



## Prologue: Juma Madeira—From Socialist New Man to *Madjerman* Activist

One of my favorite photos shows the young Mozambican Juma Madeira posing on the hood of a friend's car in front of his workers' hostel in East Germany (Fig. 1.1).<sup>1</sup> Who was this young man and what brought him to East Germany?

Juma was born in the district of Memba in northern Mozambique, on April 5, 1963. A year before his birth, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), the current governing party of Mozambique, was founded. When Juma was one year old, the Mozambican war of independence started, which lasted until independence was finally attained on June 25, 1975. In 1974, Juma finished the fourth grade at a Catholic missionary primary school in Mutauanha called Paz e Amor, Peace and Love, a school in the tradition of the Portuguese civilizing mission. When the country finally became independent, Juma was in the fifth grade at the technical school in Nampula city. The Mozambican civil war erupted in 1977 while Juma was still in secondary school. He graduated in 1980. In the same year, FRELIMO constituted itself as a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party.

Juma's parents were non-practicing Muslims, engaged in subsistence agriculture. He remembers his upbringing as rural, working the fields, and sleeping on mats on the floor with his three siblings. He walked to primary school. To continue his secondary education, however, he moved to Nampula where he lived with his aunt, a housewife, and uncle, a tailor. Compared to many of his compatriots, Juma was well educated. Between



**Fig. 1.1** Juma in front of his workers' hostel in Zschopau, East Germany. Source: Juma Madeira

1979 and 1981, he taught a literacy course for adults as part of the national literacy campaigns aimed at workers and cadres of the party, army, cooperatives, and communal villages.

While still in secondary school, Juma was recruited to continue his training abroad. He was excited for the possibilities this opportunity offered: "I was sent by President Samora Machel, the father of our nation, to prepare myself in Germany to return to save our country through work." Before he touched down in Berlin-Schönefeld in 1981, he spent a few months in various collection centers across Mozambique, where he received quasi-military training and listened to lectures about life in East Germany. He was to learn how to conduct himself as a socialist New Man and ambassador for Mozambique abroad. Juma remembers: "we learned to eat with a knife and fork, to wear shoes, and to wash our hands. And we had to run, run, run, run!"

After six months of language training, Juma began working at the VEB Motorradwerk Zschopau, a so-called people-owned enterprise producing motorbikes, close to the city which is today called Chemnitz but was then

called Karl-Marx-Stadt. He underwent training for milling and lathe machines and received a diploma as a skilled laborer in November 1986. From 1983 to 1989 he also occupied a position in the company as FRELIMO Secretary for Information, Propaganda, and Finances. He worked for eight years at the motorcycle factory, serving two four-year contracts. According to company documents, Juma's open and gregarious character made it easy for him to integrate into the work collective. He sometimes needed reminding though that the goal of work was efficiency—a virtue Juma never came to fully embrace—and the fulfillment of the production quota. To the frustration of his supervisors, he constantly remained below quota. Even though he graduated with an overall evaluation of "good," Juma did not take work too seriously; to him, work was something that needed to be done, but his heart really beat for the many experiences Europe had to offer outside of the company gates.

Juma was in Germany for much of his youth. He left as an eighteen-year-old boy "who had never drunk alcohol, smoked, or made love to a woman" and returned as a twenty-seven-year-old adult, a trained skilled laborer with nearly a decade of work experience, a partner, and a child. Juma met his colleague Graciél in the motorcycle factory. She was born in Maputo in 1963 as the daughter of a cook and a housewife and went to school until sixth grade. Graciél's older brother had been recruited while still a student to work and train in East Germany, and his letters home, describing his life in the brightest of colors, inspired her and her two other brothers to sign up for the program, too. After four years in a beverage factory in Leipzig, she went back to Mozambique for three months before returning to East Germany on a second contract, this time to the motorcycle factory in Zschopau. She never aspired to have a European boyfriend and remembers: "Juma was love at first sight!"

Juma, who had several lovers in Germany from different nationalities and backgrounds, told me that Graciél was very persistent and would not accept no for an answer; only when Graciél became pregnant did Juma commit to her. They decided to hide her pregnancy to avoid her being sent back to Mozambique, which had happened to other women in their company. In the end, they were not only allowed to stay but moved together into a small apartment provided by the company. Juma Junior was born in 1988, and two brothers, born in Mozambique, followed him. Unlike many of his colleagues, Juma did not father children with German women, but he does have four other children with two other women in Mozambique. As is common among many former Mozambican labor

migrants, he never formally married and continues to describe his marital status as single.

For many Mozambican workers, German reunification continues to have a bitter aftertaste. On the one hand, they expressed happiness for the Germans, but for their own lives, it was often a catastrophe, as it meant a premature return to a war economy back home. In the ensuing disorder of the transition period that followed reunification, some companies decided to repatriate foreign workers; others withheld information about the conditions under which they could have stayed. Racism was rife. Juma and Graciél, however, experienced relatively little of this chaos. Graciél felt very strongly that she wanted to be closer to her parents to support them, as well as to receive help with her own children. They jointly decided to return, imagining a golden future in Mozambique.

The future, Juma and Graciél would quickly discover, turned out to be not quite so golden. Their bitter awakening came a few months after their homecoming. Socialist workers returned to a post-socialist country in flux economically and politically. Like the vast majority of workers who returned in the early 1990s, neither Juma nor Graciél found work in the areas for which they had been trained. They moved back to northern Mozambique. Juma worked as a driver and security guard but struggled to make ends meet in the beleaguered Mozambican economy. Graciél worked for eight years as a service worker in an informal soda shop. The family earned extra income in the informal economy, selling home-made foods in front of their house, and renting their phone out as a public phone. In 1992, the sixteen-year war ended in Mozambique, and the country continued its path toward market principles and multiparty democracy. In 1999, Juma moved to Maputo with his in-laws because his eldest son needed medical attention. The rest of the family soon followed. Juma worked a variety of impermanent jobs until, in 2003, at forty years old, he gave up looking for employment.

The family now depends on Graciél's earnings—she has been cooking for a catering firm for nine years—and on the proceeds from Juma Junior's bakery. One of Graciél's brothers is married to a German woman and lives in Germany, so the family still has ongoing contact with Germany today. Juma became a full-time activist for the *madjerman* cause: first as vice-president, and then as the treasurer of ATMA, the Association of Mozambican Workers in Germany, he served the largest and most durable organization of returned workers. Since 2010, he has also been an active member of Mozambique's second largest opposition party, MDM, the

Democratic Movement of Mozambique, and is hoping to build a political career. Though Juma was not able to capitalize on his training as a skilled worker, he puts his political training to use, no longer as a socialist New Man, but as an activist and aspiring opposition politician in a post-socialist Mozambique.<sup>2</sup>

In January 2014, on one of the first days of my second stay in Mozambique, I visited what is known as the park of the *madjerman*, where ATMA President Zecca Alfredo Cossa introduced me to his right-hand man, Juma. Juma had been given the task of detailing the official oral history of the organization of returned workers from 1990 to the present.<sup>3</sup> This introduction was the beginning of an ongoing conversation about the organization and his personal experiences in East Germany. During my time in Mozambique, Juma was my host, excited for the opportunity to reciprocate the hospitality that he had experienced in East Germany. He invited me to his home to meet his family, cooked typical Mozambican food, and brought a big cake to my birthday celebration, knowing the great importance to every German of *Kaffee und Kuchen*—coffee and cake. He showed me sites important to the *madjerman* in Maputo and Matola, such as their protest route, the airport where they had first returned to the country, and the collection centers where the future worker-trainees were assembled prior to their trip, among many other locations. He included me in *madjerman* reunions, and invited me to community events such as weddings, funerals, and wakes. Thanks to him, and many more returnees like him, I eventually came to understand their history, their present, and their dreams for the future.

I am sharing Juma and Graciél's story to illustrate the intricate interconnections between personal, national, and international events, and to contextualize the life choices of former migrants from Angola and Mozambique. Key personal decisions included the choice to migrate; how much energy to invest in training and work; what to consume in East Germany and how to invest in an eventual return home; with whom to establish relationships; and how to deal with exclusion and racism. This included navigating life in the conflict, post-conflict, and market economies of their homeland. They also had to negotiate with their home governments over withheld wages and other social security benefits. Among the national and geopolitical events that framed the possibilities of Juma's life were Portuguese colonialism, independence, the Cold War, regional and domestic armed conflicts, the disintegration of the global communist project, and the transition to the market economy and multiparty

democracy. Juma and Graciél, and other similarly situated workers, would have never migrated for training and work to East Germany had it not been for a combination of national and international factors that pushed them to imagine opportunities elsewhere. Geopolitical partnerships between socialist nations shaped by the Cold War era further enabled this migration from South to East. This book tells the story of the rise and fall of the socialist project in Angola, Mozambique, and East Germany, as experienced by the Angolan and Mozambican migrants.

## NOTES

1. The former Mozambican workers in East Germany became known as *mad-german* after their return. The information presented here is drawn from various interviews and conversations conducted with Juma and Graciél between January and June 2014 in Maputo, Mozambique.
2. MDM stands for *Movimento Democrático de Moçambique*, Democratic Movement of Mozambique.
3. The official name is Associação dos Antigos Trabalhadores na Extinta RDA, Association of former workers in the extinct GDR.

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