Hello, and welcome to the west meeting room. We are broadcasting from the map room studios in Hart House and you're listening on CIUT 89.5 FM, the sound of your city. We're grateful to be taking up space on dish with one spoon territory. I'm Sabrina and I'll be your host for today's show. Sharing the mic with our special guests Iomos Marad and Eternia. Thank you all for joining us.

Today we'll be discussing our Hart House human library series, humans of hip hop addition happening downtown at the Hart House library on Tuesday, December 3 2019, from 1pm to 3pm. It's also happening on the University of Toronto Scarborough campus. On Thursday, February 6 2020. For more information, check out Hart house.ca. We're also here to talk about stories and in studio today talking about our own and our guests experiences and relationship to hip hop. I'd like to introduce Iomos Marad who self titled his book, African American slave turned immigrant, adding fabric to the universal immigrant story of hip hop. Marcus Singleton, aka Iomos Marad was raised in the south side of Chicago and the infamous Englewood community by a single parent mother. His music pays homage to her love and the spirit of activism she instilled in him. I'd also like to introduce eternia, who self titled her book how hip hop saved my life. She left home at 15 and as a child thrown into an adult world, hip hop was a safe place to be seen, heard and understood. It was an outlet to express the experiences and trauma she struggled to process. It was a way to navigate the streets as a teenage girl surrounded by older men, and to shift the narrative and gain respect. It was a language, a culture and her home. As she entered adulthood hip hop transition from being a coping mechanism to a viable career. 20 years later, she reflects on how hip hop saved her life. I'd like to also introduce Mr. Lif, known for his work with Def Jux, Mellow Music Group and Thievery Corporation, and also a special thanks for their baby who joined us in studio today. You might hear some of his sounds as well in the background, but we are a baby from the studio, as I'm sure you've heard before. So American slave turned immigrant, adding fabric to the universal immigrant story of hip hop, and how hip hop saved my life. Where did these titles come from?

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  2:38
So I'm originally from the south side of Chicago. And that's usually something that we say amongst our friends that like we're slaves trying to like survive, you know, cuz I'm from Inglewood, which is like, where the news where a lot of news take place. A lot of like broken families. Basically is just like everything we try to survive in a system. So he's just like, man, we slaves, like we slaves to a system and we try to get liberated. So when I had opportunity to move here a friend of mine was like, man, Do you know you know you an immigrant now and I was like an immigrant and he's like, yeah, cuz you leaving from America, you going through Canada, and I was like, I never really thought about that. So that's why I say like, that's where that title came from, like African American, I don't really like that term African American, because it's always got this. The idea that surrounded that I'm not fully American, you know
what i mean. So I never felt like I was an American, even though I was born there. But because they call me African American. I always feel like I'm a part of it, but I'm not a part of it at the same time. And I hear that narrative from people of color this that limit Canada as well. So it's like this is an attachment, but a detachment at the same time. So like, so that's what I came from. The idea that I'm an immigrant and I was like, man, I never even thought about that, because I'm like, one generation removed from Jim Crow, like my grandmother. She's from South Carolina. And she picked cotton. You know, I'm saying so, I'm like, just literally one generation removed from that narrative, you know, of being a slave or man, you know, on that plantation type living. So that's, what a title that i came from

Sabrina  4:28
I think that's really salient to especially the point about immigration, I always find it interesting. I was reading an article once and it was the author is talking about how they were expatriates from America in London, and I was reading it I was like, it's interesting how, you know, we seem to have these classes of refugee immigrant and quote unquote, expatriate and how it seems as though when you're coming from, you know, a colonist country or a quote unquote developed country, you can call yourself an expatriate or a tourist or visitor. But immigrant has a lot of racialized tones unlike other, you know, non Western, sometimes tones as well. Yeah.

Eternia  5:08
It's been a while since I pitched the book. So I had to remind myself of what I had said and how hip hop saved my life is really just as clear as it sounds. So I moved out when I was 15 years old, or I got kicked out depending on who you ask me or my parents. And I was always involved in hip hop before that, probably since I was like nine years old or 10 years old. But when I was out on the street, and whatever that looked like a lot like the movie kids ever seen the movie kids, hip hop was the one thing that kept me from doing a whole bunch of other things that most kids were doing.

Sabrina  5:44
I guess I wanted to touch on the ideas of home and background for both of you io being from you know, Chicago and having that background and then Eternia you and your own description saying you know, you were rapping before you knew what it meant to be a white from Canada who rapped? Right, right. So what did these contexts mean? Like what does someone who's you know, never even been near Chicago doesn't know the politics doesn't know the context. What should they know listening to your music and the same thing, you know, being white Canadian, female coming into hip hop? What does that mean? And how does that change the context of your sound and your music and the message that you're bringing?

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  6:23
I mean, for me, like, hip hop kept me from a lot of stuff that was going on in my neighborhood, like it's a lot of like, gang violence, a lot of gunplay, a lot of police brutality, stuff like that. But hip hop kept me around the house. And like my mom's like, grew up in like a pretty religious
household where they wouldn't let her listen to like Michael Jackson or you know, Prince and stuff like that. But when I grew up, my mother was kind of more lenient with me so she let me listen to like hip hop around the house someone was like she had no problem with it cuz it kept me around the house late. That's what I want to do. Like I want to listen to it, stay home listen to I was reading, I was writing not scribbling them. I wasn't like writing rhymes or anything, but I was always like journaling, like because music back then cause you to like think and think about your environment and stuff like that. So always like it kept me in the house. It kept me around how until I got older. And then so that's a lot of that music. It's like it comes from that like i had an older cousin. That was like really into hip, like He I don't know how he was getting these tapes like he would get them before they actually came out. And he's like, well, you can these tapes from like he would come back home with like candy, the jungle brothers. before they even came out. He would never tell us where secret spot was. So he, the first tape that I borrowed from him was straight out the jungle by the jungle brothers and I begged him if I could bring that tape home. And I listened to that tape like religiously and it just like, it helped me find my identity of who I am. And then I heard a song black is black with Q tip on it. And I was like That's what I want to do. I just knew that it was just like a connection. And I knew that that's what I want to do. I want to like, hopefully have that same effect on other people that listen to my music.

Eternia  8:12
I sounds like I was raised in your mother’s household.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  8:16
Nice.

Eternia  8:17
Yeah, no, because you said she wasn't allowed to listen to Michael Jackson or Prince. And that was my household. Wow. So my mother was very religious and strict. And we didn't have cable TV. We didn't listen to like secular radio. We didn't like yeah, we went to church every Sunday. And my father, on the other hand was like, straight out of a Scarface movie. And I am not exaggerating. If you're from Ottawa, then you know, and, and he owned a nightclub and he own restaurants and bars. And you know, he had a studio built into one of his nightclubs in the back, but he used to hang out in a lot. So I was raised kind of in two different worlds. And when we were at our dads, it was literally under the age of 10. To Live Crew. You know what I mean? Public Enemy. NWA, like, I was learning these lyrics before the age of 10. Wow, not knowing the context, the politics, the reasons why I wrote uncle Luke a letter under the age of 10. Like, I think that your rap lyrics are very sexist. I'm eight years old and I don't think it's appropriate for us. And if I was Luke, I would have been like, yo, why is an eight year old listening to my music, but, but this is like, I have that letter, you know what I mean? So, so two different worlds completely. And so I started mimicking what I was listening to, before I knew the context, the history of what I was listening to, but that turned into me writing my own lyrics. I was always writing poetry. I was an English kind of student and always read, well read. And so I was reading poetry turned the lyrics very young, you know, between the ages of 10, 11, 12 spitting on the playground since the age like grade five, and by the time I was 15, and moving out of the
house, I was like, always ciphering with like, anybody That was hip hop was home for me. And vice versa like we meet each other and you know, it's kind of a certain language were in Canada, which was I don't know if this is the same in Chicago, but in Canada, there was very few outlets. And so if you met someone that knew the same groups that you knew we're talking like, early mid 90s, like if you met someone that knew the same like people that you were listening to, like, we didn't even have a station here that play this stuff. We had shows we had certain college radio shows we had WP okay in Buffalo, but we didn't have like a 24 seven like so when you met someone and they were like, yo, you know, that record or Yo, you know, that group or Yo, you know what's going on over here, like right away. It was like the secret language. And it was a pass. And so for me, that's kind of what helped me navigate the world of hip hop in the 90s in Canada because very few people, especially very few woman doesn't matter the race, very few women and especially very few white women were even, my father is Middle Eastern. It's just the way people see me and how I present myself. So that's why I say white. You know, I'm saying he's from Turkey. But so so yeah, you would just meet people and right away you'd be like oh snap you know that or you know this or you spit like that or whatever and then boom like you're in and when I say no I mean I was sleeping on their couches. I'm eating their food. I'm now in their rap crew. I was a part of a few rap crews. Like all as a teenager based on this language that we all spoke and it was home and it was safe.

Sabrina  11:21
Can I just say, you saying WBQ makes me feel see and I remember being younger driving around in my mom's car and like, we'd be listening listening that we pulled to a red light and it all goes staticky and my mom would be like backing up backing up trying to like cuz it's from Buffalo, right? Listening to Buffalo radio and only in Toronto. My moms like they don't play our music anywhere else. I'm like, Mom, let's just listen to pop I don't know. like no you need to listen to our music, it's our culture.

Eternia  11:46
I never had cable. When I was in high school, My boy shout out to Jason, he used to record Rap City for me all the time on VHS tapes and Rap City in the mix Canadian rap city different than America. By the way, we didn't even have any of that. Yeah, exactly so like beats, when he changed the game. They used to tape for me he used to tape from me and every week he'd served me a new VHS tape and that's how I stayed up to date with what was going on. And magazines like one thing I realized a couple years ago is I actually would hear about artists first by reading about them before I would actually hear their song or see their video. Because in Canada, we had so few outlets, so it's like, I was buying these magazines, reading about these artists and then being like, oh, and then when I'd see them, I'd be like, Oh, I already like know their whole bio, because I read about them before I heard them. Like being on another planet.

Sabrina  12:35
No, it's really yeah, it's kinda like contraband. I was like prohibition where is all this music You know, like yeah, where's Where are you getting it from?

Eternia  12:42
It was like an underground thing.

Sabrina  12:44
You have this one buffalo radio.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  12:46
Chicago. We had like, we had music. Yeah, we had a lot of outlets like we had like, WHBK. We had JP chill. He was like he had a local radio station at University of Chicago to play hip hop. We can actually like go up there and go freestyle, but you had to call first and he'll walk now stay here put a record on walked downstairs and open the door, let us upstairs to like rhyme and stuff so it was like the culture was always there in Chicago from like, Akbar, juice. You know to mean old type star like dirty MF like an S thirteen like it was this always around you know mean. So we like we looked up to them you know I'm saying like I looked up to Akbar like I went to a spot called a bob shop and that's the first time I met juice and that's the first time I met Akbar and Juice kicked me out a cipher cuz i was i was just starting out and I'm around them spitting on everybody. He was like touch me on the shoulder. Yeah, that's not the right cipher for you. You want to go over there? So I went over there and I seen Akbar. That's the first time I've seen a dude like battle three, do three or four cats by herself. Like Just decapitated all of them. Yeah, like Akbar was nice man. So he like took me under his wing. Hip hop in Chicago is known but it's unknown at the same time like the people there's no like common, Kanye. Rob fest is the brat where she you know she's connected with Atlanta but she from Chicago . Lulu Chris is from Chicago where he claimed Atlanta. I have two of my friends with the high school with him and so he's found he's but he claim Atlanta so it's like we was always like trying to follow their trails like my crew was tryna follow common's, common's trail, then younger dudes responding Kanye. But it was always dead man, like we see common all the time. Like, you know, sound a Southside just like oh, yeah, there go Rashi there go Rashi. So

Eternia  14:51
And Ron Nelson was pre my era like just to say that there were torch bearers here but Ron Nelson was pre my era and then Mastermind Show like that was kind of around my era. So there were people before me that were doing it for my age and my state is not a lot of outlets.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  15:07
Cause y'all got a lot of history. Solar

Yeah. Choc layer. History is deep it No I'm saying carnel of the show, dream warriors. my wife I was just telling him my wife was shocked that I knew who the dream warriors was

Eternia  15:21
Dream Warriors! yo! When i was not much older than him, you know. When I did a show with them finally one day I was so excited. Yeah, it was the first festival first one it was right in front of City Hall. Nathan Phillips Square, and the lineup was stacked. Drake was supposed to show up but it didn't matter that he didn't get the lineup was so dope without him! And dream warriors man Yo, I was like, man,
Saba  15:55
I guess so. Um, I think something that runs true for the both of you is that hip hop was finding hip hop was like coming home. It was very transformative and such an integral part of your lives. So I would love to hear if you feel comfortable sharing, how your relationship with hip hop has evolved over the years and how your craft has changed as you've lived through various life experiences and kind of gained more momentum in your career, how has that changed your craft?

Eternia  16:21
I think that it's like any relationship. And so relationships are renegotiated and there is rough patches, and they grow and they evolve and you have breakups. And then sometimes you make up and I know it's a corny way to describe it, but it's really true. So for me, hip hop was a safe space and home and community. A lot of times like I operate in the church now and the way the church wants to be, is the way the hip hop community was in the 90s. Like the you know, I mean, like, just how we were for each other. But then, you know, you get into the Business and the industry and that's a whole different thing and that's not what I'm talking about when I say community you know, I'm saying. And then you do experience that's probably where I experienced more of the misogyny or the the overt, you know, marginalization or sexism and then you know, you start losing your love because it's a job that happens. And for me, I had to question my intentions and my motives because they change from when you're 15 writing raps all day not going to school. Um, and and then so I took a step back. So long story short, you know, I went to you know, it being just like eat. breathe. sleep, oxygen to you know, this is my career too. And then the coming up part which is really exciting, you know, when like the papers and the TV stations and all that are like I'll check them for you because your new. Been there. And then you know, the momentum and then the maintaining that and then the deals and then they're releasing the product and then the feeling, maybe like You're not really that inspired. I remember there was a certain point in my career and like I hesitate to say this but I'll just say it like I remember feeling like yo I'd rather like stay at home and like manicure my toenails or like rearrange my closet right now then go and do this show that I'm like, slated to perform at or like headline at, like, and that's when I knew that I needed to take a step back because my fans didn't notice at the time that I still had gusto when I was on stage, but I knew in my heart that something was off.

So I'd say for a while I took a step back and the only kind of music I was doing, I still did music but it was collabs features etc. Like I didn't pursue it as my form of bread and butter. And then I think, you know, we're just stepping back into that arena now. So we've come full circle and the full circle part for me. Sorry, just to clarify was reevaluating and reassessing my intention. So my why because my why changed to be something that probably wasn't as honorable or as integrity driven as it was initially. At least for me, like nobody else would say that but for me, I was just like, Really? So now my Why is literally  I Create because it is in me to do. It was planted in me before I ever came out of my mom's womb to create I need to do this in order to maintain my health and wellness. Whatever comes from that is a bonus but not an expectation
and when you get stuck in the business that is not how people feel about it. So that's what I had to reevaluate. It took a long time,

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad 19:22
nah that's good as this guy is definitely kind of similar with me like for me in my career I don't think I took a serious, like my art is like a hobby. Like it was like this is something fun to do. And if I get props then that's cool, you know I'm saying and then just up and down like I had opportunities I could have went to like, what was the name of that tour was like, like a bunch of rave and they had like one small stage for like hip hop or whatever I forget what it's called

Eternia 19:52
wasn't worked for workers.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad 19:54
It was the worked tour.

Eternia 19:56
See, i was on that tour. what is the cuts 10

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad 20:00
I don't even remember. Yeah. I didn't even go like I was just like, I'm straight. But it's like opportunities like that I kept missing. But then other opportunities came like I was able to do like summer Odyssey. I was able to do like other things for other people, but I really like just like the live performance element of it. You know what I'm saying, being able to be on stage and ramen and stuff and then getting the props with your friends or whatever, or the people that's close to you. Like getting possum Akbar. Like that meant everything to me, like, opening up for like, most definitely did he give you like, are you decent, you know, I'm saying like, that's all that was cool for me and then my plan was like going tours and buy my mama house like that in another area. That's all I wanted to do. Like if I could get on like that. And helped my mom's out. I'm good. But it never happened that way. But then in between me doing music. It was always academics. Always going back to school, then I'll drop some hands and go another stint of school drop something here and there and then. But my I was always trying to keep my name consistent like I know my name is not like huge but certain people know about me you know what I mean? So like you said it's like that exactly like the people that matter like it's always like this up and down thing it was like that too like it was like man I'm not doing this no more and then somebody hits you up on the email like man you want to do this collab. ight, send me the beat, and there you hit a be like oh you write that boy right there and lay your verse and send it back like okay, I guess I'm not gonna stop so it was always like this up and down. And I think I'm at where you at right now to like now I'm doing it for like a purpose. You know what I'm saying, like I'm trying to reach the young people through the music. It may not be the style that they like, but I'd be in a classroom and I'd like you know, breather Rama Sanae like man you decent why you not on the radio is like I'm not doing it for that like I'm here while I'm supposed to be so like doing like stuff around hip hop education and me still doing music on the side that's cool so that's been like my journey it came from like me wanting to be like
where most def is Mr. Left even like I'm in my first scene I was like man this dude is dope, like we try to get there like we see like most Talid, Mr lif, other people like people that we looked up to like I was able to like, Jay live, his whole camp. And then like the D, like the whole DMV crew Odyssey Kev Brown, like we was trying to get to that level. Like that's what we try to. We try to be like them, but it's like the industry in Chicago was not it wasn't there like that, you know what I mean? Unless you was trying to go commercial like common or Kanye and then you eventually have to leave home but we didn't want to leave home. So that's that's similar to your story. So now I'm doing it with a purpose like it

Sabrina 23:00
Like a recalibration

Marcus Singleton/lomos Marad 23:00
yeah, absolutely. Like a step back, because I'm older, no sound like I'm older. And you just you start thinking differently when you when you're doing music now that's more calculated,

Mr. Lif 23:12
you know, and if I can add on it like it's so easy to do the death by comparison thing in this business you know and it's certainly always you know, reminds me is a comparison is the thief of joy. That's what she says you know, it's like and that is just such an important statement for me. Because it's like, especially in this era, you can sit there and just, you know, when you have a sliver of downtime and hop on Instagram and look at your friends that they might be in Germany rocking for 40,000 people or you know, or whatever, they could be just playing a club for 500 people, but they on tour while you might be at home, or something like that. And you can you can just, you know, death by 1000 paper cuts yourself, you know, into just being discontent with your position and everything, but you have to really gauge what is right for you. what resonates with you? And I think it's a beautiful thing like if you if you felt like hey, having a direct effect in my community and around the people that I came up with for in your case, I'm saying like, the people that you came up around admiring, and like you said, to get that nod from Akbar was huge for you. Like there's no fault in that man, you know, I mean, because it's I think it's the way you get lost in this business is when you when you really feel fulfilled by that. But then you but then you feel obligated to chase the thing all the way the top, whatever the top is, and then you know, you end up sacrificing a lot of elements of yourself on the way there you might not you know, get treated well by people you might not treat people well you might, you know, compromise your artistic integrity and all that. So, I just really think you know, it's it really is, you know, y'all sound like you're both in a beautiful place, you know.

Sabrina 24:48
that was Mr. Lif by the way.

Marcus Singleton/lomos Marad 24:50
Legendary Mr. Lif. still do man.

Mr. Lif 24:55
I'm honored to be here and to add on and to support. Really blessing.

Unknown Speaker  25:02
I think that that was so amazing to listen to that because I think it's something that we all need to remind ourselves, whether we're in the business or not, whether we're artists, whatever we're doing, it's constantly grounding yourself. And I loved how you phrase it like finding the why and realizing it's about the process of creating and not so much the outcome. I would love to actually hear a bit more about, I almost call it moving to the beat of your own drum, and you call it like paving your own path. I don't know. How does what does that look like? How do you find your place in the hip hop scene? And how do you stay true to who you are? What does it mean to move to the beat of your own drum?

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  25:38
Well, for me, I used to do a lot of comparison all the time. Like when I would like right around where I hear like a verse from Odyssey and I'd be like, Man, I'm not there you know, I'm saying like I've rip up a ROM and then try to you know, write it again or do you hear somebody else steady chasing other people instead of being content with my own style and then after Friend of mine, Ron, he lives in Detroit, who i do music with he's basically like man, why do you keep trying to compare yourself to them be content in your own skin like what's good for him may not be good for you. So when I had a conversation with him it was just like now I'm at a place now like I'm really content with my own voice and I'm like really just trying to move to the beat of my own drum. If everybody else going that way. I'm fine going this way. You know what I mean? Like I'm fine. If everybody talking about this, I'm fine about I'm really cool with talking about this over here, you know what i'm saying? Something that may not have been touched or something on a current event, because my thing is about consciousness like I've always gravitated to people who were like conscious in their music who's like, like drive me to think and reflect on myself and where i am at? So I always wanna be what's not out there are represented the I'ma be the MC. Like my friend, SB he told me he an artist soon from Chicago.And he was like, you know, I was looking for like people who was doing like conscious hip hop or doing like, music to motivate us to do things like I couldn't find that. So he's like, I'm gonna be that, you know, say I'm gonna be what I'm not what I'm looking for. So I'll fill that gap. And I took that from him like, yeah, I'm just gonna try to find like, I'm not trying to find my niche, I'm gonna make my niche. And if people gravitate to the music, they gravitate to it and if they not least, I'm fine with myself in the message that I'm bringing out. And and there's some integrity You know, I'm saying like the level of integrity or the type of music that I'm doing. So that's what that means for me like, I'm just moving to the beat of my own drum and if you feel the rhythm you can dance alone. Not then we good.

Eternia  27:44
You made me think about a lot of things when you were speaking Yeah, but the last thing you said it just made me think like we have to live with ourselves. At the end of the day. We have to go to sleep at night and depending on how in touch you are with who you are. Betrayal of self is the world Kind of betrayal that you could do. And, it hurts you and imprisons you. And so people used to ask me in interviews all the time, yo, Isn't it hard to like, not be on the they were
talking about female bandwagons at the time, so like meaning wearing revealing clothing, for example, or rapping about certain things, sex, etc. And I was like, No, it's not hard for me to not do that, at all. Because what I'm doing is being myself. I'm like, What is hard is probably what they're doing. Because if any way the label is shaping them as a product, which they probably are, I'm like, that is hell, that's prison. Like if it's not you if it's you fine. But if it's not you, that's a prison. What I'm doing is easy, because I'm just being me. Like, that's not hard. You know what I mean? So when I mentor younger MCs, which I have had the privilege of doing in the past, it's like, there's only one thing that you are an expert in that no one else can test you in and in hip hop is very competitive. And that is your own experience, your own feelings, your own experience, the things that you know, deeper than anyone else. This is my this is my whole point is like I just started Really try to write music that came from a very deep personal place, but a place that nobody could really like, you know, I'm trying to say, so I wasn't trying to compete like you what you're saying. And I'm, I might be I'm not I don't consider myself like a socio political MC or anyways, but I think my personal experience is one that touches on all those experiences. But it's not a broad scope that I rap about as much. It's a very personal experience. Yeah, so betrayal of self is the worst, and you can smell a distant genuine person a mile away. I know you can. I can, you know what I mean? And the reverse is true. If I'm somebody navigating a space where, you know, really, I'm the visitor because like, you know, I'm saying like, as a white person in hip hop. It's like the last thing I want to be as disingenuous because genuineness, you can smell a mile away too. So it was very important, I think, for me early on, and we all did dumb stuff. Like I listened. I pulled up some of my old rhyme books, like really old like before, like before I ever recorded versus old. And I was like, man, thank God that these verses never recorded because nobody would have liked me and it was like salt and pepper, it was just salt and pepper all day. And I am not salt and pepper if you know anything about me, but at the time, that's what I was listening to. And that's what my verses sounded like. So we all have to have as an as artists we need to have time to, to grow and develop. And I think what's happening sometimes is you're seeing people grow and develop on the airwaves and on TV and in front of your eyes or on YouTube I'm old school. So I also give artists grace when they're young as well, because I'm like, yo, like, once again, if I had dropped those salt and pepper raps, like looking like how I look coming from Canada, people would have been like, Who's this poser? So So everyone has their own path, and I give grace to artists that are still on it.

Sabrina  30:38
I love this conversation about how you know hip hop builds community, but also your points just now about how we're seeing a lot of the times artists growing up like we're watching them grow, right? So it's a medium that can build community but it's also medium but can take community away especially in a time in your life. When you're transitioning. You're learning you're growing. What would you say to youth? I know you already kind of touched on this, but what would you say to youth looking to find themselves or anyone, even someone older trying to break through looking to find their voice through hip hop? And also where do they start? Right? Like, do they start on YouTube? Do they start being packaged as a product in order to get that traction? Everyone seems to want to get like a billion views on YouTube, right, like, and I think that also goes back to that idea of finding why you're actually writing but it's so hard to
do all these things, especially when you are watching someone who's playing shows for millions and selling out stadiums and you're like, how do I get there? How do I get to be a Kanye? A Travis Scott, a Dr. Dre and Eminem. You know,

Eternia 31:41
I feel for youth now coming up in the music industry because we got PapaRazzi in our pockets. And back in the day, it would take a lot for you to be able to have your voice heard on a medium where a whole bunch of people would hear you or see you. And so hopefully at that point, you would had a little bit of media training. You will I've learned a little bit about who you were you would, you know, maybe you know, you've refined yourself as an artist. Hopefully, you know, that's what happened to me to a certain extent, right. But nowadays, no. And so, yeah, I mean, what do you tell? What do you tell youth when like, basically, you're still developing what you believe in and who you are. And your depth of content is only going to come from experience from life lived, and you might have not lived that much life yet. That's tough. That's a tough one. Yeah.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad 32:33
Yeah, that's a tough, That's a tough question. For me, I created like a curriculum, a leadership development curriculum for like, based around hip hop, like hip hop is draw, but we always tell them like it's big in a hip hop, like, you may not make it to the level of Drake, you may not make it to the level of Kanye, you may not even make it to the level like a J. Cole or somebody, but you can always start in your community. You know what I mean? Like music can affect your community. So like, through the course of that curriculum what we do is we ask them like what's in your neighborhood that you will want to change? Like, is there something in your neighborhood that you want to change? And then from that we come up with either we do like a public service announcement, or they do like a mini documentary, or if it is some MCs or artists or singers in a group then we try to like come up with a song and then shoot a video about that issue that they see in a neighborhood. So you may not ascend to that because my thing is like community development so I will probably be the wrong person for a young person to come if they trying to get to Travis Scott route. You probably not gonna come to me. You probably need to go find somebody else. But if you if you down from like, building a community, like one of my favorite artists, like the female artists besides Eternia now since I've been introduced to music, is Invincible like out of Detroit and the activism that she's doing in Detroit, like her music is like, you know, the soundtrack to the work that she's doing in Detroit, you know what i mean, so I'm kind of like similar to that and that vam trying to, like, raise young people up to just don't be mindful about the stardom. Like Be mindful about what's going on in your community. And to me, that's the importance of hip hop. It's about cuz like, to me commercial, like, just the commercialization of hip hop is made it individualistic, yes, but hip hop is not about individualistic, it's about community. You know what i mean, hearing Eternia's story, like how she was in you know, meeting people in the hip hop community and she felt like that was the fam that's, that's how hip hop is supposed to be.

Eternia 34:42
I in fact that you made me think because I didn't answer like what I would say thank you. I think one thing I would probably say to people to you, which is kind of what I touched on earlier, is know your why know your reason, and it better be a really good one because you can get wherever you want to go. I truly believe that if we want something bad enough anyone of us can get there absolutely. God forbid, you get somewhere and the foundation of how you got there was on a really shaky reason like a really shaky why because I promise you your world's going to crumble you know I'm saying so better be a good reason and a better you know I'm saying so and only you know that but your your why has to be a good reason. And, and and listen a lot and be humble.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  35:20
Exactly. Humility can take you far.

Eternia  35:22
yeah, you can't like be ready to work be humble and listen,

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  35:25
it's always it's always amazing when you meet like artists that you look up to like a lot like I was able to meet Most Def and he was like the most humble I was amazed at how hands on he was like, just do this real, like he was a real dude. Kerris one yeah walking up and down 63rd street with no bodyguard and like he on our block like this dude.

Eternia  35:47
Crazy, I was chopping merch, shoulder to shoulder with Pete Rock and CL. And this is like recent in the sense of like, they're huge. And literally like same merge table. We're all just selling, you know what i mean, in Europe. Humble

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  36:01
Yeah, just down Are you like it just like I remember meeting pasta new s for the first time just so down to earth man, just like those other artists that I connect. I was like, and when you see that when I was young, I was like, I want to be like that. Like if I ever make it whether I make it to a high level or low level, I'm gonna be like that all the time. Like, what's up? Let's chop after show one of the grab something to eat. Let's go. Let's go bild like I'm about building like cats who want to do collabs I want to get to know you first. Come to the house. Let's break bread. And let me get to know you. Then it comes through in the music. again, it's all about community building. Yeah, you know what i'm saying. So that's, that's what it is for me.

Sabrina  36:47
Why hip hop I we were talking about community, we're talking about hip hop. You know, people talk about how like music brings people together as a medium and as an artistic form. But is there something that sets hip hop specifically apart from other genres, in building that community and and in getting your voice out and telling that story.

Eternia  37:08
So historically, and it's really important to know where you come from as an individual and also as a collective and hip hop is a culture. Historically, it was the voice of the oppressed, the voice of the marginalized and the voice of the underdog which is what you kind of still hear today, to a certain extent, and, it was kind of picketed against by most radio stations, you know, they would advertise as we don't play no rap crap, you know, I'm saying like, we so so it was historically, something where, if you were a part of it, it almost immediately galvanized you to other people that were a part of it. Because it wasn't, I mean, it was popular, I guess, in certain circles, but pop culture at large, you know, North American society, it wasn't. And so I would say that that's one thing. That makes it you know, unique in the music world as as a culture and as a mode of communication as something that that brought people together and I think it initially was used as a tool, you know, which can build or destroy a hammer invincible used to always say that it was used as a tool to build communities as you're doing and and to get a message across to the to the population at large about shit that was going down that was that that people didn't know about that wasn't okay. So I think that's where it all comes from. I think even to this day, you don't really here too many happy hip hop songs. I don't know, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe they're out there now. But when I was coming up, you didn't hear too many happy hip hop songs because I love them. Don't get me wrong, the less old but because it was a voice. It was a journalistic kind of sociological voice. So yeah, I think like initially, that's probably why specifically hip hop was A passionate galvanizing force and voice that connected people together. Almost like if you were to go to a group, like I know, this is kind of weird to say, but if you were to attend, like, if you lost your parents and you go to a group where other people lost their parents and you're all sitting around talking about how it feels to lose your parents or your sibling or your child. God forbid. I feel like you know, hip hop was like kind of that support for each other for a very long time.

Sabrina 39:25
And I think to me, we've been talking about even pre interview that difference between hip hop as a culture, hip hop as a community and like, I just wanted to know if y'all thought that kind of the industrialization of hip hop or rap can has taken the story sometimes out of hip hop. So do you think that's that's an industry thing?

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad 39:47
I think it's part of like, the, you know, capitalism, you know, infiltrate and hip hop culture. To me it's it kind of took like the heartbeat The message out of hip hop culture correct me if I'm wrong like that's just my. That's my feeling about it like when like when I was growing up I can still remember the first time I heard FIGHT the power and how that song affected like young people around me listening to that song and like the stuff that was happening at the time when he when Chuck D came out with that song with Public Enemy and the movie do the right thing attached to it and what that somewhow the message came with that. So just like that was to me that was like the start at the end. You know what I mean? Like, I feel like like capitalistic society they saw that song was like oh yeah, we need some to curtail this because they not looking at each other no more. They trying to find out where this systemic things that happened in racism, oppression all the day, right. So we're gonna have to ask offset that was something so let's offset it with gangsta rap or with this or with that, and I feel like that's what shifted that was
like the turning point part of the turning point for a lot of music sound different than it is today because even back then you had a variety of music. You had to party rap, you had to conscious rap. So if you want to hear about the political social political you can listen to Will Smith or you know what I’m saying Fresh Prince and Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince like some just easy go.

Eternia 41:33
Foxy Brown is that right?

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad 41:35
Exactly. It was like a smorgasbord but not everything is cookie cut. It is sound the same like everybody like that's the same dude. No, that's little song. So I thought that was little. Yeah, it just sound the same. But I think that just the infiltration of capitalism into hip hop. I think that's what shifted the sound and the like, the feel of the music. Yeah. And now bopping.

Eternia 42:01
Yeah, and I don't know if it's like an insidious, intentional thing. Or if it's like simply what happens when money becomes the goal. But the word is capitalized. Right? So it's like you have someone story. Arrested Development was cool, you know, say put money behind Arrested Development, they came out and they dropped knowledge. But it's like, now it just appears that everything exactly we used to have all these different sounds. I used to say you met one person who raps you met one person that does hip hop or one song on the radio, that's just one person. That's just one song. We are as varied as, as there are human beings on the planet, the type of hip hop there is out there. That's what I have to tell people that don't know hip hop. But the reason why people don't know that hip hop is as varied as there are human beings on the planet is because what pop culture tends to reinforce is Yeah, as a very destructive image. Period.

Sabrina 42:52
I think I want to talk about your drums. I want to talk about how you came across the drums how you learn the drums. I think hip hop and I like the voice as a medium is great because it's very like democratic. Anyone has everyone has a voice everyone can speak but an instrument costs time, resources, money, you know, to learn. So how'd you come across it? And you know, I think Yeah, I do want to speak to how great it is to have representation especially for you know, lower income kids to see artists who can play.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad 43:24
Absolutely. I mean, for me, like my mom told me when I was little, I will always like pull out pots and pans and play on the pots because I'm not like, I didn't get lessons anything. So I was just like, I used to just playing on pots and pans when I was little. And then I will play for my church, a play for my church when I was older, but that was all by ear. And then when I got into hip hop, I went, I did a talent show and my mom came to the talent show, you know, how mother's are, like you look like everybody else. So what you mean? like she was like, yeah, you just look like them other artists you need to do some nesco set yourself apart. These other artists and I was like what you mean? Like, you know how kids are they don't want to hear what
they parents gotta say. So my mother was like, I don't know. Why don't you mime and Rhyme and I was like, wait, you want me paint my face white and play? Like I'm in a box while I'm rapping. So yeah, dude. Like, that's wack. She's like do theatrical poses when you round like that's wack too say everything she was suggesting I was sending it to the dugout, like, Nah, that's not gonna work. And then out of her frustration, she was like, well, you play the drums, play the drums around at the same time. I was like, I didn't let her know. I was like, okay, so I'll practice on my lap. Like sit in my room of practice rhyming while playing and then had a show that had to do and I brought my drums out and it just, I just stole the show like nobody there he's like, dude, just dude is plaing Jones and rhyming at the same time. And then I like flip my snare upside down walk a rub the cars under a snare you got like this metal strip. So I'll flip the snare upside down and rub this stick up against it and it sound like I was scratching. So I was just like, I was just trying to do stuff innovative. And then like, I think it's so important for like, I forget what that the TV series is on Netflix. What is chance to rapper, cardi B? Oh, yeah. What the guy who was playing the piano, he was rhyming while he was playing. That dude is cold. He's smoke if you here this podcast, anytime you want to do a song with you?

Sabrina 44:12
Yeah, I want to do a song with you. And I dont even

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad 45:32
He was like, a piano. Like classically trained. And not only that he was like, going in between English to Spanish. Yeah, like so he's like most people exactly. Like he's, like multifaceted, and I think is good for young, because they took the instruments out of the out of the school. That's why we turned to turntables and records and planing with the record why the record is plan because they took instruments out of the school. But it's so important like one of my favorite drummers is questlove from the roots, and Chris daddy day like they amazing musicians and artists. And I think that's so dope like, I feel like other artists don't like Ali Shaheed Muhammad is the DJ for Tribe Called Quest, but now he's playing the bass. Like it's just, it's a natural evolution, I think, for artists to like you, right? Because your voice is already an instrument. And how do is that if you pick up a guitar or you play the drums or any type of instrument that you could play it, you can incorporate that into what you're doing. I think that's, it's amazing for that. And I think we need to like especially racialize you, we need to like expose them to that, you know, instruments again, reimplement that and say its alright, you can do that and you can do hip hop. Now it's like hip hop violinists. Now, you know, I'm saying that was unheard of. So

Sabrina 46:57
well. There's like, even like lizzo, who is you know, kind of pop. But kinda you know and she plays the flute which is you know super classical instrument people even think she can't actually play it and it's just.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad 47:07
Are you serious?

Sabrina 47:08
No people because you know she is she's a racialized she's a black woman or like all black people and flutes that doesn't make any sense right? But she she raps and she that's what set her apart she raps and she played the flute and you know so

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  47:20
One of my favorite albums, people diss this album, but man one of my favorite albums was that Lauryn Hill unplug when she played the guitar and peoples like she's playing the same chords over and over again. I'm like, you gotta look past that man that's one of my

Eternia  47:35
I think it when people go back now is the lyric. Yeah, if you go back now you can't miss it. I think they were expect

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  47:42
Yeah, but you know, I think that's just like a net. Like I said, I think that's a natural. Like right now I want to learn how to play an acoustic bass, along with me playing the drums and I would like to like get actual training to play the drums so I can be like an Amir Thomas or I can be like a Christian. Every day who those guys are, like they went to school for, for music. So, yeah, I think it's important to reimplement that to expose you to that.

Sabrina  48:11
I know you're saying the pots and pans and you're playing in church, are those the avenues that you would tell lower income youth who they're like, well, I, I can't get it guitar? Well, like where do i start?

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  48:20
Yeah I mean, I know, like, it's some community, I don't know if it's the same here, but in some community centers in, in Chicago, they have like, where you can get lessons for free, you know what I'm saying for like, an hour or so. But if you could find outlets like that, do that like after school programs, you know, they could create like programs like that for you educators out there that's listening that you can, like, bring musicians in and teach you how to play the guitar or how to play the violin. I think it's important.

Sabrina  48:53
And how did you come across the humans of hip hop Hart House library, what brought you to apply?

Eternia  48:59
Well, I mean, for So we just say what it is because I had to wrap my head around whatYeah, so what we're talking about if you're listening and you don't know, you might know, is I'm not going to describe it, right? Basically, we are walking like our history, our stories, our experiences are our books waiting to be read. But instead of it being a published book with pages that you check out the library and read, you check us out of the quote, unquote, library, we will be in the library, right?
yeah. And, and you quote unquote, read us, which is really kind of a conversation. It's a brilliant idea. It reminds me of Zora Neale Hurston and how she she would, her research would often just be people's stories, you know, in their own language in their own words, and how they would say it, she wouldn't even change the way that they said it. And I think that's beautiful. And, and so yeah, that's that's and and to answer your question, I think one of the organizers reached out to me based on a mutual person that we knew when they knew I was I think they were looking for hip hop related folks. And somehow My name got in the mix

Marcus Singleton/lomos Marad  50:08
Yeah, same same. I took a class with a classmate. And she said, I used to work at the Hart House and I know Jessica rain, they will love you. And then I teach a writing class here once a month at Hart House. Teaching kids how to write rhymes. And then they told me about this. And then she just invited me to be a part of the team as a hip hop. I do

Eternia  50:31
Are you teaching University kids?

Marcus Singleton/lomos Marad  50:33
No, they're like some kids from Boys and Girls Club and they get bused here. For like once a month. Yeah, I'm just trying to get plugged in anyway i can.

been fun. Yeah. So that's how I got introduced.

Saba  50:49
Because it's actually I think most of our conversation was about the music and like make your way through the industry and like actually trying to counteract all of like the negative energy that's around the corner. ization of hip hop but I would love to hear a bit more about, like some of the other projects that you're working on. Like in the community, like you mentioned doing workshops. You also mentioned working with youth through mentorship programs. So if you'd like to kind of speak a bit, you got a lot going on.

Marcus Singleton/lomos Marad  51:17
So that's my work is around hip hop. I wish I had a, back in the 90s I wish I had it, get more involved to academics with it because this a lot of the research that's on a hip hop, some of it is real, some of us kind of like I'll be reading people and i'm like that's not true. That's not true. I'm not gonna say no names like that's not true. So I want to get involved like academically because I feel like some of the stories are not like when they mentioned hip hop, they say same names Tupac, Biggie, whoever, but I feel like other stories are not being told, like you know, I'm saying like brand new being poor, righteous teachers. Eva locally, like Eternia. I just found visibles name is in a book emergent strategy, a book that somebody wrote, as I it, but it needs to be more of those story, Mr. Lyft story, you know, saying pigeon john, like these other artists. This a part of the fabric of hip hop, but they're missing that. But I mean, I look up to like Chris MDN, Marc Lamont Hill, the work that he's doing, even here at U of T, Mark Campbell. I just met him,
like, I read his, that he's dope. Like, he's from Toronto. I'm like, I'm like, he sound like me. You
know, I'm saying like, through his writings like how invested he is in hip hop and the connection
of like Toronto hip hop in the history. He's dope. And, then my mentor back in Chicago, Davis
Stovall, he's not an artist anything, but they call him a hip hop, you know, hip hop professor.
And basically like, I came up on to him, because he used to have like this open mic spot at
University of Chicago, University Illinois in Chicago, which is a University of Chicago. He was a
professor he had this open mic set call Mojo's pan, and we used to always go there to cut our
teeth. Like when we first started to learn how to rhyme and stuff. He would always break down
our lyrics, but he was so knowledgeable like how is this dude so knowledgeable about like
current events and he would like tie in our rods like he would say what our rhymes meant like I
didn't even know what my rhymes meant. He is like breaking down our rhymes and stuff. And
then come to find out he was a professor there and I was like, dude, like he was from the south
side of Chicago. And that was the first time I ever seen like a black doctor who was a professor
like, and I was like, told my friend, he told me is I may you know, he a professor. I'm like, do you
lying? And he's like, Nah, I'm telling you. He's a professor here. And then one day me and him
had a chance to talk me and Dr. Stovall. I was like man you a Professor? he was like, Yeah, I was
like, I couldn't wrap my mind around. He was from the same neighborhood, the same area I
was from. And I was like, Man, that's what I want to do. I want to do something like that. And
he still teach at high schools like he's still connected to the ground. He's not like academia. He
wears t shirts, hoodies and Jeans. He's just a regular cat. But he tattooed up, you know, I mean,
but he's still for the people where he used and he worked and he's connecting community with
academia, which I think that's been it's been a separation between academia and community,
and a lot of people, academics, they talk about the people in the community, but they're not
bringing those people to the table to have those conversations. So that's like something that I
like I desired to do. And then when I met my wife cause my wife got like two master's degrees.
So when I met my wife, she knew that was like a desire for me to go back to school. And she
found this program at U of T. I applied at the last minute because I didn't think I was gonna get
in. Then I got in, like I applied for like three programs and I got an all three but I picked social
justice program because it's more like related to what I like to do. And then when I when I got
in, I was like, I want to do hip hop, something that's related around hip hop. So I created in
Chicago, I created this a leadership development curriculum called Finding Your voice is vision,
ownership, integrity, community and empowerment. And teaching kids to become leaders in a
community sounds like, instead of getting in trouble in school, why don't you go to your
principal? and be like, Look, what is your vision for your school? And how can I help as a
student to help you achieve the vision for the school, so it's like putting them in a shift is tear
down that hierarchy system this in schools, and it's helping students and teachers to become
partners to establish something better for the community. And I feel like it's definitely needed
here in Toronto with the like, the streaming of students like streaming them to college, and
that's streaming under University. And I feel like hip hop can be that void like You can be
intelligent, you can be smart and you can be into hip hop rap sports or whatever. But you could
be academic as well. So that's that's the reason why I want to get into the field of hip and
literacy.

Eternia  56:13
That sounds like you're doing stuff already not you want to.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  56:18
So here i'm i'm just teaching a, I'm trying to I'm in some conversations with a couple of schools right now to try to get my curriculum implemented into the school. And then I'm teaching a writing class here at the Hart House every once a month. And then they said, it's been going really well. So they want to do more work with me when it comes to that. And then just still continuing to do music recording. And like a friend of mine in Detroit, he he has a program called in demand, where he's trying to get more racialized men to come into the schools. And so he's using hip hop song a part of that and he also has this thing called lyricist society which I want to. I want to start a lyricist society Toronto, where we, you know, work we use, and we shoot videos, they write rounds, they record and they shoot videos, you know, just to change the narrative of what they think racialize youth are about, just to take control of their narrative, you know what I mean? Instead of them. They criminalize, they're, this their that they don’t, they don't want to learn they're not smart, they don't want to read. I saw like Marc Lamont Hill like cuz he, he bought a store and changed it to he made a bookstore and in North Philly, based off of the fact that they said that racialized people don't read books. And he was like, That's not true. I'm about to change that. So he actually put a bookstore and his neighborhood and like a hood neighborhood, and people are coming to read books and buy books and drink coffee and build community there. So I feel like that's one of the things I want to do here too in Toronto. And partner with people that's already here. But i'm kind of scared because I'm an outsider trying to do it. So that's what I'm trying to connect with more people that's like, in tune with the culture here. And let them know like, I want to be a part of that too, part of the movement too. So sorry, that was long

Eternia  58:13
no nothing to fear, though. I know, it's easy for me to say but welcome perspective and needed.

Sabrina  58:18
And I think that speaks to why the human library is so important and so needed because especially with, you know, self publishing, and Wikipedia and the internet, like anyone can write a book, but because anyone can write a book, especially higher institutions of higher education, I'm using air quotes, you know, post secondary institutions have different standards for what is considered credible, right. And when you look at those those citations and you look at who's writing. The people look a certain way or they come from a certain background or they come from a certain socioeconomic status. So not everyone has access to write a book that people will deem quote unquote, credible, right?

Eternia  58:54
Even actually, that touched them like my heart when you're talking about historians that are credible or not credible or who's being covered and who you hear about because when I went to the Smithsonian the the African American History
Yeah, man, so obviously it's beautiful and you've got to spend days there but the hip hop section which is well done like everything is really well done and curated by you know, I think ninth helped curate it and like other. Yeah, other legends too but you know the section on female MCs historically in that museum was definitely a who had the best marketing and promo budget. Well, you know what I'm saying like, like meaning there were you saw a Tifa you know, you saw Foxy you saw Kim, you saw like the names that you think.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  59:35
MC Lyte?

Eternia  59:36
Yeah, I think you saw light, but but it was very basic. It was like the female version of like the Tupac and the BG the J and like, I'm just like, man, like, obviously, like, it's just whoever had the biggest budget biggest marketing promo budget that left a mark on history, hip hop history. And so it always depends on who you ask, and everybody has, you know. So yeah, I really thought you know, I was a little disappointed with the female representation.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  59:58
That's just not good. Cuz, I mean, one of the first MCs was pebbly poo. Yes, he was a female MC. A lot of people don't know that. She was part of Kool Herc screw. Yeah, she's the very first MC was a female. Yeah. But again, people don't know the history. Like pebbly poo. Like if it wasn't pebbly poo and being a Run MC will be, you know what I mean? So if you don't know the history, like what are you suppose to do. I mean, that's why like Professor Hampton. She's a professor here at Oise. She started a black studies cohort, and I'm a part of our cohort. And she's that's why she's like recruiting different people in different voices, because she's trying to shift that paradigm of academia looks like this, academic sounds like this. And just trying to change that narrative, you know what i mean, like of the different voices that could come to the table, because like, we talk about that all the time. Our students come into the classroom with their own social capital, but we ignored that. You know, I mean, they come in with their own knowledge, but we totally ignore the knowledge that they come with our class with.

Eternia  1:01:00
sounds like you want them to be a blank slate. And now let me..

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  1:01:03
instead of building up the knowledge that they already come to the classroom with, so

Sabrina  1:01:07
it's time. Yeah. Because we talked about, you know, that people saying, you know, racialized students don't want to read books, certain types of people don't want to read books. It's not true. But what is true, right, is people are going to, you know, especially kids, right. They're going to respond to the things that they see, right? If all your books talk about, you know, I don't know, like, certain neighborhoods or like yachts or certain types of schools, or like, Susie wears a uniform and this is what happens and you're coming from a background where, you
know, you might live in State Housing, government housing, you might you might be a, you know, going to a food bank, things like that. Those kinds of stories that are portraying a certain kind of life might seem so foreign to you that you can't connect with it. You can't learn from it right? Never mind the issues of you know, students, first of all, needing food, needing proper places to sleep, a good night's sleep to actually come, which are issues sometimes when you're coming from lower income background that we need to solve. But once we have the food programs, once we know our kids are sleeping, once we know that they're sleeping enough, we need to curate the curriculum to their perspective. And that's why it's so important to have people in the culture of people who have had these experiences, you know, curating these curriculums and working with these students instead of having, you know, all of our professors and all of our teachers coming from a certain background, but our students coming from a very diverse background, and you know, never seeing a black doctor who was also in hip hop or never seeing someone that looks like them. Because then those educators are only going to speak to a small sect of the classroom. She's gonna keep reproducing right.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  1:02:43
I think that's another thing that gets overlooked too. Most of my favorite MCs are educators. You know, I'm saying that J life is a teacher. Grab lover, p rocks, little brother. You know what I mean? Like You know, they either teachers or they like community or like Sadat X was a teacher you know what I'm saying from the brand new beings here like a basketball coach. So it's like it's always about like that community thing and I think hip hop can be that curriculum like critical hip hop pedagogy is like that. It creates that space where you can have that dialogue with students. Like when I go in a classroom, I'm not trying to just talk at them the whole time. That's how you learn by like dialogue with each other, have a conversation, and it's like, I'm not the person with all the answers. Yeah, we gonna figure it out together as a community collectively,

Eternia  1:03:38
Which puts a lot of pressure off of you too.

Marcus Singleton/Iomos Marad  1:03:40
Exactly. Yeah, exactly. You know, like we give our students we give our kids a discredit if you just assume they don't know. You know what I'm saying like you never know. Exactly, Exactly.

Eternia  1:03:53
Passionate about people's narratives and stories, which is why I like listening to yours. I'm really I went to school for journalism. So I'm really passionate to hear like different voices. And I love it when there's like a room full of people that normally would feel like they have nothing in common connecting with each other. Like, that's my happy place. Whether that be unofficially like just organically like my friends are going into one room or whether it be something that's, that's more official So, so I produced a podcast that we have one episode of and working on more, it's called the messengers. And it's actually yeah, it's actually the first episode where it was a number of artists, myself included, talking about just when song wrote itself, like divine inspiration, kind of like a moment, we're just like, bam. But the way that we talked about it is
something like it's a it's an experience we've all shared as artists, so we all talk about that when we play the song, but but I just I have this feeling that like a lot of us share a lot more in common than we do. But we do have different experiences. Don't get me wrong, but there are so many things that we have in common that we don't know we haven't common because what we see is the things that separate us and so. Anytime I have the opportunity, which is the hosting work that I was doing, but I'm still figuring out how I'm going to translate that. Um, but yeah, anytime I have the opportunity to kind of bring people together facilitate panels or dialogues or discussions or events or whatever, where you kind of squash a little bit of stereotypes and get people talking to each other, something. I love to do, and I've worked with, you know, I've definitely done some school tours and mentorship and stuff like that. And the kids, man, they, they are our teachers, they are very wise. I always feel like I'm filled up after I leave, like I went there to supposedly, whatever with them, but that's what they did for me, you know, so.

Sabrina  1:05:36
Yeah, I love that concept of, you know, people who seem or think that they don't have anything in common, coming together and finding something. And I think that's also why something like that an event like the human library is great, right? Because it provides the opportunity for communities that don't really interact, to have a safe space to ask those questions. You know, you might have never met a racialized person before and an Mc before. You know, someone who has dropped out of high school, you know, or what have you. And that's a space where you can walk up to them. You can be like, Listen, you're gonna different you're kind of weird like I'm a little scared of you like let's have you know a conversation and find out where you come from.

Eternia  1:06:14
And hopefully Canadians won't be too shy and nervous. We're notoriously polite. Polite in quotation.

Sabrina  1:06:22
But I think that's also salient. It reminds me of that quote, like people tend not to remember what you did or what you said, but how you made them feel. Yeah, and not, not everyone, like you said, have the same exact experiences, they might not have been told the exact same things or experienced the same exact thing. But you know, and I think that also speaks to what you're saying about hip hop and how most of the music is sad or like it's not necessarily that positive, joyous, you know what I mean,

Eternia  1:06:47
critical or it's intense, or it's sad or it's angry or it's painful,

Sabrina  1:06:50
and I think it's because even on the range of positive emotions, not everyone necessarily knows what it's like to feel loved, knows what it's like to feel included, knows what it's like to have a home but I think it is very universal to know what it's like to at the very least feel excluded. You know what I mean? Yeah, feel sad,
unheard, not understood, unloved

Disempowered Yeah, right. So I think it's, it's at the end of the day, it's not about the details, but it's about those feelings. Yeah. And how can we connect people through those feelings?

Yes. very true. Very true.

That was huge for me because I didn't really talk that much in elementary school in high school. I was like, quiet all the time. You were learning?

Yeah, you know, saying like, I just felt I wasn't confident to like talk. You know what i mean. And then when I got introduced to hip hop was just me. It just do something to you. It give you that confidence that you want to say something you want to speak, you know what I mean? And it helps not just in the area of the arts, but it helps in your personal life as well like to build that confidence like that assurity your identity of who you are in yourself. So I think it is important.

It's an identity builder.

Yeah. For sure I like too I just don't like the fact that how artists work in silos, I'm going to make sure say that like, how we just like, you know, you, like you get your thing over here I got my thing of here are the person that they doing over there, we understand that we come together we can go further like I forget that quote was saying like, if you walk by yourself, you will work faster or whatever. But if you walk together you work further or something like that is some to that extent, but I just like it's to me. It's like, I feel like artists need to like come together.

I actually feel the same way about, like programs for youth in Toronto. Yeah I feel like whether it's an after school program or government funded program, like whatever program that's using arts, educate and empower youth, I feel like there are so many out there that are not coming together
Therefore, on their own, they're actually not making change they are but in a very limited scope way. And I see that because I meet so many people doing the work. And none of them are working with each other.

I don't even know each other

Talk about a program that they're like, no one else is doing this program. You know, I mean, so it's like, I'm not saying everyone has come together, but I'm just yeah, I feel that way about what the work, they use art, space, work.

Can you imagine all those people coming together? I think that's what Chris Emden is doing with the hip hop education piece. Like he started this whole movement. I think one of the human books, she's a part of his thing. And he's just like creating this movement, where it's this network where people come together, connecting and sharing ideas. So that's part of my goal to being here. I want to connect with people that's doing different programs and invite them into what I'm doing. Hopefully, they invite me into what they do, and we can do it together.

Build that community. Yeah, yeah. That spirit of hip hop out in the world, right. Yeah, I love it. Well, thank you again. Your time. Such great stories and insights, my room. Yes, definitely some coveted books that you can check out at the human library. I believe it's you can speak to one book for 25 minutes at a time or a maximum of four books over an hour.

I don't even know what I'm in for. It's gonna be interesting.

Yeah, it should be awesome. Yeah. Well, we should have you back on so you can reflect on that.

Yeah, we can obviously Talk.

Thank you so much.
Thank you to our guests, Iomos Marad and Eternia, two incredible hip hop artists, lyricists and educators whose stories are being featured in the humans of hip hop, Human library. Thank you for sharing your stories with us today, of challenging norms and narratives of resilience and overcoming adversity of insight and change and paving your own path in the arts and music scene and the wider landscape of the world. One major takeaway from our conversation today is the transformative power of hip hop and shaping lives and connecting people of various identities and life experiences. You can learn more about the humans of hip hop human library and initiative within the hip hop education program at Hart House by checking out their website at Hart house.ca.

Don't miss your chance to register for the events and get to hear some incredible stories. Again, the humans of hip hop library will be taking place on December 3 from 1pm to 3pm. at hart house, and the other date and location is February 6 at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus. Thank you to my co host Saba for helping me facilitate this awesome conversation and thank you to our sound tech Ari as well as to Braeden, Day and Mika for helping to produce the show. Most of all, thanks to you, our listeners. We'd love to hear from you. You can find us on Twitter at HHpodcasting and Instagram at Hart House stories. We're here every Saturday at 7am on ci ut 89.5 FM, and we post all of our episodes under Hart House stories on SoundCloud. Our intro and outro music was composed by Dan Driscoll. I'm Sabrina here with my co host, Saba and we're signing off as your hosts for today. Thank you for listening, and we'll see you next week.

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