

FORUMCIV.

Power to change



ARTIVISM FELLOWSHIP COHORT II

Regional office for Eastern and Southern Africa



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Celebrating Artivism: The Transformative Power of Creativity



Introduction

This storybook is a vibrant testament to the boundless potential of creativity in driving social change. It celebrates the journeys of individuals who, through the ForumCiv Artivism Fellowship, have harnessed their artistry to champion democracy, human rights, and social justice. This fellowship stands as a beacon of hope and innovation, uniting the power of activism and art—“**Artivism**”—to create meaningful societal impact.

Born out of a pressing need to amplify voices and ignite dialogue in a world of increasing inequality and shrinking civic spaces, the Artivism Fellowship is more than a programme—it is a movement. Over months of intensive workshops, collaborative residencies, and transformative mentorship, a cohort of 20 extraordinary fellows has emerged, each equipped with unique talents and unwavering passion. From spoken word poets and visual artists to filmmakers and

musicians, these fellows embody resilience, creativity, and a shared vision for a more equitable world.

Through their projects and personal growth, the fellows have redefined art as a catalyst for change. Their works explore urgent themes—gender equality, environmental justice, governance, and mental health—presented in ways that challenge, inspire, and connect. This storybook captures not only their impactful projects but also their journeys as changemakers, each contributing to a collective narrative of hope and transformation.

As you turn these pages, you will witness the profound ability of art to transcend barriers, spark critical conversations, and build bridges across differences. Let this book be a testament to the enduring power of creativity in shaping a just and inclusive society.

Acknowledgements

The success of the ForumCiv Artivism Fellowship is a collaborative achievement that we are honored to celebrate. First and foremost, we extend our deepest gratitude to our donors: The Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi; The Ford Foundation; and the Hewlett Foundation for their support. Your partnerships have been pivotal in advancing democracy, good governance, human rights, gender equality.

To the mentors and facilitators, led by Gregory Mwendwa, your invaluable expertise and heartfelt dedication have been instrumental in shaping the fellows’ journeys. Your mentorship has empowered them to transform their dreams into impactful actions, leaving an indelible mark on their creative and advocacy paths.

To the fellows, this book is a tribute to your resilience, innovation, and commitment to using art as a force for change. Your courage to confront systemic issues and your ability to channel creativity into advocacy are an inspiration to us all. Your stories and projects serve as a clarion call for justice and equity, demonstrating that art is not merely a reflection of society but a powerful tool to reshape its future.

I also want to extend my appreciation to the ForumCiv team with a special mention to Jackson Obare, Winfred Nkatha, and Rachel Juma, whose vision, tireless efforts, and belief in the transformative power of art have made this fellowship a success. Your dedication exemplifies the spirit of collaboration and community that lies at the heart of this initiative.

Finally, we wish these 20 artists all the very best as they strive to create a better world through their art. This storybook is not just a collection of narratives—it is a celebration of collective action and a rallying cry for all who believe in the power of creativity to effect lasting change. Together, we reaffirm that art is not only a reflection of our society—it is the lens through which we envision and build a brighter future.

*Chelimo Njoroge,
Programme Manager,
ForumCiv*



The Power of Now; Creativity as a Force for Change



When I think of the Artivism Fellowship, I am taken back to the 12-year-old version of myself—a child filled with eagerness, leading the Child-to-Child Club of my primary school, believing in the audacious power of stories, art, and action to change the world. That child understood, in a simple and intuitive way, that creativity was a bridge to a better future. Today, standing at the tail end of this fellowship’s journey, I see that belief

mirrored in 20 brilliant fellows, each bearing stories that shine with life and urgency.

We began this journey with a simple truth: that arts, culture, and communication are necessary and powerful tools for social change. These fellows —artists, dreamers, agitators for justice—joined the program as canvases bearing brushstrokes of their lived experiences. In the safe space of this fellowship, they stretched their imagination, and emotions, layering bold new colours onto their personal and collective narratives.

We began with a week-long residency, a kind of creative explosion where we learnt that all oppression is connected, and that diversity is the secret ingredient to unlocking people-power. Then came the mentorship phase—a steady, deliberate process of transforming knowledge, skills, attitudes and networks into tangible projects.

And now, we stand at the culmination of this journey, at a festival that is not just a showcase but a declaration of our shared belief that artivism matters. From climate justice murals to campaigns amplifying marginalized voices, these fellows have created works that challenge and inspire.

This is not a conventional memoir. It is a love letter to those who believe in the power of community. It is a tribute to those who insist that creativity can heal, challenge, and disrupt. These pages hold not only the stories of 20 fellows but also the larger story of us—of people who believe that artivism is the language we need to speak in these times of inequity and disconnection.

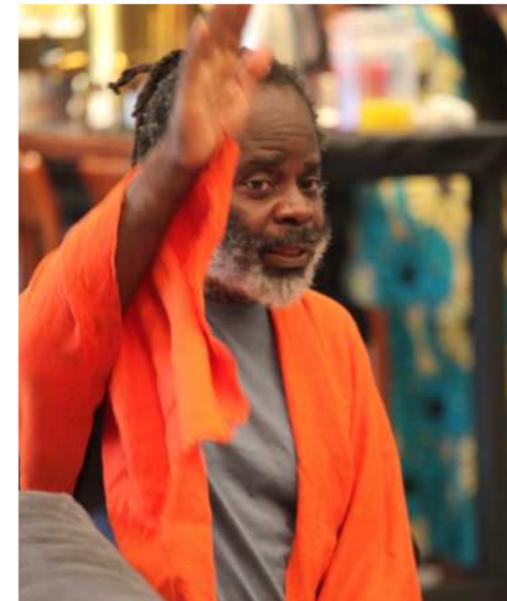
As you read this book, I invite you to pay attention not just to the projects but to the people behind them—their values, their courage, their stubborn hope. Theirs are stories of strength, forged in the fires of oppression but tempered by the undeniable belief in the beauty of possibility.

These are the stories of young Kenyans and Africans who refuse to wait for the world to change; instead, they are changing it with the tools of creativity, hope and resilience.

We live in a time when the world can feel fractured, its seams coming undone. And yet, the story of now is not one of despair but of urgent action. The fellows remind us that we do not have the luxury of waiting. They call on us to join them in building a future where creativity is not merely ornamental but foundational.

To the fellows: thank you for trusting this process, for sharing your stories, and for reminding me that there is still so much to fight for and to love in this world. Let this book be a life-long memoir of the work we have done together—and an invitation to others to join us.

Yours in art and action,
Gregory Mwendwa Kio,
Lead Consultant/Creative Learning Facilitator, Artivism Fellowship 2024.





Artivism

Fellowship

Artist Stories



Apondithepoet

Poet, activist



A few names resonate in Artivism, like Apondithepoet, a.k.a Sumaya Msah. As a poet, changemaker, and advocate, I have used my experiences to fuel a life dedicated to social justice and equity and inspire others. My journey from adversity to activism is a powerful testament to the transformative power of art.

My story began within the walls of Kamae Borstal Institution, a juvenile correctional facility where I discovered poetry as a means of healing and empowerment. Rather than succumbing to despair, I found purpose in uplifting fellow inmates with my words, beginning my lifelong commitment to using art as a tool for change. This early experience sparked a passion for advocacy that continues to guide my work.

In my pursuit of education, I have focused on child care and protection, along with a specialization in Drug and substance abuse counseling. This academic foundation supports my advocacy efforts, particularly in addressing the struggles faced by vulnerable populations. My commitment to these courses was recognized in 2022 when I won the Best Piece on Children’s Rights award under the Kenya Universities Performing Arts Association.

In addition to my work in the arts, I have been an outspoken advocate for human rights. In 2023, I was named the Best Poet in the No Tobacco Challenge for my impactful work addressing drug and substance abuse. My identity as a nonbinary individual has also led me to compose a powerful piece on LGBTQ+ rights. It earned recognition in a Human Rights Competition organized by the United Nations on the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2023. I was honored by the United Nations Human Rights Commission for my contributions to promoting equality, equity and justice.

My influence extends beyond the stage and the page. My work in Kilifi has made a tangible difference in the fight against drug and substance abuse, earning the Mekatilili Award. Through my leadership, I continue to bring awareness, inspire change, and foster a sense of community.

A pivotal moment in my leadership journey came as a fellow in the Artivism Fellowship by ForumCiv. This fellowship was significant because I focused on the public narrative topic—how personal stories can drive societal change. I realized that sharing my experiences could inspire

others to take action and bring awareness to critical issues. The fellowship also emphasized the magic of collaboration, a lesson that has profoundly influenced my work. I co-founded Art and Hearts, a community organization in Kilifi, where creatives come together to spark meaningful conversations and create collective impact through art.

With the grant received in the fellowship, I am working on a project themed “Kesho Kileo.” This project features three powerful spoken word pieces: ZUZU, NI SISI, and Niaje.

Zuzu serves as a stark reminder of the bloodshed and lies that marred recent protests. The piece delves into the tragic reality of innocent lives lost and the distorted narratives surrounding the events. It questions who represents the people and demands accountability for the blood spilled.

Ni sisi gives voice to the concerns of the ordinary citizen, exposing political leaders’ corrupt practices and broken promises. The piece highlights the price paid by ordinary people for the pursuit of power and emphasizes the urgent need for change.

Niaje addresses the pressing issue of violence against women. It sheds light on the pervasive misogyny and brutality that women face in society. The piece gives voice to the pain and suffering of women and calls for an end to violence. These three spoken word pieces collectively form a powerful statement against injustice, corruption, and violence. They serve as a call to action, urging individuals to speak out, demand change, and strive for a better future.

Ultimately, my story is one of resilience, transformation, and the power of collaboration. I have proven that art is not merely a form of expression but a potent tool for social change. As I continue my journey, I remain an enduring example of how personal stories, when shared with purpose and compassion, can spark collective action and create a better world for all.

SCAN TO
CONNECT
WITH
APONDI



Brian Silwe Omondi a.k.a Silweyz/Avangi

writer, Recording and performing urban spoken word artist.

I come from Nakuru, Kenya. My music career started back in 2017 while in high school during the drama festival competition. At that moment, I was inspired by my mom's struggles to make ends meet as a jobless single mom. I was in boarding school but stayed home for more than a day scholar due to the lack of school fees. Music was my only hope out of poverty, and indeed it is happening.

My activism journey started In 2021 when unknown people and, worst of all, fatally stabbed me outside the railways police station in Nakuru. I was infuriated that this police station had not a single street light or a patrol officer on duty, but there were like 200 of them in the CBD with only one job to harass the youths. I learnt that all oppressions are connected, and being an artist, I took the initiative to amplify these issues to the relevant authorities.

This has been possible through the recording and producing of Avangi Album, a whole album dedicated to social justice with pieces like Dream Ya kukill poverty, Tribute to Black women, Truth is, Tuwajibike, Generation Zii, Mawazo, Media Freedoms, Lief, Contrast.

Through the yearly Avangi live experience, I have brought community and office bearers together Through music, poetry and candid Conversations. In my hometown, through art for social change, people have normalised speaking about critical issues and coming out to fight for their rights. Through an initiative dubbed 'Get in the bus', a matatu civic education with the legendary Wilie Oeba, we have expanded civic spaces to take an activist message to the people it matters the most. I have appeared in several documentaries, including Using Art To Speak Truth To Power By Nation Media and Keeping the Protest Alive by the French News Agency.

As a fellow in ForumCiv Artivism Fellowship, I have done a lot of learning and unlearning not only from our able mentors and facilitators but also from each fellow on how to write, record, publish, and IP; mental health is a priority to me as a creative, how to measure the impact of my work and writing proposals.

Also, in the spirit of collaboration, my art can now reach a wider audience as my fellow artists share my work and vice versa and add other fellows' creativity to our art forms for a common goal.

I am also grateful for my new project, Kenya in 13 Minutes SPOKENTARY, which I just released, highlighting what has been happening in our country before, during and after the recent Genz protest in line with the theme WHAT NEXT' and thanks to this fellowship, the funds I got boosted my project. I am working on my 2nd Album, which will drop in 2025.

Finally, through networking during spaces, I have been privileged to showcase my artwork to the relevant organisations that work in the same line. I thank Forumciv for empowering me with the power to change.

When not doing music, I offer styling services at Mle Dukani as the top stylist

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH SILWEYZ



Charles Kariuki a.k.a Chaleslim

Artist, community organiser, TV/Radio producer and a presenter

I come from Nairobi, Kenya. I have over 10 years of experience in digital media broadcasting. I am a hip-hop rapper and an 'artist' in a duo called SkemeMusic. In which we widely address social issues. Our hit song 'Mr Polisi' has been used by Human Rights Organizations as a rally for peace and to bring an end to extra-judicial killings. I am passionate about human rights and the youth, working closely on these themes with Amnesty International, Missing Voices, The British Embassy, The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, and The Social Justice Movement, to name a few. I chair a community-based organisation called 'Future Leaders 254'. I recently did a tour with Protection International to the Rift Valley to advocate and create awareness for peace and Human Rights Defender's security.

As a style and fashion enthusiast, I manage the Skeme Styling brand with two other partners. The brand produces custom African attires and accessories from recycled materials. These creations have been used locally and internationally by artists and in films.

I have done voice-overs for various Television, Radio and NGO productions. I have also spearheaded several Digital Marketing Campaigns, managing social media for brands such as Viceroy East Africa, Afia Juice, and What's Good Africa Studios.

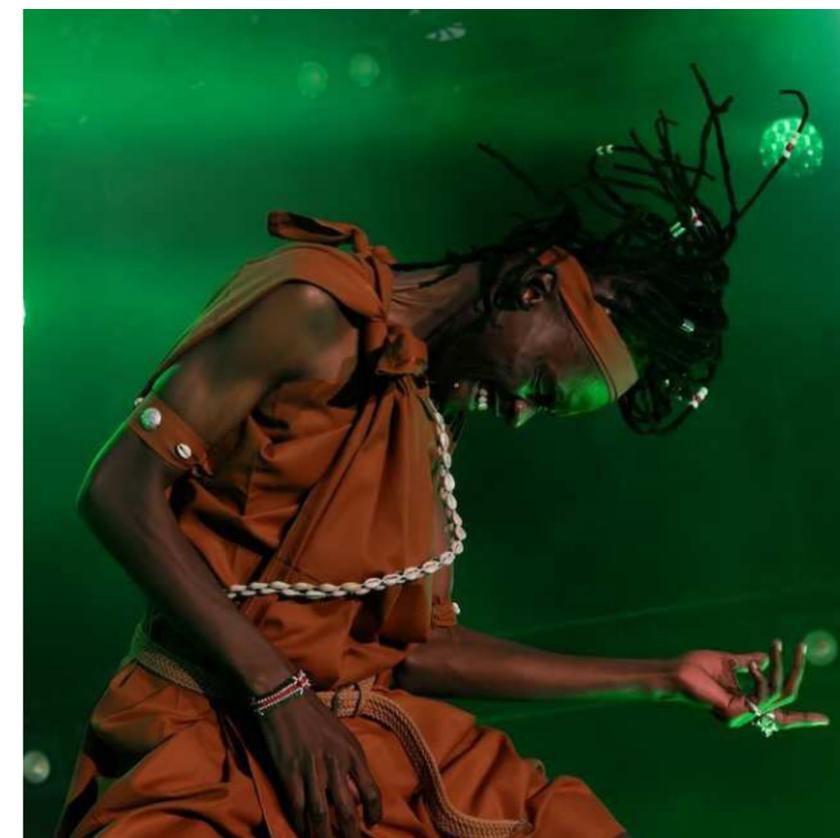
I am also a writer who has published content for 'Insider Magazine' and blogged for 'What's Good Live', an online magazine. I have been featured as an actor in the award-winning movie Blanda 1&2. On the radio front, I have been producing and co-hosting 'ShengTalk', an online magazine-style youth show highlighting the best in Youth Culture around Kenya's urban cities.

This versatility of skills helped me become the first-ever Kenyan representative for the 2022 Air Guitar World Championships held annually in Finland. I amplify peace messaging within the international Air Guitar fraternity in this new role through my unique Kenyan voice.

Being a fellow in the ForumCiv Artivism fellowship has been a mind-opener. Spending time with like-minded artists from all over Kenya and getting the time to share and be vulnerable has made me realise that all our struggles are interconnected and that only we have the power to offer solutions. I came out of the fellowship with the technical know-how of crafting and implementing a high-impact art project for social change and how I can measure the impact. With the grant offered, I am working on an EP that features three tracks: Lush - A song about climate action, Manipulation - A song geared towards unity and peace, and Juu ya stool - Mental wellness. I also plan to do a live-style installation touching on African themes and other aesthetical influences.

I believe in collecting and preserving our own Kenyan & African history to educate and remind people of our African cultural and social aesthetic through time And how it has gradually morphed as we look into the imaginable possible future. My goal is to empower my community to be proud of their heritage. As Henry Glassie says, "History is not the past but a map of the past, drawn from a particular point of view, to be useful to the modern traveller."

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH SLIM



Cricket Writes

Writer, Spoken word artist,



I am an activist based in the informal settlements of Nairobi, Kenya. I write poems that raise National consciousness, patriotism, and morality. Growing up in the informal settlements has inspired most of the pieces I perform—the high rates of arbitrary arrest, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and profiling by the Police. Cases of defilement and rape are just but a few. Art is culture, and culture is reflected in art. Art is not only work as it has been made to look like, but it is a powerful tool for liberation. It relates more to our communities. As a creative, I localise my content for a better understanding by my community and also for my dignity and authenticity.

I started my progressive writing in 2019. In college, I was nicknamed Cricket, for being too noisy. I accepted the name, understanding how strategic a cricket can be making noise all night long and how you can't avoid it. As an activist, earlier on, I had no platform to perform my pieces as they were termed too radical, so I decided to do short clips with my poems and post them on my socials.

Together with other artists I have established an artist haven: **THE ARTISTIC JUNCTION COLLECTIVE**. This space allows artists to explore their full creative potential. We also engage in political education to help us understand our community struggles, have our own solutions, and hold the leaders we have accountable.

The ForumCiv Artivism Fellowship has been a space for me to interact with other progressive arts, create partnerships, and share our stories. This has guided me and other fellows to a better understanding of our people's struggles in our different regions and to develop new strategies through art to inspire bigger communities of community organizers and conscious artists.

With the grant offered in the fellowship, I have done three pieces: **Do not forget, Angalia, and Workers wakiUnite**. I addressed the key social issues affecting my community and the failed leadership in implementing our constitution.

I intend to maintain the same values and revolutionary discipline throughout my life. I want to live as an uncompromised Poet. A generation of community organizers and progressive artists advancing our fight for social justice

Forward to art for Social Change!
 Long live our defiance, long live!
 Hands of Haiti!
 From the River to the sea, Palestine shall be free!
 Free Congo, Free Sudan!
 Free the people of the World!

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH CRICKET



Denzel Juma

Visual Artist



I am a visionary artist and storyteller whose work is deeply rooted in my passion for social and environmental change. With a profound connection to the struggles and resilience of my community, I channel my creativity to address pressing issues of climate justice, education, and equity. My art, often inspired by the stories of children, celebrates success, hope, and resilience even in the face of overwhelming challenges.

One of my notable projects is titled **“The Unwritten Pages”** and it highlights the devastating effects of climate-induced floods in his community. Through this work, I have painted stories of children who, despite displacement and disrupted education, continue to thrive and embody hope. This project underscores my commitment to storytelling that inspires resilience and calls for action.

As a fellow in the ForumCiv Artivism Fellowship, I cultivated a unique ability to use my artistic medium to spotlight overlooked narratives. The fellowship provided me with opportunities to expand my skills and learn across various art forms, including poetry, spoken word, and graffiti.

Under the ForumCiv-funded project I led Creative Faraja Artbeat, where I spearheaded an initiative to shed light on the often-overlooked connection between femicide and climate change. The idea was to go beyond the conventional understanding of femicide as a partner-to-partner crime and delve into its broader systemic roots exacerbated by environmental changes.

Through this project, we explored how climate-induced events such as food insecurity, heatwaves, floods, income losses, and prolonged droughts disproportionately affect women and girls. These factors often lead to migration and displacement, placing women and teenage girls at increased risk of sexual violence and exploitation.

Looking ahead, I am eager to collaborate with other artists from diverse genres, combining creative visions to amplify the power of art in activism. I am also committed to embracing technological advancements like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), integrating them into my work to create immersive and transformative art experiences.

My artistic journey is not just about creation but about transformation—leveraging my skills to advocate for a better, more equitable world. Through my work, I amplify voices often unheard, creating a bridge between art and activism that resonates with audiences worldwide.

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH DENZEL



Dorcas Makena

Actress, Poet, Filmmaker

In the vibrant creative scene of Kenya, I stand out as an artist committed to driving social change. With a unique blend of poetry, acting, and modeling, I use my talents as tools for advocacy, touching on pressing societal issues such as sex tourism, climate change, femicide, and human rights. My journey is not just about artistic expression but also about creating a more equitable, sustainable, and just world.

I run **Makena Makena Ventures**, a creative enterprise dedicated to all forms of artistic creation. Through this venture, I have established myself as a new-generation filmmaker and leader, deeply connected to my community. My short films and poetry aim to illuminate issues often swept under the rug, inspiring dialogue and action. With projects that explore the realities of sex tourism and the urgent need for waste management in line with climate change, I hope to transform the narrative around these topics in my local communities and beyond. My work is fueled by my self-motivation and a deep desire to create meaningful change. I envision a world where sex tourism is eradicated, women are safe, and climate change challenges are met with proactive solutions. My leadership shines through my various projects, including short films and stage plays, where I merge storytelling and advocacy.

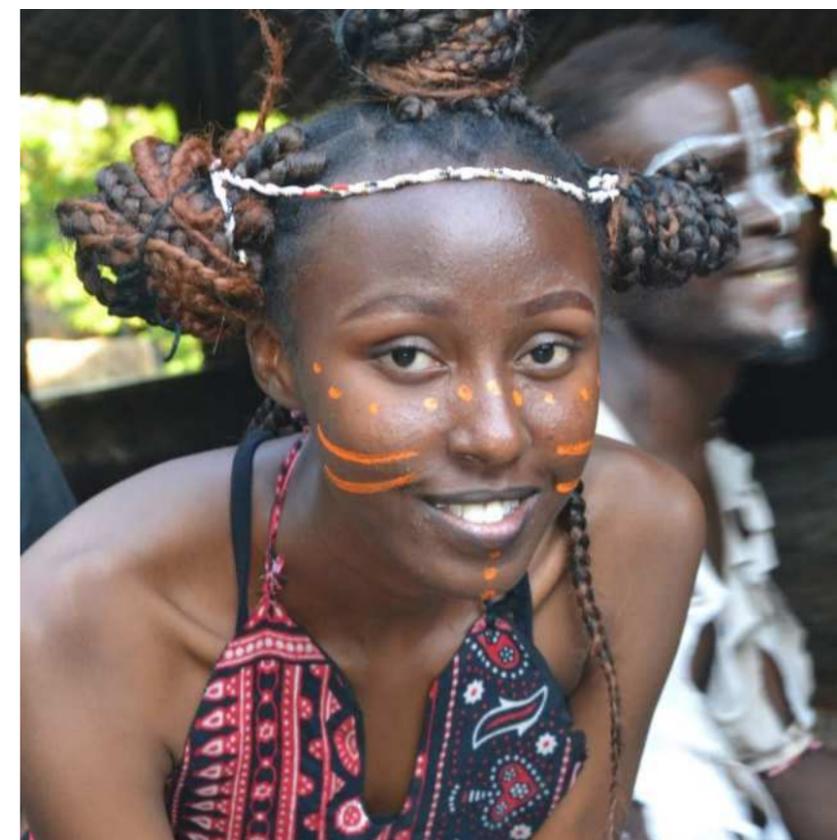
As a filmmaker, I believe in the power of short films to connect with people on a deeper level. My recent works focus on creating awareness about the harsh realities of sex tourism, an issue prevalent in coastal regions like Mombasa and Kilifi. Through my art, I strive to give a voice to the voiceless and push for a society where exploitation has no place. My poetry and acting delve into equally compelling themes. From addressing the grief and outrage surrounding femicide to highlighting the importance of equality and environmental stewardship, My work is a call to action. My unique perspective as a young, self-motivated leader allows me to resonate with audiences from all walks of life.

I have had a transformative experience as a fellow in the FORUM CIV Artist Fellowship. I have learned the power of personal narratives in driving change and reinforced the importance of diversity. I cherish how the fellowship fostered a safe, inclusive space where different voices were heard and celebrated.

With the grant in the fellowship, I have worked on a transformative film project titled **Voices Unchained**. It draws inspiration from real-life personal stories and the impact of mentorship in shaping artists. The film delves into the journey of individuals who have found their voice through art, exploring how mentorship nurtures creativity and empowers artists to confront societal challenges. By weaving together narratives of struggle, resilience, and artistic expression, **Voices Unchained** highlights how art becomes a powerful tool for advocacy, breaking silences, and addressing issues such as inequality, exploitation, and human rights. This project underscores the role of art as a catalyst for dialogue and change, demonstrating that creativity is not only an outlet for self-expression but also a beacon of hope and transformation in society.

My artistic endeavors reflect my vision of a better world. By merging my creative skills with activism, I demonstrate that art can be a powerful force for change. My work raises awareness and empowers others to take action in their own lives and communities. As I continue to build my career in filmmaking and expand the reach of Makena Makena Ventures, I remain a beacon of hope. My efforts remind me that, with passion and purpose, art can create a ripple of transformation in society.

SCAN TO
CONNECT
WITH
MAKENA



Eric Muhandia

Visual Artist, Socio-Political Commentator, and Illustrator.

I am known for my compelling use of cartoons, illustrations, comics, and murals to address critical societal issues. My work explores themes such as governance, public health, corruption, and civic engagement, transforming complex narratives into visuals that spark conversations and inspire change. I leverage my creativity to advocate for justice, amplify marginalized voices, and foster public awareness through art.

My journey as an artist began when I was seven years old, inspired by my father and brother, who nurtured my passion for drawing. Their encouragement fueled my curiosity and love for art, which I further honed through practice and experimentation in high school. After completing campus, I pursued a short art course to refine my techniques and broaden my skills. Combining my background in public health with my artistic talent, I discovered a unique way to address societal issues, blending creativity with advocacy to inform, educate, and inspire change.

My recent accomplishments underscore my growing impact on Kenya's creative scene. In October 2024, I participated in the highly competitive Shujaaz Illustrators Competition, where I illustrated a main character for an upcoming webcomic series. My skill and unique perspective stood out in a pool of talented illustrators. In the same month, my piece, "Strings of Chaos," submitted to the Okoa Uchumi Anti-Corruption Competition, highlighted the damaging effects of foreign influence on Kenya's finance bill and protests. Additionally, in September, I emerged the winner of the National Cartoonist Competition by Siasa Place for my thought-provoking cartoon, **#HealthcareOnWheels**, which creatively addressed challenges in Kenya's healthcare system.

Taking part in the ForumCiv Artivism Fellowship has been transformative, equipping me with storytelling techniques and refining my public

narrative. Art can challenge oppressive systems and empower communities to envision better futures. The fellowship has deepened my understanding of how art can create societal impact and foster civic engagement.

With the support of the grant offered in the fellowship, I am creating a series of socio-political cartoons that address pressing issues in Kenya, ranging from governance and corruption to public health and civic engagement. I aim to provoke thought, educate, and spark dialogue about everyday citizens' challenges. I actively engage with local communities and monitor current events through news platforms and interactions with citizens to ensure my work reflects their concerns and lived realities. The cartoons are shared on digital platforms, including LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, making them accessible and engaging to a broad audience.

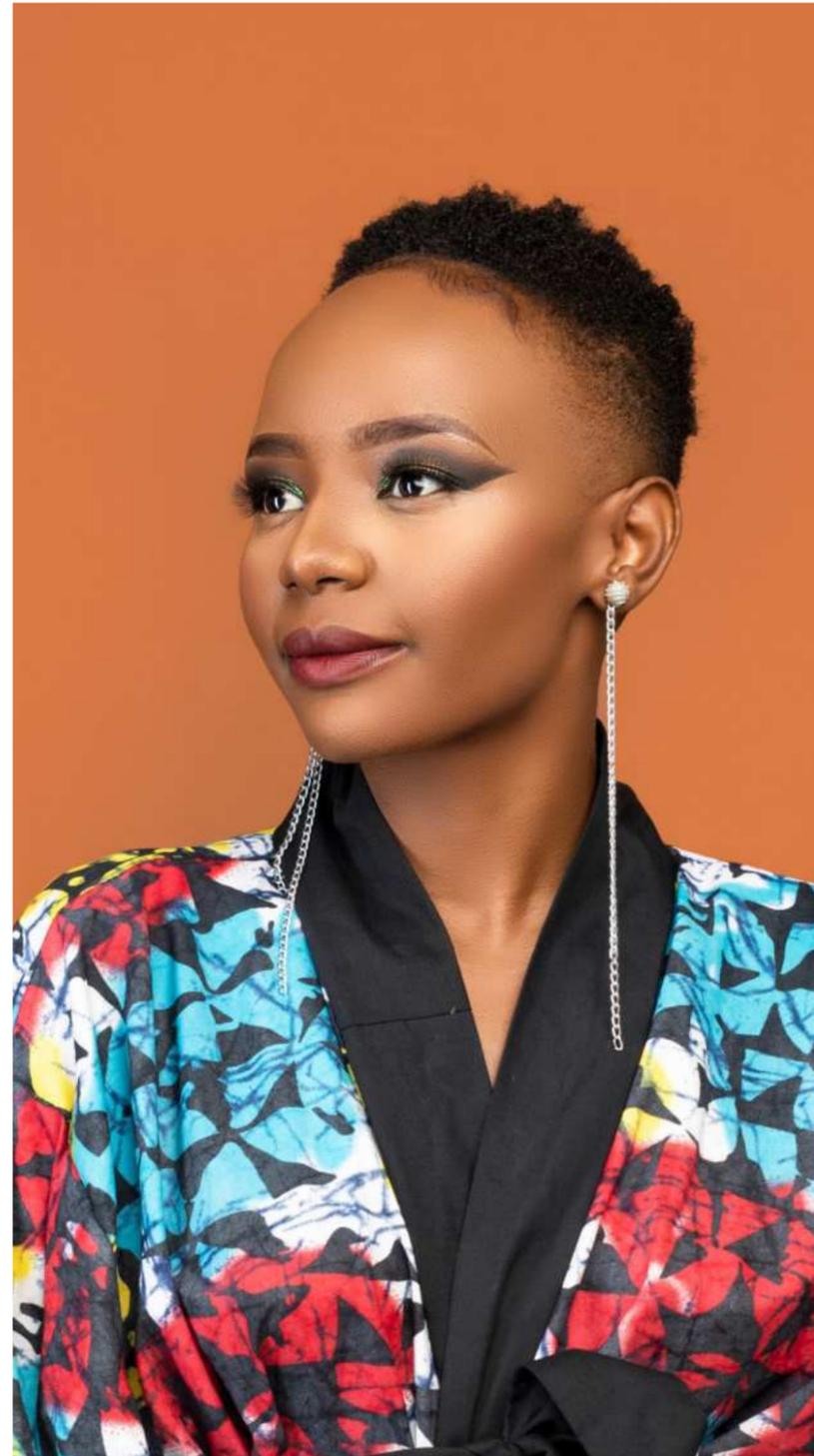
Using humor, satire, and relatable storytelling in my projects, I aim to empower citizens to question the status quo, understand their rights, and imagine a better future for Kenya. Looking ahead, I aim to expand my work in murals and comics while collaborating on projects that advocate for public health and socio-political justice. I remain committed to using my art to inspire, provoke thought, and drive meaningful conversations that contribute to a more equitable society.

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH ERIC



Felicity Mudis

Spoken word artist, Fashion designer, Artist



I started poetry in 2021, and it has been such a beautiful journey. My greatest motivation for starting was to break the silence, my own and that of people in society, to give power to our stories and experiences because I firmly believe that change comes when we speak up. I'm grateful to my mentor, Godfrey Emoja, the Director of Talent Industry/East Africa Poetic Hour Battle, for ensuring that I stay at the top of my craft.

I am a co-founder of an organisation called **Freedom In Healing**, which advocates for gender equality, mental wellness, and the eradication of sexual violence and other violations against women and girls through the power of art and media. I am passionate about spreading life and light through my work. I have performed on several stages, including TEDx, Jumuika Sikika Mtaani, Mask Awards, East Africa Poetic Hour Battle, Poetry Cultural Exchange Uganda, the Annual SRHR and Climate Change Summit. I am the convener of Sister Darling, an annual poetry and fashion event that focuses on telling the stories of African women for social change and raising emerging female poets.

Being a fellow in the Forumciv Artivism Fellowship has genuinely impacted my journey as a creative. I have learnt so much about honing my craft and creating an impact that will outlive me. I interacted with different artists and met seasoned artists whose work I genuinely admire.

I'm excited about my project, the **Sister Darling poetry album**, which I've been able to pursue courtesy of the fellowship grant. The pieces in the album explore the stories of African women, the ones who were, those who are, and those who are yet to come, under different themes like gender equality, GBV, mental health, legacy, and Pan Africanism.

I am thrilled to keep pursuing art and to keep creating a better, safer world

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH MUDIS



Harrison Ouma a.k.a KgZ Heavyweight

Rapper, hip-hop artist and spoken-word artist.



I am one of the most promising artists in and from Dandora, the home of East African and Kenyan hip hop. My love for music and poetry began way back in kindergarten and slowly caught up, later graduating into writing rhymes in high school. My prowess in lyrical diversity and engineering skills have become vital tools in breaking cultural and linguistic barriers. I honed my Rhythm and poetry skills by learning from and deconstructing artists like 2pac, Nas, Wu-tang clan, Rakim, Biggie Smalls, KRS-1, Joseph Hills, Burning Spear, and Bob Marley.

I began releasing YouTube freestyle videos in 2015, amongst other collaborative singles. I am also a professional food and beverage specialist, soon to be a chef; I am known for my heavy punch lines, wordplay, and Metaphors, amongst other stylistic devices that are full of educative artistry and positive vibes. I have worked with various artists in compiling my mixtape dubbed **The Rhyme Mechanic**, which I released in May 2017. Comprising nine tracks, most of which are collaborations with Dandora's finest artists, I have worked with various studios on this mixtape, notably Rojavo Studio, where I have recorded most of my tracks.

I have made appearances on many stages in Nairobi, most recent being the Alliance Francaise and Kenya national theatre, having done media tours to various radio stations like Capital FM with Amina Abdi, Homeboyz Radio with Coreen and most recently, Kenyatta University Radio, Also a finalist of Talanta Mtaani Show season one on Triple P TV that was aired nationally, Made an interview appearance on K.T.N Artistic Tuesday, Life and style with Brian Aseli and K.B.C king wa Mtaa rap battle.

I am currently the Goat Mic Champion of the Year at East Lands Expressions TV. Most of my work can be found in hard copy and online via Boomplay Music and YouTube, amongst other significant platforms under the Brand KgZ Heavyweight. I am already working on his next album, which will be released next year.

I am passionate about Charity work and helping the youths and children in slums live a responsible life. I dedicate my art to the social well-being of

the slum areas and their dwellers by working on different projects that will uphold this, notably legal justice and criminal reforms conservation initiatives in correctional facilities. I am a mental health advocate privileged committee and board member of the first successful mental health walk held in Nairobi county, attracting close to 1000 participants, championing free mental health cities, substance abuse, gender-based violence, and extrajudicial executions through the fusion of poetry and rhythm elements.

As a fellow in the ForumCiv Artivism Fellowship, I have been able to create new networks and learn new ideas and knowledge on how the arts can create impact through Artivism. I am happy to have met fellows like Oyamo, Mika Banda, Denzel, and others who equally use the arts to advocate for social issues. Through the grant offered, I have been able to do an EP Highlighting issues affecting the country recently due to the Gen-Z Maandamano.

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH KGZ HEAVYWEIGHT



Jacque Njeri

Award-winning graphic designer and multi-disciplinary artist.

My work is driven by the belief that art can be a powerful catalyst for social change, empowerment, and innovation. Through my creative practice, I seek to inspire individuals, especially women, to embrace their creativity and voice in ways that contribute positively to society and shape the future. My art is grounded in the values of inclusivity, justice, and human rights, with a strong focus on elevating marginalized communities, pushing boundaries in technology, and empowering women through feminism and African futurism.

My work challenges conventional ideas about culture, identity, and society by blending traditional African themes with science fiction and emerging technologies. The intention is to create thought-provoking pieces that engage audiences and provoke deep emotional and intellectual responses. Through projects such as **Maan!damano**, **A.EYE**, **Maasci**, and **Genesis**, I address critical issues like governance, women's leadership, and the transformative potential of technology. These works represent my commitment to social commentary and a call for societal transformation, using my art to empower voices that are often unheard.

My vision for change is to elevate art as a tool for societal reflection and progress. Through the use of augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI), I demonstrate how art can evolve to create new possibilities for interaction, collaboration, and social action. Projects like **Maan!damano** integrate AR and AI to deepen audience engagement, enhance collaboration, and inspire collective action, all while providing a platform for others to join the conversation and contribute their creative ideas.

My experience in the Forunciv Artivism Fellowship has been pivotal in shaping my approach to responsible and impactful artivism. Learning from fellow creatives and engaging in discussions about the intersection of art and activism has

been inspiring and motivating. The fellowship has reinforced my belief in the power of art to inspire action and change, motivating me to continue pushing boundaries and contributing to a more just and inclusive future.

My actions to create change are centered around mentorship, collaboration with advocacy organizations, and utilizing prominent platforms such as the Mozilla Festival to discuss issues of internet justice, AI for positive change, and the creative economy. These efforts are part of a broader movement to build an inclusive, sustainable, creative economy that allows diverse voices to thrive, thereby contributing to both cultural and economic transformation.

Looking to the future, I am committed to leaving a lasting legacy that demonstrates how art can shape society and challenge norms. My work will continue to explore the role of technology, particularly AI and virtual reality, in preserving cultures, creating new narratives, and empowering communities. I aim to inspire others to view art not just as a personal expression but as a tool for social transformation that plays a critical role in the creative economy.

I seek to build a thriving ecosystem where creativity not only fosters cultural impact but also generates sustainable economic opportunities, enabling artists to earn, contribute, and grow within an inclusive, dynamic creative economy.

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH NJERI



Juliet Muiruri a.k.a Koi.

Filmmaker, Artist, Dancer



I am a creative professional in the digital advocacy, rights, and campaign space. I specifically make documentary shorts, short films, and video art concepts. I use creative visual storytelling strategies to articulate the impact of social, community, corporate, small businesses, and non-profit organizations and groups in Kenya. I love making creative and meaningful digital and visual works. How did this love begin, you ask?

My digital and visual storytelling journey began in 2018 after finally pressing publish on my YouTube channel. Before that, the fire to tell stories using video was sparked on the long holiday of 2013 as I transitioned from primary to high school after watching an incredible film that changed my life. I vividly remember how it brought me to tears, laughter, introspection, and motivation - that's when I realized if I could make someone else, even one person, feel like this, I would gladly do this for the rest of my life.

Fast forward 5 years later, my digital art company **The Koi Element (TKE)** was born. The Koi Element is a digital campaign management company that provides digital solutions in the advocacy and social impact space. I was in my second year of undergraduate studies then.

The artivism residency is definitely in my top 5 moments as a creative. The incredible opportunity to join an outstanding group of artists and spend days in the capital's outskirts where we curate, create, and introspect - not just on our beautiful country but life itself. Since then, I have fine-tuned my voice and style as a filmmaker, specifically in social impact. I have continuously created short films, video art projects and documentaries. I have also joined national & regional festival film competitions, competitive filmmaker's incubator and accelerator programs in Kenya.

From these ambitious efforts, I got shortlisted for the People's Choice Award in Alliance Francaise's annual short mobile film competition and shortlisted for the Eastern Nigeria International Film Festival (ENIFF) AI Storytelling Hackathon competition.

I would be remiss not to mention that I finally got to actualize what I've been putting off since high school—going back to drawing. And yes, now, I actually paint—add Painter to that wonderful list of my spectacular talents and skills.

Through the grant offered in the Artivism fellowship, I have been able to work on a project whose inception began in the residency program. This project is one for books. It is arguably one if not the biggest, purely creative-first project I've embarked on. I will be screening a video art documentary titled **"DER: A Red Mashujaa"** that will be accompanied by eight original paintings by yours truly. This documentary is a labor of love from my twin brother Alex Maina and me - and is wholeheartedly dedicated to the SHUJAAZ of the present, past, and future. Through the fantastic support of ForumCiv and her partners - I cannot wait for YOU to experience this visual event.

This is just the beginning - I get literal goosebumps thinking and planning for the future.

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH KOI



Joy Loice Wanga

A Multidisciplinary artist and entrepreneur

Through visual and digital art, I amplify critical issues like climate justice, mental health, and gender equality, using my voice and work to inspire action and provoke change. From the canvas to digital platforms, my art is a rallying cry for justice—a medium that turns silence into power.

At the helm of **Chora na Locha**, I champion mental health by offering art therapy to youth. These safe spaces allow participants to heal, express, and confront systems that have failed them. With **Running Past the Thought**, I bring an artist edge to the 16 Days of Activism, addressing femicide and gender-based violence. My work also extends to the annual Sister Darling show, which I co-curate to spark conversations on societal issues like SGBV, Pan-Africanism, and climate change, blending art and activism seamlessly.

With the grant offered by ForumCiv in the artivism fellowship, I created Kenya's first femicide-focused art installation, the **Red Shoe Installation (now Wuoche Makwar)**. This groundbreaking piece illuminated the grim realities of femicide and urged action on this pervasive issue. Paired with a robust online campaign, it mobilized people nationwide to share their calls to action, transforming personal pain into collective strength. My digital artivism has also made an impact during the Total Shutdown KE femicide march, amplifying voices demanding justice and accountability.

My artistry is deeply rooted in my journey. As a hospitalized teen sketching during sleepless nights, I discovered art's capacity to heal and inspire. Later, with a degree in interior design, I recognized art's broader power to provoke thought and change. My transformation into an artist was cemented during the Artivism Fellowship, where I found a community of changemakers and learned the critical importance of inclusion, diversity, and collective action.

Today, my work holds governments accountable, amplifies marginalized stories, and builds movements for change. Whether I'm hosting art therapy sessions, crafting digital campaigns, or creating thought-provoking installations, my mission is to use art as a powerful tool for advocacy and empowerment.

For me, art isn't just about beauty—it's about impact. With every project, I strive to prove that creativity and activism can coexist to build a more just, equitable, and inclusive world. In my eyes, silence is violence!

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH WANGA



Meshack Sisenda a.k.a Mesh Holykid

Musician, Performing Arts, Artist



My journey into the world of music began in 2017 when I was in Form One. During that time, I discovered my passion for music is not just as a listener but as a creator. I remember how I used to write and perform the songs of Eko Dydda, an artist I admired. I'd sing his songs over and over, but something was missing. I struggled to create my melodies. Whenever I wrote a song, I would forget the tune before finishing it.

To overcome this, I started recording myself during the holidays, singing and playing with tunes so I could preserve them. This simple recording became my way of remembering and refining my ideas. On December 27, 2017, I finally completed my first song, 'Yahweh,' a gospel piece that marked the beginning of my musical journey.

With the support of my mother, who believed in me even when I doubted myself, I continued to create in 2018, producing both solo projects and collaborations.

But the most defining moment of my journey came in 2019. As a person with Albinism, I faced not only the struggles of daily life but also the harsh realities of the entertainment industry.

The myths, misconceptions, and stigma weighed heavily on me. I knew I had to speak out to raise awareness. So, with a close friend, a visually impaired individual, I wrote and recorded the song 'Albinism.' The song sought to challenge the myths surrounding our condition and highlight the reality of living with Albinism. It was a personal and powerful message, not just for me but for many others who were marginalized.

The song was well-received, and in June 2021, Citizen TV featured a documentary about it. That moment was a turning point. It cemented my resolve to use my music as a tool for advocacy, to raise awareness about Albinism, and to speak out for persons with disabilities. Since then, I've made it my mission to ensure that my voice is heard, not just in the music world but in the fight for equality and inclusion.

However, the journey has been challenging. There were moments when I felt defeated—like when I was conned by a video producer who promised to help me with a project, only to take advantage of me. Getting performance opportunities has also been challenging. Too often, event organizers would focus only on my disability, seeing it as a limitation rather than a part of who I am. They would doubt my

abilities, and it was disheartening. But I refused to let these setbacks define me.

Every time I was given a platform, I poured my heart into it, knowing each opportunity was a step toward breaking barriers and changing perceptions.

Joining the Activism Fellowship Cohort 2 has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

It has provided me with a space to learn, grow, and connect with other artists who share my vision. Through the fellowship, I've gained valuable insights into how I can make a living from my art, how to educate society through my work, and how to manage my mental health amidst the pressures of the industry. Most importantly, it has helped me understand the importance of community, collaboration, and mentorship.

Before joining the fellowship, I had always limited myself to singing. I thought my voice had to be confined to that one form of expression.

However, interacting with artists in poetry and spoken word made me realize that my creativity had no boundaries. I challenged myself to step outside my comfort zone, and I am proud to say that my latest project, 'Tuko Sawa,' is a blend of music and spoken word. It's a testament to my growth as an artist and a reminder that sometimes, the most influential art comes from stepping into the unknown.

I want to thank ForumCiv for making 'Tuko Sawa' a reality. This project is not just a song or performance; it reflects my journey, struggles, and triumphs. It's a reminder that we are all the same and that, despite our differences, we deserve love, respect, and understanding.

As I continue to navigate my music, activism, and life path, I know that the road ahead will not always be smooth. But with my music, my voice, and my message, I will keep pushing forward. Because I believe in the power of art to change the world, I know that we are stronger together. 'Tuko Sawa,' we are all the same. And that is the message I carry with me, now and always.

SCAN TO
CONNECT WITH
MESH



Mika Obanda

A multidisciplinary visual artist

I was born and raised in Mukuru Kwa Reuben slums, a land commonly called ‘industrial area’ in Nairobi. As a native Kenyan, I have lived most of my life in these slums, which were formed to house the employees of the nearby industries.

In the Mukuru slums, I have witnessed the horrors of living in a violent neighborhood and a violent home. I have been raised by a single mother who sacrificed a lot for my well-being. In 2018, I was kicked out of high school because of trafficking and using drugs in school. Later the same year, after doing deep introspection while living with my sister, who helped me through in a Christian holistic manner, I found art as an outlet to express all the trauma and depression that had made me turn to drug abuse and bad behavior. Using art has provided education and understanding of my diversity and those around me.

As a visual artist, I use different mediums to express myself. I am mostly known for using eggshells in mosaic, eggshells which they source from local hotels. This medium is very therapeutic as it teaches me patience. I also do drawings with charcoal and pastel on paper. Using these mediums helps me deal with racing thoughts and random ideas that need immediate action.

In previous artworks, I have addressed themes of gender equality, sexuality, mental wellness, bad governance, and police brutality. These themes are familiar to me as I grew up watching them unfold in different settings. I play a lead role in impacting social, political, and environmental change in the field of visual art and beyond.

I have worked together with artists as a member of Mukuru Art Collective. In 2024, I did a solo exhibition, **‘The Commentary’** at Wajukuu Art collective; I had an Art Installation for **Numb3rs** the play at Creatives Garage, Nairobi, and attended a week-long ‘Feeling Good’ art residency at Goethe Institute in Nairobi. In 2023, I had a solo exhibition, **When I Think Of My Mom**, at One-off Contemporary Art Gallery, Nairobi, and participated in two group exhibitions: Artaffair exhibition at One Off Contemporary Art Gallery and Nairobi Group exhibition at Affordable Art exhibition held at the National Museums of Kenya. In 2022, my work was part of a Group Auction, **A Night At The Library**, held at McMillan Library, Nairobi, by Book Bunk. In 2020, I was part of an online group exhibition, the Manjano Annual Art Competition, at The Godown Art Centre in Kilimani, Nairobi. 2019, I participated in a group exhibition at Mukuru Art Collective in Nairobi, Kenya.

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH MIKA



Monaja

A recording and performing artist.



The music that I do fuses sounds - particularly of African instruments - with contemporary styles of music, predominantly Hip Hop music, which I grew up on. I call my style of music *Tema-imba* (spitting/ rapping and singing). It addresses socio-political themes, often with a touch of humour. Perhaps my articulation of these socio-political themes are informed by my academic background – I was trained as a historian years back, and I do consultancies on the same. But above all, I’m a product of my environment, and what I interact with is what I use as subject material for the music I do.

Earlier on as a younger artist in the Kenyan music industry, I cut my teeth as a rap battle emcee, winning several rap battles on TV shows like NTV’s *Hip Hop Halisi* and the *Jukwaa* Festival Rap Battle. I retired from battle rap and later focussed on songwriting and performing at shows across towns and cities in Kenya and Tanzania. Around this time, I developed a passion for social movement building and community organising – I was among a group of comrades that helped forge a relationship between young organisers from both countries and the politically charged music that I made then helped me in this regard. More recently, one of the songs I released in 2023 – *Tosbanisha* - was used for online mobilisations for the “Gen Z” protests that took place mid-this year.

June 25th is an album that I have been working on for months to commemorate the legitimate defiance that Kenyan youth demonstrated while storming the precincts of parliament. It was a symbolic show of assertiveness and initiative against a crass and greedy ruling elite that was determined to shove the deleterious Finance Bill 2024 down our throats. Snipers gunned down youth, and many were injured, but a statement was made – people would not take injustice while lying down. The project also answers the question of the proverbial *What is to be done* in light of the lull in organising since August.

Working on the project has had its ups and downs – there were times when I experienced writer’s block, but in other instances, the creative process flowed smoothly. However, the execution of the project has been fulfilling. There’s a feeling of accomplishment that comes with the completion of a song or a skit. I must say that putting into practice the lessons that I learnt during the fellowship has made the process somewhat tedious. Nevertheless, it’s a necessary labour whose fruits I believe will be enjoyed for years. The lessons learnt during the fellowship must be put into practice; after all, what was the point of knowledge – using it?

The fellowship has been a great experience. It has set me straight and given me clarity—particularly on the business side of things—branding, intellectual property law, and how to handle social media, among other issues. The creative engagements with fellow artists from different fields—we were divided into groups—were quite eye-opening and enjoyable. They took me out of my usual creative comfort zone of solitude.

What next after the fellowship? More music, more collaborative efforts, and continuing to push the envelope as far as creativity are concerned. I also intend to pursue other interests besides music- film is a field of interest which appeals to me. Music remains my first love, however. The idea is to use it for the people – not merely as a critique against the excesses in our society but also as a hand to sculpt society into what it could be envisioned. Let’s see how it goes.

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH MONAJA



Mutua Arts

Visual artist

I specialize in graffiti art, portrait realism, and illustration. I draw inspiration from the things happening around my Mathare community. My work revolves around social justice and addresses social issues, including gender-based violence, social cohesion, and politics, among others. I am very passionate about using my art to speak for my people, as I have grown up in this community and experienced all the misgivings that come with utter poverty.

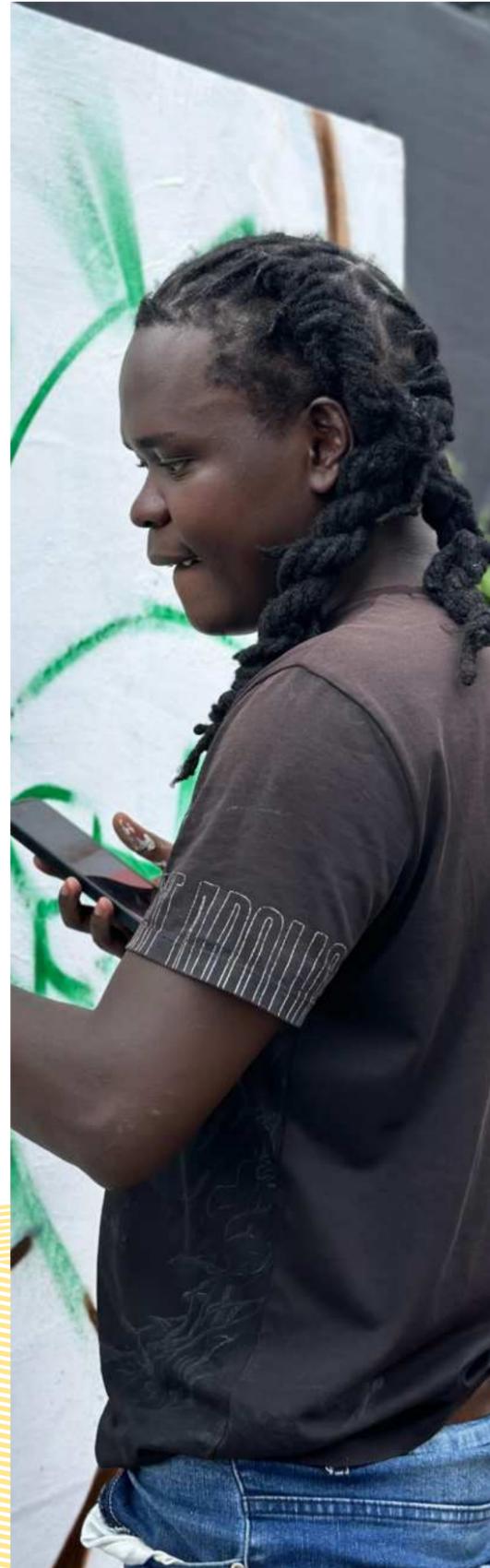
I am a self-taught artist. I started art at a young age with the assistance of my mom. My family believed in my dream and supported me fully. I started with pencil art, but as time went by, I decided to do something that would inspire and bring change, thus changing to murals and graffiti. While in high school, I participated in and won a lot of Insider Bic competitions, to the extent that they asked me not to participate. I have also learned a lot as an apprentice under Yash and Gill. These two, to a large extent, have molded me into who I am today.

I have done several pieces around the world. In 2022 and 2023, I won the UN award for most impactful graffiti artist. These awards have not only fattened my profile but also opened my doors to a larger audience. In my line of work, I have partnered with various organizations, such as the European Union, the Danish embassy, the Katiba Institute, social justice working groups, the British Council, and many others.

The fellowship was inspiring, and I learned a lot. It was fulfilling to meet and interact with fellow artists. I did not learn from some of the facilitators, but some were very enlightening. The residency was structured in a way that was very educational yet artist-oriented. With the grant offered in the fellowship, I was able to do a mural and illustrations. The mural explores the theme of femicide, which was a prevalent menace in society at the time of the fellowship project.

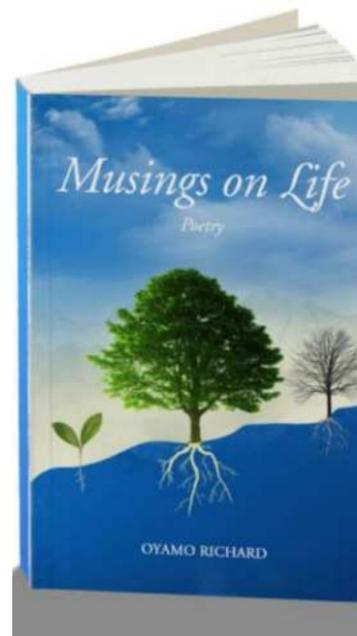
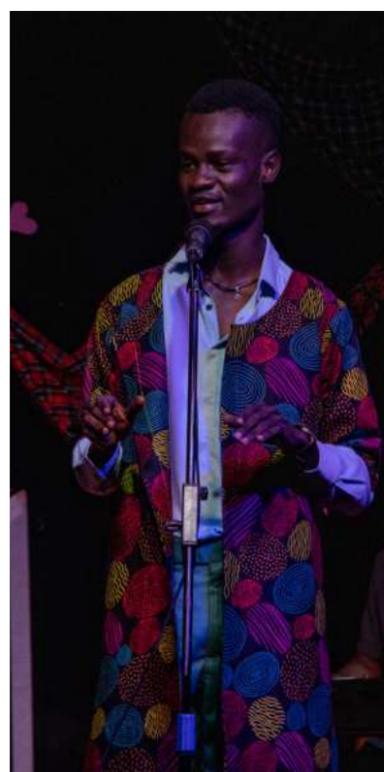
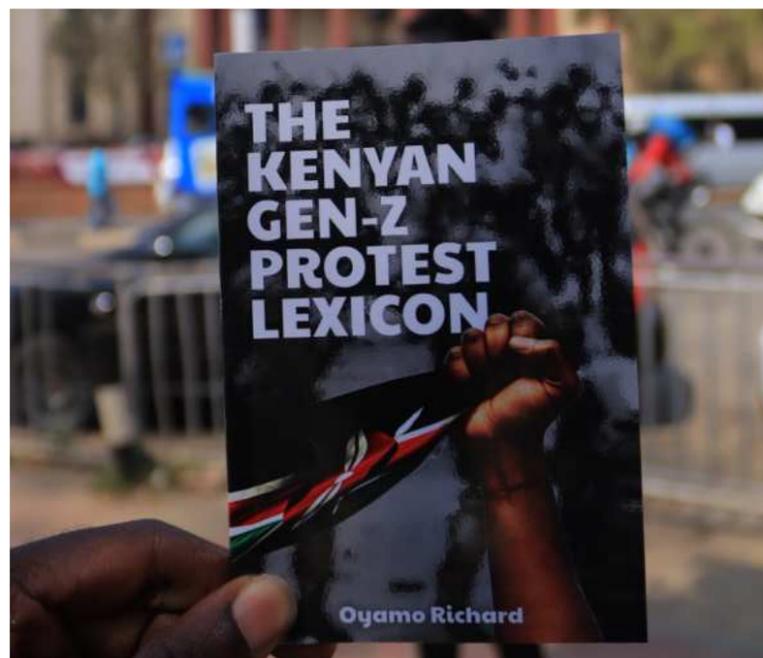
When I am not engaged in my artistic endeavors, I am busy swimming. I have won a number of medals and certificates. I swim in all kinds of strokes. I worked with the Red Cross as a lifesaver during the floods that affected Kenya in 2024.

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH MUTUA



Oyamo Richard

Writer, Poet, Editor, activist and a teaching artist



I am the author of two books: a poetry anthology titled **Musings on Life** and a chapbook titled **The Kenyan Gen-Z Protest Lexicon**. The latter is a documentation of the protest that happened around June and July 2024, when protestors stormed the parliament. I have curated and hosted two poetry concept theatrical shows dubbed **2Boys 1Man** and **Kanga Kisses and Matatu Beats**. I have worked as an editor at Intercen Publishers and am currently a freelance editor. I co-founded a collective of writers, poets, and visual artists called **Rafinki**, where I oversee programs and partnerships. The word Rafinki comes from two words, 'Rafiki' (Swahili for a friend) and 'ink,' as we see ourselves as friends united by ink. I have a bachelor's degree in Education, English, and Literature from Kenyatta University.

My artistic journey started in 2015 while in high school. In particular, it began on one Sunday afternoon. I had just come from church and now religiously tuned in to a radio show, eagerly waiting to listen to my favourite show. It was a reggae show, and in addition to the music, I liked the show because of how the hosts criticised the government's corruption, injustices, and bad governance. On this particular day, the show began with a recitation. It blew my mind. I attempted to write it down, but I missed most of it since I could neither keep up with the speed nor replay the radio. I, however, ended up writing something I thought was close to what I had heard, and when I was done, I thought it looked like a poem. In school, I showed it to my English teacher and asked him if whatever I wrote was a poem. He said yes! There was no going back! That's how I became a poet. However, professionally, I began in 2021.

My artistic work focuses on SDG 3,4,5,10,13, and 16. I strongly believe in the Swahili adage that says; **Msanii ni kioo cha jamii** (the artist is the mirror of the society). This Swahili saying summarises my theory of change; I believe that as an artist, if I consistently and deliberately reflect on my

society and what it is going through, I shall be rewarded for it. I understand that the reward may not always be positive; as Cesar Cruz says, art is meant to disturb those comfortable and comfort those disturbed.

Being a fellow in the ForumCiv activism fellowship has been an eye-opener not only without but also within myself. Through the fellowship, I could trace roots to my artivism from when I was a child. The first time I stood for myself was when after having endured months of utter mistreatment at the hands of a relative: talk of child labour, talk of being starved, working in the rain, sleeping outside, my clothes being given away, and so on, I revolted and demanded to be taken back to my parents. I was only 6 years old then, but from that experience, I understood that defiance is not always negative. Those who violate human rights do not deserve my obedience, and certainly not yours. I lead my life as an example to the people around me that we should always stand for our rights. We should embody Dedan Kimathi's saying; I would rather die while standing than live on my knees.

The grant from the fellowship enabled me to complete a project I had been working on for nearly a year. A spoken-word poetry infused with music. It is titled **Kioo Cha Jamii**, and it encompasses eleven tracks. It tackles several themes, including but not limited to Bad governance, extrajudicial killings, mental health, GBV, and child abuse. It is also in the fellowship that I got a chance to explore my interest in visual art.

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH OYAMO



Palma Wa Vasho

Performing & Recording Poet, Influencer and Human Rights Defender

I come from Nakuru, Kenya. I use spoken word poetry to highlight social issues such as social justice, equality, climate change, drugs and substances, unemployment, leadership, gender-based violence, governance, the Constitution, and accountability. My art is a powerful tool for raising awareness and driving positive societal change.

The struggles and resilience of my community deeply inspire my activism. Raising awareness and amplifying marginalized voices is crucial in driving justice, inspiring change, and building a fairer, more inclusive society.

I have performed at numerous events in Kenya and across East Africa, captivating audiences with my ability to blend creativity and activism. My spoken word performances address real-life challenges and call for accountability and equality, and I am proud to be a respected voice in the region's activist scene.

As a recording artist, I have released two albums and an EP that showcase my deep connection to societal struggles:

- **Struggles Za Mtaa:** A vivid Album that portrays life's challenges in urban settings.
- **Maovu:** A raw and bold Album about injustice and systemic failures.
- **Baada ya Machafuko:** An EP offering hope and reflection on rebuilding after hardship.

Beyond poetry, I am a digital social media influencer with over 350K followers across all platforms. I use my platforms to amplify social issues, engage with young people, and promote meaningful conversations.

I also work with grassroots organizations to address injustices and empower marginalized groups. Through my art and activism, I continue to inspire action and champion the rights of others. My journey as a poet and activist has made me a voice for the voiceless and a symbol of hope for many in Kenya and beyond.

The Forum Civ Artivism Fellowship has been transformative for me as an activist. It has provided me with the tools and intensive mentorship. Through it, I have recorded my EP, **Baada ya Machafuko**, which explores resilience and hope.

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH PALMA



Ummulkheir Ahmed Shalle

Visual artist, Artist



I founded the **Wadhajir Initiative For Development (WID)**, a community-based organisation. Together with ten other artists, we use artivism to advocate for social justice, the end of gender-based violence (child protection programs), and Environmental justice programs. I am also passionate about legal empowerment. As a community paralegal, I love incorporating legal aspects into my daily life and working with my fellow colleagues.

Using art as a tool for advocacy against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Garissa County holds transformative potential. Through murals, installations, and performances, I aim to create impactful visual and emotional narratives highlighting the physical, psychological, and social harm caused by these practices. By involving survivors, youth, and local leaders in these creative processes, the art will reflect authentic community voices, fostering dialogue and breaking the stigma surrounding these issues. This approach can reach diverse audiences, transcending literacy barriers and making advocacy accessible and relatable to everyone in the community.

The potential impact extends beyond raising awareness. Art can inspire cultural shifts by questioning harmful norms and fostering empathy. Through sustained campaigns, I envision increased reporting of FGM cases, reduced social acceptance of violence, and more vital community support for survivors. Engaging men and boys as allies through art-driven initiatives can further amplify the movement, leading to long-term systemic change. By embedding art in advocacy, I aim to create a safer and more equitable society while empowering Garissa County's residents to take ownership of the campaign for gender justice.

At Wadhajir Initiative for Development, we have done art for advocacy activities with several organisations in Garissa in fighting harmful cultural practices like FGM. Child protection programs partnering and supported by Action Aid, Silver Lining and Supkem, a Capacity for peace project that links up peace with climate change and have done art based people centred dialogues, mobile art advocacy in markets and peace actions

in areas where there is insecurity measures and lastly during the election period we were able to do nine murals in strategic places that had messages of peace.

As a fellow in the ForumCiv artivism fellowship, I learned a lot from the facilitators and other artists. I gained new networks, thus expanding my reach and possible collaborations. With the grant offered in the fellowship, I was able to do a project on two fronts: Mural and Graffiti, and a mentorship session—the project aimed at ending harmful cultural practices. I did the mural and graffiti in a strategic marketplace, saying **STOP GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**. The mural is located in the largest Livestock market in East Africa. Considering the hundreds of people who visit the market, we believe the message will reach a wider audience.

The mentorship was on using art to advocate against FGM. The mentees were primary school-going girls from grade 4 to 7. They were taken through the importance of proper hygiene and also what FGM is, its short-term and long-term effects, why it is being done and lastly, as survivors, how they can champion girl child education and eradication of FGM. We also got to buy two boxes of sanitary pads and two boxes of soap for a local school to promote hygiene.

In the future, we plan to partner with other partners on child protection, climate justice, and peace projects. There is still a need to do more art for advocacy in my region because most of my people understand what they see best rather than what is written down, and their literacy level is generally low.

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH UMMU



Wangui Kimani

Award-winning poet, model, and co-founder of Female Poets Kenya.



My genre, Floetry, is a blend of poetry, music, fashion, and my presence. Through my work, I explore themes of women’s empowerment, social change, climate action, cultural preservation, and the power of the native language as an advocacy tool. Art is more than self-expression; it’s a way to provoke meaningful conversations, simplify complex issues, and inspire collective action to make the world a better place, and that’s why I do it.

Growing up, I saw how words could unite people, spark movements, and preserve culture. This realization fuels my passion for using art to amplify silenced voices, challenge the status quo, and create spaces where stories can heal and inspire. Every poem I write and every stage I step onto is an opportunity to drive change and connect with others on a deeper level. My artivism is rooted in my love for storytelling and my firm belief in its power to transform.

As a County President Fellow under the *Global Peace Kenya* program, I use my artistic leadership to mobilize communities, advance climate action, and champion women’s voices. Some of my proudest achievements include:

- Contributing to anthologies and participating in poetry masterclasses have refined my craft and broadened my reach.
- Training female poets with disabilities in web security fundamentals empowers them to share their stories online safely.
- Helping shape Kenya’s first poetry curriculum through the *Poetry Theatre Development Project* by the Kenya National Theatre.
- Winning the African Storytelling Contest by the *Global Landscapes Forum* in the *Food Sovereignty* category.
- Co-founding Female Poets Kenya.

My EP, **Your Highness**, delves into women’s mental health, blending creativity with advocacy to tell stories that need to

be heard. This project is a testament to my commitment to creating art that resonates and drives change.

As a fellow in the ForumCiv Artivism Fellowship, I created **“Beneath Her Veil,”** a poetry mini-documentary giving voice to women who have experienced assault. This project provided a platform for survivors to share their stories, encouraging others to break their silence. The fellowship has been a transformative experience, offering opportunities to collaborate with incredible creatives, expand my skills, and explore art’s profound impact on advocacy and healing.

Beyond poetry, I am a script editor, voiceover artist, stage manager, coach, director, and mentor. I am passionate about fostering diversity and inclusion in the arts and empowering performers to find and use their voices. Every project I take on is a chance to inspire, connect, and lead meaningful change.

SCAN TO CONNECT WITH WANGUI





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