The West Meeting Room
Episode 14 Sounds of Home, January 25, 2020

Saba 0:20
Hello, and welcome to another episode of the West meeting room. You're listening to ci ut 89.5 FM, and we're broadcasting from the macaroon studios house. I'm your host Sabah, and I'm very excited to welcome you into the studio today to listen to two segments centered around the overarching theme of home, the sounds, the sensations, the nostalgia and memories, the comfort and the pain, the displacement and transition. We're going to be exploring it all today for the first part of our conversation. Joining me in the studio today are my fellow producers, Braden, Ari, Mika and Sabrina and for the second half we will be listening to conversation with the incredible hood a car to be an Iranian American political fashion writer, activist and community organizer based in Chicago. Maybe we can start off by going around and introducing yourselves for our new listeners, and sharing something like a thought feeling or reminder or resolution and energy that you're bringing with you into the new year. I can start

Ari 1:21
Yeah. My name is Ari. I'm one of the producers here. And I guess like something that I sort of accidentally started in the new year, we were talking about this last week, some of my friends and I have like, really taken up skating, we all used to skate a little bit as kids. And I sort of associate sports and training and stuff with very intense like competitive kind of negative associations. I used to do a lot of a lot of sports and competing growing up. It's something that I that sort of became a bit of a toxic thing for me and it's been really nice to do something for the front of it with my friends and like I don't know, we've been going out like, almost every night, I got a text from, from one of them today that was like happy one week anniversary of when we started our skating, you know, like, that's been really nice and to sort of, I don't know, remember that you can like start new things and that it can be something that isn't, I don't know, stressful or serious thing like school. That's sort of an accidental like New Year's resolution II thing. I never make new year's resolutions. But that's sort of something that I started.

Mica 2:33
Hi, I'm Mica, and I'm one of the producers here. One of my 2020 resolutions is to continue working out something I started a little bit before 2019 ended, but just to continue that because it's really healthy and good. And also to sleep more.

Saba 2:51
And yeah, something that I'm bringing into 2020 is actually a part of a conversation that I had with Braeden over the break. It's my reminder Resolution but it's to learn to love my voice and embrace my voice. It's such a powerful tool and we use it everyday we use it at work all the time.

Braeden 3:09
I am Braden also a fellow producer. I think, something that I was just thinking on the walk over because I had a job interview earlier today and I've just been applying for lots of jobs and sending my resume and it's just such it's kind of a grueling process, like it ends up becoming triggering, like pulling your resume together and trying to like sell yourself and then and then finally, I mean, it's like a miracle to even get a response and then when you do going through the interview process, and I don't know just like a grounding moment as I was walking over after the interview was thinking, you know, there's not like a skill sets can be taught and as I go, I should be like reaching to apply for jobs that maybe I don't have the skills but I think I have a unique set of experiences like, like I'm bringing to the table like a certain perspective in life. It's experience and and just maybe that that should be the place for for myself to focus on going forwards because

yeah, it's brutal

Saba 4:16
but you did it.

Braeden 4:16
Yeah.

I'll keep doing it. I guess I guess we're all kind of in the same in the same boat. Where were we? You know, Mica, you were just saying earlier you've applied so many jobs. Oh, my new job.

Mica 4:30
Hire me, I swear. Yeah.

Sabrina 4:38
Hi, I'm Sabrina and I'm in the sound booth. So I might sound different than everyone else. But um, I think for me, what I'm bringing into 2020 is like, the idea of flinch theory and like moving past the flinch of like doing something unpleasant, which I heard first and there's a YouTuber named like Matt Davila, who does Productivity videos and he did a new challenge a month for every month of 2019. And he did his recap at the end of like 2019, early 2020. And in the segment where he talked about taking cold showers for a month, he was saying that like the biggest part, like revolutionary part of doing that was like getting over the flinch like actually getting into the shower because he knew the water was going to be cold and it's going to be unpleasant. And that concept just flinching away from something that's unpleasant, but the outcome is neutral or even you know, positive like studying or doing something you're afraid of, but it can like push you to an end that you really enjoy is you know, experiencing that flinch but then going for the thing instead of recoiling into it and like backing away. And I think that's something that I'm trying to like bring with me to different aspects of my life, especially studying and like actually going to class and instead of letting myself think like, Oh, this is gonna suck, I'm just gonna stay in bed. It's like, I might think this gonna start by going to go anyway,
thanks, everyone. I think that was really powerful. It's a really great way to start today's episode. So in preparation for today's segment our conversation, I asked everyone to prepare or to bring in some soundscapes that remind you of home, or bring up notions of home for you. So if we could go around and share some of our pieces, and then even unpack the sounds, the sensations and feelings that are immersed in those pieces, and then what did it feel like to capture those sounds? And when you listen back, what do you feel?

Ari 6:33
Um, yeah, so mine, it was, I don't know, I guess when I was sort of thinking of what I wanted to record for this. A lot of things came to mind. And typically when I think of home, I think of like my parents house and like my dog barking. But another thing that sort of become almost like a ritual, I guess, in the house that I live in now with my roommates is we all have slightly different schedules. I see them a lot, but one thing that we always do is like We always get ready for bed together. And it's always like at this point in the night where we're like delirious and just so exhausted and really cramped into our tiny, tiny, tiny bathroom, this just like this window lists like horrible blue. So when I was sort of thinking of what I wanted to record, I think of like spending sort of, like, mundane like moments with my roommates is something that makes me feel like I'm at home and sometimes that is in this situation. Other times, it's like when we're cooking together when we're just sort of like, existing I don't know, but this is what I ended up recording.

Unknown 8:00
The Bachelor of Science is our sign

Mica 8:09
cancer Pisces

Braeden 8:13
Scorpio brooding Aries.

Sag, polyamorous Scorpio.

Unknown Speaker 8:27
Let's harmonize.

Saba 8:34
That was lovely. Thank you so much. Who's next?

Sabrina 8:36
I feel like mine is going to be much more boring. I took a more like practical approach and are not really practical. I feel like I guess mundane is the word that I'm looking for. And when I thought of like sounds of home, I was just thinking of like, sounds that I actually hear everyday like in the background, and that's what I recorded and kind of just put together like one after the other. So it's like Laundry machines and keys indoors. But yeah they really are like, I don't
know I find that they especially like the door opening is really distinct to our apartment. I don't
know it's kind of weird but the exact way that like the key sounds in the lock and the way that
the sound like reverberates across the whole apartment because it is just a one bedroom but it
is on one floor is different than you know the way that I hear my mom opening the door at you
know my house back in Pickering or even when I hear people opening the door at like my
partner's house or any other houses I've had. So that's really distinct, to me the sound of like
someone coming home or the sound of someone leaving and then also just a lot of sense of the
oven because we didn't have a microwave for the longest time and I've like fallen in love with
my oven.

Unknown Speaker  10:15
Hi, how are you?

Saba  10:44
So what did it feel like this process of recording that I did that the sounds become so normal to
you that at some point that you weren't even like tuning into it until you recorded it and listen
back and you realize that there's so much like hustle and bustle going on here every day.

Sabrina  10:57
I think for me like this whole process was Really interesting because it comes off of the heels of
our winter break soundscape. And I had like a lot of passion and like creative energy coming out
of editing that and then I had so many ideas for like, sounds around my house that I'm like, Oh
my god, I can make something just as cool but like only in a minute or so. And then as I was
actually editing it, it's like,

sounds are really boring.

I just had the realization that they're just like, everyday sounds, but like in the way that it's like,
in a video game, you don't put people washing their hands or like locking their doors before
they go to a different scene. Like These are the sounds that you've cut
out of a movie.

And then I was like, a little sad because I was like, in my head, I was making them to be like,
these really cool sounds, but really, they just sound like really, every day. But then I've got some
freedom in that because I feel like there should be more every day in media and like more
mundane, just kind of a key in the door, the laundry room and showing the more boring,
mellow like restful parts of a day and not just the highlights. So that's kind of like my whole
thought process. As I was going through editing this minute piece,

Saba  12:03
yeah, I think there's a lot of authenticity in that in in both
Sabrina your piece and also our use case where it's not like you're, you're hitting recorded trying to kind of fabricate those sounds, these really are part of your daily life. And I mean, the notion of home is very unique and personal to people to you. But this also creates a sense of like, universality, like these are the sounds that we all kind of hear in our everyday lives and baby I personally don't even really tune into it unless I hit the record button. And then I realize I'm very conscious of the sound suddenly, so thank you so much for sharing. Which electrical

Braeden  12:39
Oh, yeah, I guess that's before sharing mine Sabrina I totally go with like the sound of a door and like the key in the door like yeah, like has its own music like its own like tone and texture to like, no matter where you are. Yeah, the in that but it but again, like it's a sound you hear all the time, but like don't think about it and then you actually delete it and then you're like, Oh my gosh, it's so distinct from all these other like context like I love that great point. Okay, so mine is a moment where my partner and I are playing with Madison our hallway. We got her many sticks for Christmas. I guess as Canadian essential This was unbeknownst to me not growing up here. Just like little mini hockey sticks that we can play down like are very long, narrow hallway. And yeah, as I was like, I was kind of slipping back through my phone to look for a soundscape that captured home and I realized like I need to like that also needs to be a part of the process like reviewing what we've already recorded. Like that's, that's so fun. It's like this period of discovery like oh my god, I forgot about this and you're so transported. So this was from a few weeks ago. Just capturing just like a really nice moment. I like it because you know, there's like always going to be dirty dishes in the sink. There's always going to be laundry but sometimes you just need to hang out in your hallway and play mini sticks with your toddler.

Mica  14:12
This is the Matthews. Here she goes.

Hoda  14:21
Mama, Mama. Mama.

Braeden  14:42
Yeah.

Unknown Speaker  14:48
Yeah, we talked about that madness

Braeden  14:55
lagger.

Hoda  15:04
Yeah.

Saba  15:10
Thank you so much for sharing. Oh, yeah. How did it feel like listening back?

Braeden 15:14
When did you record that? Um, this is from a few weeks ago it was been just like going back and listening to whole bunch like, I guess I record so much more than I realize. And so yeah, it was just it was it was actually kind of a nice reminder because I have been feeling really overwhelmed just with like my workload this week and, and it was just such a grounding reminder of like, there are these really precious moments in the space in between that are important to like, keep having but also to revisit as a reminder,

Saba 15:46
that's beautiful. Thank you so much. Okay, so my piece is actually instantly when I when I was thinking of the prompt of home, it took me back to April of 2018 when I visited Iran after Six years. And so it was a trip just my mom and I, and we said visited my grandma and my family and to her on which is the capital of Iran. And then my grandma is actually from the province called Gila, which is in the north of Iran. And she's originally from suicide, which is a by rash, which is more well known. But then we actually, my mom's cousins were these amazing women like I, every time I visit them, it's just like, instantly feel part of something like a community. It's almost like coming, it's coming back home, after being away for so long. And there's this instant like click where I just know that this is where I belong. And they have this really incredible way of like making you feel whole. And so they took us on this adventure, like we visited so many different cities in that area. But then we also went to Banda and zelly, which is this kind of seaside city and it's So we were walking along with shore and then we they're all these like, like sailing boats right along the shore and there are sailors who you can pay for ride along see and so we met this man named Andrea and Cole Yeah, yeah. And I was just like it's like obsessed with this man. I don't know I he was amazing. Um, but yeah, so he took us along this ride and he was helping us take photos like as he was staring and then I just remember recording the waves hitting the shore and then even like I always say, like, one day I'm going to go back to Bender and Sandy and I'm going to go back to Uncle Yeah, yeah. And I'm gonna, I'm gonna just like rear live that moment. So it's really, really short. But that's home for me. I think part of my heart is always in Iran.

So thank you. Thank you so much for sharing I think that was it was really lovely to hear how unique everyone's conceptions of home and I think it's it's a very fluid and like ever evolving kind of idea, because I could I could we hear your thoughts on like, what like, what does it feel like to listen to that? Is that a piece that you visited? Like what came to mind when you're thinking of soundscapes today? Yeah. Honestly, when I was thinking of soundscapes, there's a lot that came to mind. The first soundscape that I thought of was actually the sound of the song, which I've mentioned a few times. But I think it's just this really beautiful sound. It's, it's basically it's the prayer call the Muslim prayer call. And every time I go to Iran, that's the first thing you hear like at different points in the day when it's kind of the time to pray. You hear that like, broadcasted from all of the mosques in the area. And it's just instantly like that's when you know, your any run. And so it was that but then I didn't actually have Feel so terrible because I don't actually have like a sound that I've recorded myself. Because it's not until
recently that I've become so aware of audio and how powerful it is and how important is to capture those sounds. So that was the first one. But this one was the second one. Actually, when I thought of home, it's Yeah, listening back on. It just takes me back to that trip. And I remember the sensations so vividly, because there was this feeling of just like, complete and absolute calm, and I've never I very rarely experienced that in my life. By just hearing the sounds. I think it's just the sound of the water hitting the shore as well, in general is just a very peaceful and grounding sound. Yeah, and just listening back on it was amazing. I can feel like that like I felt like a tingling. And I just remember I was looking for it because I knew I had it somewhere and then I realized I was on my mom's phone. Because my phone was always dying on that channel like it was never functioning when I needed it to function by asking mom to send it to me and I loved how you captured that like experience listening back how important it is because you realize how you have all of This, like these moments that you've captured, I think is really cool to like transport yourself back to that type

Ari  20:05
that's like, Can I go off of that, like reminded me because I worked in a hostel in Palestine for a little bit in Ramallah, and we would sleep on the roof because there was no room inside. So like all the staff would sleep there and we would be like, put to sleep and woken up and like in the day as well, but like by the protocol, and like that reminds me of home as well because like, when I sort of arrived there, I like I was completely alone. And like immediately made all of these like, amazing friends who were essentially my family who I'm still in touch with. I was like, quite a few years ago, every time I hear it now, like I had no sort of, like I knew it was before but I had no like previous like emotional connection to it. And that's like, very different from like, I don't know, just yeah, that like reminded me of that sort of feeling of home for myself that I found there and like yeah,

Saba  21:00
Yeah, I think it really is impactful. Like one day I'm gonna I'm gonna play it for you, for you all for whoever hasn't heard it before, but it is amazing.

Braeden  21:09
Yeah, I'm really I think it's interesting when like, our notion of home is scattered across multiple places, sometimes across multiple continents. Like, what does that what does that feel like in your mind? To have sort of maybe pieces of you like in all these different, Franklin, like fractured across all these different places? Yeah, I'm curious to hear your perspective.

Mica  21:33
I think that's when it just really boils down to home representing the people that you're with, at least for me, that's kind of what it's transformed to in the last couple of years, like, when I'm with my mom, that represents probably being in year why, and it's just her voice and like her big green with my brother. That really reminds me of sort of being at home. But I'm like now in Toronto. It's like hearing my No partner like, I don't know, outside in the living room, cooking or doing something that reminds me of home. So sort of this idea of like the voices of the people
that you love really shape your understanding of where you are. Because I don't know I feel like at the end of the day, that's really what what sticks.

Saba  22:18
Thank you so much to Braden RA, Sabrina and Mika for sharing their wisdom and lived experiences around navigating the complexity of finding home and community within and outside of yourselves. We're going to be taking a quick break and when we come back, we'll be listening to conversation with writer, organizer, and all around powerhouse. You're listening to ci ut 89.5 FM

Welcome back, you're listening to the west meeting room on ci ut 89.5 fm. As you may or may not know, we have some incredible conversations on this show with creatives, artists, activists, and community organizers who are engaged in amazing work dedicated to inciting and propelling social change. This week, I'm incredibly thrilled and honored to welcome Iranian American political fashion writer, community organizer and multi hyphenate powerhouse how to kind of be to the show. Thank you so much for joining us on a call all the way from Chicago.

Hoda  23:51
Of course, no, thank you so much for having me.

Saba  23:56
First of all, I want to say congratulations, I'm celebrating your first year of operation At the gluten production Co Op.

Hoda  24:02
Thank you. We're so excited.

Saba  24:04
Would you be able to maybe give a bit of context about what the gluten production Co Op is and what kind of work do you do?

Hoda  24:10
Yeah, of course. So boots and production or manufacturing is a what our namesake is that Danish gluten cookie, your mother probably a story, her sewing kitten. But we are an all women, immigrant and refugee run apparel, manufacturing workers cooperatives. But basically, we make clothes. We are a manufacturing company. And we work with designers around the country and around the world in order to create their collections. So the things that you see in stores, people made them. So we made them. And I think that that's really important, because it's also fascinating to know that a lot of people think that your clothes are still made by machines, but all of clothes are made by hand. Sure, hands and machines, but the process is just so intimate. And I think this is very important to name that like what's on your back right now is 10 have gotten into creating that and so Yeah, we're also workers cooperative, which means that everybody who is a member of the business also is a co owner and runs it and shares and profits and gets to decide what every aspect of the entire business
looks like. So we set all of our reads together internally, every designer that we work with gets improved together, even the hours that we said, it's constantly flexing just because people need to pick up kids from work and our school. And so where we're trying to look at both sort of acting as a sustainable systemic alternative to sweatshops and fast fashion production, because the majority of production even in the United States or Canada, even as actually still as special, and that article about Fashion Nova recently came out to I think people were shocked but they shouldn't be, obviously, but being able to actually provide a tangible alternative to special production and then also being able to provide a space of holistic care for all of the members who are refugee and immigrant women. They're not trying to just like get them a job at Walmart and like checking a box that like They're now employed, but what does it actually look like to care holistically for refugees and immigrants and particularly women?

Saba  26:07
I saw your post on Instagram a few days ago and your annual report is absolutely amazing. How does it feel?

Hoda  26:13
Super, super grateful and proud. Like, I think that I was really, really excited just like thinking about it and putting it together. And just knowing also the stories of why everything is the way that it is and how hard it was to get to like zero waste, for example, and the way that the work that we're doing, I think it's just been it's been such a difficult process that being able to just like put that together it was it made it all seem so worth it. And also, it made me also realize how little people still understand about apparel manufacturing. Because I don't know if people even realize how big of a deal it is that we didn't buy a single polybag for example. And so even though maybe I feel like not everyone is rejoicing as much as we are.

Saba  26:57
I'm definitely rejoicing it the other day, I was Talking to our team here at the Hart House stories. And we were I was just raving about how incredible the co op is. And I had read so much about the project, and I've been following it on Instagram, but here you talk about it to me. And the conversation is just amazing. It's just taking me back to how incredible it was to see the progress that you made in such a short period of time that you're completely revolutionising. And I know your mantras to have completely abolish the fashion industry. But this is really setting the stage for something really incredible. I've been admiring your work actually for years now I started reading your blog at school, your platform due to Assad and as a fellow Arabian in the diaspora I know we we grew up in very different contexts you in the US and myself in Canada, but it felt really incredible to find this, this voice this connection to to Iran, but also you completely shaped the lens through which I view the world even today. And I said so. What I really but what I really wanted to do with today's conversation is maybe paint a portrait of who you are an audio portrait I thought it was very clever for putting that together but um, so I know I know you go you have so many projects on your plate you to do is odd because we've read the international book club, the gluten production Manufacturing Co Op, you're a published author of street style, but actually what really drew me to you at first as well was in your Twitter bio you describe yourself as the angry Daughter of immigrants. I have to say that
that has become my like, I've tried to assume that title as well because it's so so amazing. I love that it's incredible. But how is this like this intricate and multifaceted part of your identity is shaped your life experiences especially your work and the lens through which you view the world?

Hoda  28:52
What it kind

of interesting question of Yeah, I think that my Entire worldview is completely, constantly shaped and reshaped by what I take in what I know my history to be what, who I define as my people. And I think that's always been a work in progress and something that is constantly in flux. And I feel like for good reason. So I mean, when I was born and raised in Oklahoma, and it was just incredibly white and conservative and growing up without the Iranian community or a Muslim community and being pretty much the only visibly Muslim, I made my first Muslim friends at the age of 17 in college. So I think that experience, I think, really put people in a position to decide whether they want to survive and move forward and I guess assimilate to a certain degree, which I guess we all have or decide to take another step back and really put your foot down. And I think growing up in my house, both my parents are immigrants and they weren't necessarily be angry types, but they Did I think just watching the way in which they occupied the world, the ways in which like my mom cared for people and like the love that she had, and, you know, just the ways in which I feel like my parents without saying anything really instilled? What now in hindsight, iccb, like very deep Islamic values of just humanity, but also standing up for justice and fighting against oppression, regardless of who it is, or again, I guess I did the latter, which is just take that step back and really think about it, this person is telling me to take off my head job and punches me in the face, does he really have my best interests in mind? Is this the person I should be listening to? And so a lot of those early, really, really difficult decisions were made that made me I think, realized that I was never going to be normal, or never feel like I was going to fit in. And so the next question was, well, what am I going to do about that? And I think that sort of the challenges of growing up, really, I think, helped cultivate a sense of the ways in which I see my relationship with my work or the relationship that They have getting in and out of community. And I've been really grateful that that has changed dramatically, I can now feel like I have a tangible community and also one that I feel like it's so much also borderless in a sense, like, I know that you also mentioned that you're Iranian and something that really has changed for me, especially I think, this year when I went on my first international tourists who I define is community. And at first, you know, I think just by virtue of the world that we live in, a lot of the times we identify community based on borders based on shared like, like ethnic background, but seeing that the majority of the people around the world was majority, but like a large chunk of people, the Iranians constantly come up around the world where some of my biggest critic in ways that were just like harsh and unfair, and yet people from around the world identified as Muslim or had shared values or political struggles, would constantly be the ones that were there at the end asking questions, you know, wanting to get coffee, things like that. And that made me really think about why I defined someone as community and why I don't define others as community and so That whole
experience has really shifted my own perspective. And you know who I am writing for whom I work with you and for

Saba  32:08
you touched on this point and that I thought was really interesting. And I found this like sense of connection as well to what you're saying, the idea that some of your biggest critics actually come from your own kind of ethnic background, because I know growing up also in Toronto, wearing the job and then being part of the Iranian community, I often felt like I never belonged either, because it was either, yeah, they associated me with things that I didn't want to be associated with regimes and in ideologies that definitely were not mine, to kind of adopt and also not being able to find a sense of belonging due to discrimination. And that really resonates with me the idea of like finding community beyond those borders beyond those identities as well. Actually, I do have a question back on your connection to Iran and into your to your family and growing up in the diaspora. So So how did you stay connected to your Iranian identity and I know you mentioned your family and instilling values and above with regards to Islam and also kind of, I guess the language that you grew up speaking. I know for me it was more of as I grew older, I kind of try to learn more about my roots in Iran like my my histories. And is this also something simpler for you? Or was it something like a lifelong kind of pursuit of finding your connection? Your roots in Iran?

Hoda  33:28
Yeah.

I, the first time I went to Iran was the summer after my freshman year of high school. So I was a little bit older. And up until that point, despite how much I knew, like the contrary was true, I would just continuously consume information in the media about or what the media was saying about Iran. So before I went to Iran, I could not imagine what my homeland could look like except in black and white and except in like shattered sort of buildings. No very like orientalist dream. I was like what are nightmare almost is like what you run was based on what I was just continuously hearing from TV from us from classmates. And so through that, okay, I was very nervous to go to Iran for the first time I felt like you know I thought women were walking on one side of the road and men on like the other side and there would be all these like barriers and all you know just like incredible sort of yeah everything was just like just dilapidated in my mind. And when I landed I remember at the airport in Tehran. It was like two or 3am and my onto I'd never seen before in my life up to that point literally just runs and like gives me a huge hug and I was like, Oh my God, who is this human? And it's just wild to know that like there's a whole community of people who are related to you and like love you despite have never met you before in your life and it was just, it was such a wild experience. I still remember that that car ride from the airport to cut edge. When my mom said family live was one of the most beautiful moments of my life. It was pitch dark, I could see nothing. But just seeing those like that string of street lights, just like the quietness and the soft, spicy being spoken in the background. I was like, wow, I'm home like, this is where I'm from. And that was just like a really transformative experience, being able to go back and struggle through my Farsi, maybe
really invested in like understanding this homeland that is both complex in so many ways, but also like a part of land. So you

Saba 35:36
went to you visited you ran for the first time and your freshman year of high school. And then when did you start Juju Assad?

Hoda 35:43
I started Yeah, this summer after my freshman year in college, August of 2012.

Saba 35:48
There was the hope with GG was odd to counteract those narratives that you grew up listening to are seeing in the media growing up in Oklahoma and then going to University in Chicago like is it it was that the inspiration behind it? counteract this narratives,

Hoda 36:01
to large extent. Yeah, I think less particularly Iranians, though, then more Muslims and particular a certain incident that really led to the development and sort of did you, as I said, was a pregnant Muslim woman in France of June of 2012 16 months before, was brutally attacked in the hate crime. And when she started yelling, I'm pregnant, I'm pregnant, they started kicking her in her stomach, and she had a miscarriage out of everything that I personally experienced and faced and dealt with that incident in particular, really struck a deep chord with me and made me want to just yell, which I did, was very angry. And that really made me want to think about the ways in which the media that we're consuming like I thought for myself firsthand, can completely shaped the way that people engage with you or don't engage with you so early on my audience was like primarily directed toward white people, toward people who are slightly racist, slightly materialistic really wanted to use fashion as a way to almost trick white people and having conversations that they needed to be having. That was actually my like, initial target audience and I was writing for that. And I actually kept my writing completely separate than my actual life. As a student, No, none of my friends knew that I had this like whole separate world that I was engaged in, until it started like, it was like read about it, and like the news on Teen Vogue or something and be like, I would like skip class, like go to like a blogger, brunch downtown, like different things like that, that just started to really occupy my time. But then also, I didn't have a huge shift the second time, or the third time I went to Iran, and was doing research for my thesis at that point, and really decided to shift my audience from, like writing for white people to writing for our own people and giving language of liberation to a community that also needs it. And so Iran has definitely been a huge factor in that trip and shifting the ways in which I see my religion. Discipline my work and the audience again, for who I write for

Saba 38:03
your blog is centered on the point that fashion is inherently political. So would you be able to kind of unpack that for us as well?
Hoda  38:10
Definitely. So I think there's like, two parts. This first question is so accessible, everyone wears clothes, like everyone does. So it's something that now everyone has a point of reference, in order to be able to engage with when we talk about clothing, to some extent, obviously, like not like a technical design side, but everyone has a basic level of understanding of clothing, how to wear it feels like how much you pay for it, but also it is so powerful in the ways in which we communicate our ideas about ourselves in a public space. So me wearing a job for example, me dressing like XYZ or that person dressing like XYZ is the form of communication because we are saying something ultimately Western ways and with what brands and how we're dressing ourselves every single day when we step out. reframing our bodies for public consumption, if we think about it like that, and it's the the language that we're allowing ourselves to be consumed in, and we're choosing that most of the time, of course, not without a credible influence from a lot of different factors, but ultimately, it's the ways in which we every single day and make a decision to pull something off of the clothing rack and put it on our bodies before we leave out. So that in and of itself makes fashion both a a really important mode of communication that allows conversations like militarism, or Orientalism, which may not everybody has a direct and tangible physical relationship with. But if we can use a point where people do have this relationship and then take people there through this language, I said that could be like a very important way in which you can make these really important conversations like militarism, Orientalism war, something that's super accessible, so we don't have to necessarily have to use all these big words or phrases in which now detaches or makes, you know, people who don’t like reading about things. testimo accent and I focus my article academic piece, but in a way that everybody can engage with that, for me was this really, really important. And the second, the fact that everybody engages with clothing also make clothing, inherently political clothing is a form of art. And all, public art is political. Because now that we have this language of communication, given all of the shit shows that are happening around the world, we either can use this very powerful mode of expression to either talk about what's happening in the world, or we don't. And that's a decision that we can make every single day. And the decision to not think about or not talk about, not use this language. I think it's deeply privileged. It doesn't make any less political. So if we think about, for example, not just maybe what we’re wearing, and we’re just going like, I don't know, black sweater, whatever you we feel like it's there a political but then if you think about where that clothes comes from, that allows us to also open up conversations about imperialism or capitalism, the fact that the majority of our poor produced in Southeast Asia, but the majority of it is consumed here in the West, that sweatshops are a necessity for fast fashion. And that militarism is connected to the creation of economic societies in which sweatshops can now exist and thrive. Like all of this is so deeply related and we just start tracing things back. And so I think that makes fashion along with all the numerous other ways that fashion is inherently political, which we can also talk about like the history of fashion, gender, all these sorts of things. Could be just one aspect of that production and consumption can open up doors for an infinite number of conversation.

Saba  41:33
I was watching your BLF talk business of fashion talk the other day with Shireen and Sheba car and a moderated by massive ago certainly and I remember just thinking like now you explain it
so eloquently about that inherent like deep connection between this like those two different
the way it's been propagated, so almost like separate worlds, but you merge them so
beautifully. I think it's where you paint a very vivid picture of why it's important that we're
aware and conscious of What, what we choose to wear and where it comes from. But also, I
love the way you describe fashion as an art form and also as as a language a mode of
communication. So I want to see if you'd be comfortable sharing what what do you
communicate with your clothing choices?

Hoda  42:16
Yeah, great question. I think many different things. I think that many times the ways in which I
dress is very dependent upon where I'm going and what I'm planning on doing. So, for example,
if I'm in a space that I know that there might be like a larger maybe possibly more conservative
audience or audience, the audience, population mass of people, like for example, they don't
normally engage with like, airport. booze, yes, restaurants, things like that. I like to wear
clothes. That tends to be more provocative, because for me, I know that ultimately people are
going to be looking at me because I work a job like point blank, no matter what people are
going to instantly make a judgment about the way that I live my life just based on a single way
that I dress. And so I think there's so much baggage that comes with that. There's also so much
trauma that can also happen in just a moment's instance of a glance. Because when you know
that you are different, and you know that you appear different on the streets, quote, unquote.
And then the ways in which people look at you is like a very non consensual way that your body
is being consumed. And I don't want to get like super theoretical here, but and it's sort of like a
public exchange that your body is sort of being consumed. And you don't have agency over
that. And it's the feeling of like, incredibly, incredibly isolating and incredibly traumatic, and
also is just constantly built up every single time you leave everyone sort of looking at you, like
you just came from outer space. And obviously, this is so much more tangible in Oklahoma that
is in Chicago or like bigger cities, but that feeling is still there nonetheless. And it's the same
thing that for example, people of color, always still when they go into a store and they
followed, things like that, that, like really cultivate a sense of self in a very negative and toxic So,
for me, I've learned that the ways in which we can either use fashion to reverse that agency so
being able to go into a place like an airport and wear a shirt that says revolution in Arabic is
obviously going to get me a lot of stairs. But now it's not because they're looking at me because
they're like other rising me, it's because I am literally demanding for them to look at me and
look at my shirt. The fact of me making them uncomfortable through the ways in which I dress
is so powerful, because I'm using their racism against them. So if you're going to be racist, be
racist, but let it be uncomfortable for you and not for me. And then also I get to be able to
really sort of demand was there so it's like, again, it's that that reversal of agency that now like I
have that power, and you're looking at me not because you want to be because I want you to
and so that's just one way that I think we can even think about fashion as a form of like taking
up space and agency and public spaces are oftentimes not afforded as people of color

Saba  44:53
is very similar sentiments to like fashion being laboratory or like I mean, I stopped wearing the
hijab Last year, but both like wearing it putting on, like when I was nine and also taking it off at
19 was both like a form of agency for me as well. And now that like, I'm trying to be more conscious about what I consume, I think it's really amazing to realize how powerful fashion is and in making it not just making a statement being true to who you are actually wanted to touch on this point that you brought up. But I mean, that stemmed from something that you said about being provocative or inciting to change or shifting frameworks through the clothing that you wear, or you always this unapologetic abolitionist or was it something that you had to hone and kind of grow into as you kind of engaged with your work? Where did you find your voice and how did you hone this unapologetic element of your identity?

Hoda 45:50
Yeah, I think a lot of that definitely came from those early experiences from Oklahoma and just childhood as I mentioned, a lot of it is also definitely work by I think that it's important for us to remember that like progress or even being confident is not linear like that the progress of being able to be confident and unapologetic is not something that you only get better at. You have days where you're just like, oh my god, what am I doing? Why am I doing this? And there's a lot of vulnerability in that as well. So I think that it's not like a constant like step forward, step forward. But there is something that also fluctuates. And I think it fluctuates based on so many different factors. So I think that it's something that I'm always working on making sure that I am being principled in what I'm saying. And I think one thing that has been really helpful for me is just being able to be religious, I think, knowing that ultimately, this life is like temporary and we're all gonna die.

What's the point but I mean, genuinely though, if you think about it, we are literally all going to die like in this short amount of time. What on earth? Are we really going to say that all we did was like sell out in order to get a Nike deal? Or are you going to say that we're able to work on something that actually made things better? Hopefully for like your children and the people who come after you? So don't know. I think I, a lot of my ability, I think, be apologetic or confident comes from really not caring, and definitely rooted in like my understanding of my role in this world and all of our roles in this world, in a very spiritual and religious sense. And that I think, is really sprains and grounded me in times that I felt it falter, felt weak or felt like I'm questioning what am I doing? So I think that that definitely been the most grounding force in my life for sure. Yeah,

Saba 47:46
that's amazing. Because I think also, as I'm kind of learning more about my sense of spirituality and kind of China, I'm still like you said, it totally resonates with me the idea that it's like a lifelong pursuit. It's not like this linear path. It's it Sometimes Stephen circular where you go back and then you go forward again and kind of stumble along until you find your way I guess until death. You actually touched on this a bit, but I don't know if there's anything else that you couldn't really add to this question as well. But I was going to ask about how you do engage in like self care as community organizer, you kind of touched on the idea of like, What keeps you going and motivated to keep doing the work that you do, but how do you engage in self care and all this like rewarding but also very tumultuous and strenuous work?
Hoda 48:32
Yeah, this is a good question. I think that the author is something that I'm trying to figure out I haven't been consistent in this for sure. I don't have a full time job. I was I had a job full time for like one year and after I graduated college, and after that, I just been like freelancing, speaking engagements, doing writing for the projects that I'm working on, although nothing pays except for speaking engagements and that literally pays my bills. And all of my work. So, because that is so like luck, but also like being my own boss and like making sure that I'm like I'm very much hyper organized, everything that I do is amazing but also incredibly difficult because if you don't want to get out of bed you just don't get out of bed. And if you want to watch one more episode of Netflix, you watch three more episodes of Netflix you like every day, there's another thing that myself control just has to be like, okay, but it doesn't really make sense to drive three hours just to go to that one coffee shop because you like that latte or do you want to do some work right here right now. So it's like there's always something that I feel like is needs to really just like sit down and motivate yourself. For me Actually, aside from like, like what actually helps me get out of bed and like really do the work even when it's so hard and it feels like it's never ending as definitely the community and the people who are here both online and offline who like I I know that if I ever stopped working they will get very mad at me. Like the best way, and fight me in the best way. And so I know that for sure also, of course the women at gluten like I was like, so close at this point and there's nothing I will never ever let this project fail and just by virtue of those relationships and the relationships with people in the community and people online people like you, like, I know that like, I need to continue doing this and those relationships in the conversations that we have actually is what helps me get out of bed and like continue to work or like pulling all nighter for no reason. And yeah, I was actually just, I there's like this tweet that was going viral like a few weeks ago. It was like this woman who said that Oh, yeah, in my like, 20s and 30s. I worked like 60 hours a week, but it was all worth it because now I’m in my 40s and I can buy anything that I want. I just thought that was very interesting because I work about 18 hours a day, every single day. And 90% of my day is work like I'm just at Based just working on my computer or whatever, and I am sort of broke like I, I'm happy, like I'm okay with that, like, I'm not trying to like I'm not like doing this for like wealth accumulation for fame or anything but it's just literally because the work itself, I believe in it. And that's what allows me to just like sit at a computer for 23 hours and respond to emails or write something and, or things like that. I also do want to mention that I don't want to, like, glorify or romanticize I want to mention a name that like I need to work on. And my friends are constantly like asking like, what it When was the last time that you just like, did nothing? Yes, I don't want to like make it seem like this is like what people should pay for a capitalistic world you know, that, like productivity is seen as like the greatest virtue but there are other things that are also important that I'm lacking, like need to work on.

Saba 51:50
I wanted to touch on something else that I really, really admire about your work and I can go on for You often identify yourself as an abolitionist. I was wondering for listeners, if you could maybe explain what does it mean to be an abolitionist? What does that look like? And how your work has been driven by this kind of this philosophy or this framework?
Hoda 52:14
Yeah, great question. Abolition is a larger movement or understanding. I think, the ways in which systems work, that really the United States is rooted in the anti anti black sort of work to end slavery and abolish slavery and also just abolish anti blackness. So slavery, I think, is a really easy way to be thinking about abolition or the easy example. So abolition is basically when we understand that particular systems require and not just violence is not like a byproduct, but it's actually central to the way in which that, like institutions must run and there's a requirement for how the institution must run and that it can be reformed, but it needs to be done away with and in its place. I think. Deletion is always seen as something that's like, Oh, yeah, bring the sound and the sound like I'm all for it. Don't get me wrong. But abolition is just as much about the creation and imagination of what those alternatives could be, than it is about ending those violence is of the system. So slavery, for example, you can't reform slavery, like I think we are now come to that at a point. And many places, at least it was slavery is not an institution that can be reformed, but we just passed, we just cannot exist in society, we have to abolish slavery. So obviously, during the time in which enslavement was the main way in which the American economy functions, no one would be saying this so easily and like obviously, and so today, if we think about that, there's so many other systems that require violence and the same way that slavery does, but also rooted in anti blackness region anti muslim violence, which has been a phobia that we need to also be calling for an end for a while building what those alternatives that look like for example, policing and prison and the way that they exist right now because policing actually came out of slave catchers in the United States and their roots are in incredible violence and right now only works uphold a very white supremacist state in which the institutions are rooted in and built by white supremacists and poor white supremacist. And I think that we have to not be fooling ourselves when we think about having more representation in the system is a tech plus when in fact, we see getting rid of that system altogether. On the fashion side of things, this is definitely fast fashion and something that I'm very much trying to like get people to realize is that we can't reform fast fashion and there's no such thing as ethical or sustainable fast fashion, the ways in which fashion requires to be produced. The amount of clothing that is produced under fast fashion the rate of this is within the model of fast fashion production. And it needs to be done away with and there needs to be alternatives for the ways that our clothes are being produced. A gluten is actually my abolitionist response to the fast fashion movement and trying to imagine and create what could it look like when we create our clothes in a way that does not harm people or the world that we live in and is very responsible with all of the hands that go into something that is now touching and rubbing off on our skin?

Saba 55:11
Thank you so much for joining us in the studio today or call with us conversation. I actually want to before we end the conversation, I want to see if you could maybe share some of your social media handles and your writing platform. So where can our listeners find out more about what we discussed today?

Hoda 55:27
Yeah, definitely. I put a copy of the AKTVI on Instagram and Twitter. And then other projects gluten production on Instagram, because we have read on Instagram, Twitter. And then if you look that same name up, you can find my writing.

Saba  55:48
Amazing. Thank you so much for this incredible conversation.

Hoda  55:53
No, thank you. I appreciate it, man.

Saba  55:56
And I know you have to head out now but it was so lovely. to chat

Hoda  56:01
again for all of your viewers I

Saba  56:02
know thank you guys.

Thank you for tuning in to the west meeting room on ci ut 89.5 FM a special thank you to Sabrina Braden, Ari and Mika for the wonderful conversation and support and producing today's episode. And today milman for working alongside Brandon to give us this platform and create the space for us to tell stories. Thank you so much to hood Academy for taking the time to speak to stay and impart incredible wisdom about her work and ethical fashion and advocacy, or intro outro music was produced by Dan Driscoll we would love to hear from you. You can follow us on Instagram at Hart House stories and on Twitter at each age podcasting. You can find all of our episodes archived on SoundCloud. Thank you so much for listening in and see you next time.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai and Monse