect I deserve?
So I have two faces three faces
Many faces to be fit in this survival war

Empty brains on the frontline
Manipulated by the cruel evil minded who are building empires founded on innocent blood
War onto you full brain to think you can pop up only to be chopped off and used as an example, Lesson, threat that courage and lifespan is inverse
And to the full brain coward, silence is deadliest
Evil minded weapons can't compare
So who's left
When courage falls
Is it monuments parading streets named after courage?

Is it courage's blood face hanging on the wall?
Is it courage's death marked on your calendar?
Or is it courage's blood sacrificed as ink to write history for you?
Who's left
When courage falls!

Am on a path
You on it too
We are paying for crimes which have made this path unending
To a destination, who knows
But i'm hopeful it's like in my dreams
Peaceful, am honored for me and I honor you for you
Life is precious
Every form of it
From me, you to even that plant species getting to exist
It's just but a dream
I'm awake!

I miss you
I constantly find myself walking around
Hoping that maybe you'll come around
The void in my soul is killing me slowly
I search the crowd for your face

How do I find you?
Humanity!
I cannot save your face
You cannot save her face
Her face can only be saved by we together
We put aside our differences and make known the impossible to possible
For division cannot be the mission
But to feel proud
When she has to face the mirror, like the beautiful coloring of the mural
Painting every heart, our hearts, with love
For it is us to complete the journey of our resting heroines and heroes
Us to uphold our responsibility to the unborn generation
We shall unite
And together
Restore her once upon a time beauty and honor
Peace will reign

Humanity
You taught me to love me for who I am
And to love her, him and it as me

Goodbye! © *TATA*

▶ Peace through Technology

#tech4peace

While technology can be used as a tool to ignite conflicts, it can also be used to spread peace. **#peacetech** and **#tech4peace** are two hashtags often used to spread ideas of how technology can help in the peacebuilding process.

Technology itself is neither good nor bad. Rather, it is people's decisions on how to use technology that either fuels conflicts or creates opportunities for peace.

When we hear the word technology or **#tech4peace**, we might think of more complicated technology, like coding. But really any use of technology that supports peace is included under this term.

So if you use social media to follow and support peace efforts, that is **#tech4peace**.

If you build online communities that work to fight injustice, that is **#tech4peace**.

If you blog, podcast, or create videos online that promote peace, that is **#tech4peace**.

If you create or support an app that helps people find resources or distributes food, that is **#tech4peace**.

So for this part of the chapter, we are using technology in the broadest sense of the world, meaning anything that involves the use of any technology. And in that sense, since most of us use smartphones or computers, we are all already using technology. The question is: will we use technology to promote peace?

▶ QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- **Which technologies do you already use? A phone? A smartphone? A computer? Something else?**
- **How tech-savvy are you?**
- **Would you be interested in learning more about technology, like coding or programming?**
- **How do you think technology can be used by non tech-savvy people to foster community-building and conflict mitigation?**

#ASKnet - Access to Skills and Knowledge Network

#ASKnet is a program by the rOg_agency that links together five community-based, youth-led innovation hubs in South Sudan and Uganda.

The goal of **#ASKnet** is to build a sustainable network of trainers who can then empower others in their communities with the tools and knowledge needed to address specific challenges, support community development, and ease inequality. It does so through workshops that teach people about open source hardware and software, entrepreneurship, media production, gender equality awareness, trauma healing, and financial literacy.

By teaching skills ranging from how to repair a radio to how to code, **#ASKnet** helps empower individuals so that they can go out and help others, spreading help and peace through their communities.
https://openculture.agency/asknet-access-to-skills-and-knowledge-network/

► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◄

- **Have you ever helped someone repair something? Tell us about it.**
- **Do you have a tech skill you could share with others? What is it?**
- **Does your community have repair cafés? Is this something you would like to get involved in?**
- **How could helping others with repairs and learning about technology help bring about peace?**

Makerspaces

What is a makerspace? It is any space, large or small, that is open to the community and where people can come to meet and collaborate on tech-related projects in a creative, playful atmosphere.

The maker-movement is part of the DIY (Do-It-Yourself) trend that encourages people to take a more hands-on approach to everything, learning to do things for themselves instead of relying on professionals to do it for them. While the DIY world often is used in terms of home, car, and bike repairs, makerspaces often have the added element of technology involved.

At its core, the DIY and maker-movement empower people and help build a more equal society, in which tools are available and skills are able to be learned and taught to others.

One example of a makerspace is the MboaLab in Yaoundé, Cameroon. MboaLab is a makerspace dedicated to promoting peace through social innovation, community-based education, collaboration, and mediation. MboaLab's aim is to foster sustainable local innovation in science and health in order to improve the community's standard of living.
https://www.mboalab.africa/about/

► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◄

- **Have you ever been to a makerspace?**
- **Could you imagine creating one in your community? What would you need to start one?**
- **What are the benefits of spaces such as makerspaces and the DIY movement?**
- **Have you ever done a DIY project? Have you taught others how to DIY something?**
- **How can makerspaces and DIY contribute to peace?**

The Mungo

Monitoring online social media activity, correctly interpreting potential imminent acts of mass violence, and summoning a response can save lives. The MUNGO is an Early Warning Early Response (EWER) system developed by #defyhatenow that plots, reports, and highlights violent incidents, patterns, and hotspots in Cameroon's conflict regions. Named after the river connecting Cameroon's anglophone and francophone regions, the MUNGO aims to foster peace through data analysis.
https://www.themungo.net/

Other #peacetech Resources

Peace Direct
Peace Direct is a nonprofit that works to support peace through technology. They also support Platform4Dialog, where people can get together online to discuss approaches to peace.
https://www.peacedirect.org
https://www.peacedirect.org/platform4dialogue/

PeaceTech Lab
PeaceTech Lab is a US-based nonprofit that works to reduce violent conflict using technology, media, and data. The website offers some resources to download or contribute to collecting data.
http://www.peacetechlab.org