[ Vehicles passing ]

-The idea behind

taking ownership

of what was just

a restaurant and a bar

was to create a space

where the neighborhood

can come together

and share with each other.

[ Door creaks ]

The actual word "hidmo,"

in Tigrinya,

the language spoken in Eritrea, where I'm from,

they are the traditional huts

that you would find in the countryside in the villages.

It literally means "home,"

like a home,

and we like to say here

that Hidmo means "home,"

and we like that Hidmo is a home for lots of different things

in the Central District.

[ Speaking Tigrinya ]

Thank you.

[ Bell rings ]

[ Indistinct conversation ]

Our doors are open

to any individual, organization,

or entity that exists whose goal it is to build community.

And just so you guys know, because it's an all-ages show

and the bar's not gonna be open,

I'm gonna do last call

like at 7:00,

which is in about 20 minutes, so...

Yeah.

-Whoo!

Yeah.

 Ah, yeah

 Ah, ah, yeah

 Ah, ah

[ Singing indistinctly ]

-[ Singing in foreign language ]

-Whoo!

-Hidmo is also a space where

the untold stories can be told.

Obviously, it's no secret

that the Central District

is being

heavily gentrified right now.

I mean, since 1983, this area has gone through drastic change,

and so we thought

it would be really good

for everyone to have the chance to participate

and have a voice

in what happens.

And we do it here through,

you know, art and music

and just allowing, you know,

a space to exist

that kind of honors

that history.

-How are you all

feeling tonight?

[ Cheers and applause ]

Damn straight.

That's more like it.

-[ Rapping ] And not even

tell me that I can't do it

 Yes, I'm a woman

 A black woman,

and I'm questioning everything

-It's a community center without being a community center.

I tell people, like, "This is really a community center

masquerading as a restaurant."

I know there's kids

that used to be scared

walking from

Washington Middle School

to their house at the Manor

just like three blocks away,

and when they found

that they could come into Hidmo,

they felt safe on that walk

all of a sudden.

-Prophetic revise,

division revise,

rewritten comprised,

sort of divides,

neatly surmised and categorized,

stole your prize with that demise was quite simply put

a token.

- Yes, I got a lot of tricks

up my sleeve

 It's so damn good

-Around our

first-year anniversary,

we had a community officer

come in and tell us

that some of the neighbors

were feeling

that our existence

on 20th and Jackson --

Hidmo's existence

on 20th and Jackson --

was creating a negative vibe, basically.

They called us

an "attractive nuisance."

[ Drums playing ]

So while we thought

we were brining in all this art

and all this music

and providing a space for youth and providing a space for women,

we found out that our neighbors

thought we were a huge nuisance.

-We're trying to do

positive things.

There's all-ages events here

in a time

when there's not many things

for kids to do after school.

We're trying to make this

a safe place in an unsafe world.

We want to create more of those,

and not just in Hidmo

but throughout Seattle.

-Where are you?

You're two minutes away?

Okay, everything better be tuned and ready to go

because you guys are supposed to be on like right now.

They were tuning the drums.

They're on their way here.

He said he's two minutes away.

Ugh, they're gonna give me

a heart attack!

Oh, my gosh!

I was born in a little country called Eritrea.

It's in northeast Africa,

north of Ethiopia,

and right on the coast

of the Red Sea.

When I was born,

it was a province of Ethiopia,

and there was a really, really bitter civil war happening,

which my dad

was a rebel fighter in.

Both my parents took

all at the time six of us kids

and left Eritrea.

We were refugees

in Khartoum, Sudan,

and after,

you know, 2 1/2 years,

there was no way

for us to get educated

and there was no way for us

to just live outside

and free as Christians in Sudan at the time.

And so, my dad gave up the idea

of waiting out the war

in Khartoum

and applied for asylum

in Germany and in the U.S.,

and our U.S. papers

came in first.

And so we ended up

coming to Seattle.

[ Guitar playing ]

We were settled in an apartment on MLK and McClellan

in August of 1983.

At the time,

there were seven kids,

two parents, and my little baby brother Tommy was on the way.

And he was actually born

in that two-bedroom apartment

on MLK and McClellan.

-[ Speaking Tigrinya ]

-Are you gonna talk in English to me?

[ Conversing in Tigrinya ]

Mm-hmm.

In a lot of families

that immigrate,

there's this huge

cultural divide

between the kids and the parents because the kids are growing up

as a different culture

than their parents are,

and so one of the things

that I started doing last year

is running the East African Club at Mercer Middle School.

I think it's important

for them to have

older East African women

in their lives.

-Even though I don't speak

in my mother's tongue,

let there be no confusion about where I come from.

You couldn't tell I'm Ethiopian, born in a foreign land,

Scottish and Irish dad, had more indigenous roots further back.

I barely knew them, though, who were mostly in my mom's family.

-Hidmo's not only the physical space on 20th and Jackson.

It exists to increase dialogue

and kind of broadens

the dialogue.

It allows more people to be involved in the dialogue.

-[ Singing indistinctly ]

 Had an accidental rhythm

 Yeah

-If you don't know

what to write, that's okay.

But just put the pen to the page and write anyways.

Even if you write,

"I don't know what to write."

I've started songs saying,

"I don't know where to begin."

That was the beginning

of one of my favorite songs

I've ever written, so...

-Sometimes,

you might not be a writer,

but when you read

other people's writings

and when you listen

to other songs,

you start thinking, like,

"Man, I got a story like that."

-This is yours.

I hope I do it justice.

She's very unhappy because

her hair is very nappy.

In case you don't feel the same, look at your face.

She was told she was awesome, but she lost some.

She didn't eat much food because she was from the hood.

She didn't go to school,

just stood on a stool.

She didn't have much money

and wasn't very funny.

[ Cheers and applause ]

-Mine's called "The Hidmo."

-Hey!

-[ Clears throat ]

Man, the food and the cakes

got a real good taste.

You could tell that I'm happy

by the look on my face.

All my friends eat there,

so the time is spent

in the kitchen,

where the cook is so confident.

She can make you a dish sophisticated,

it might take a minute,

so get some patience.

I might order me some tea

while I be waiting.

It's so awesome-tasting,

totally amazing,

and I ain't just trying

to get you to eat there.

You might not go,

but you will see me there.

[ Cheers and applause ]

[ Applause ]

-I see everybody's face.

I see everybody's face!

-Hidmo! What's up?

[ Cheers and applause ]

And so Ladies First

is a project of ours.

It's the grassroots expression of our mission,

which is to undermine rape

and violence in our community.

[ *Hip-hop music playing* ]

-Ladies First is a monthly all-women showcase

that shares the art and the music and the stories of women.

- I like to sing-a

 About the moon-a and

the June-a and the spring-a

 I like to sing-a

 I like to sing-a

 About the moon-a and

the June-a and the spring-a

 I like to sing-a

 I like to sing-a

 About the moon-a and

the June-a and the spring-a

 I like to sing-a

-I've never been to a place

in Seattle

that has been more,

like, just --

you just feel at home

when you come in.

- Dancing machine

with my right foot, left

-The crowds are always

so different,

and it's like all ages.

Like, this is a place

that I have been waiting for

for a long time.

Like, the mixture, and you're all people from all over town

that just are here

to just chill.

-It's the village.

It's the village.

-Exactly.

-[ Rapping ] What happened

to community?

 Hip-hop is not a fraternity

 I'm not an accessory

to your crime

 A riverbank to your flow

- The sound is polluted

 Have you forgotten the source of your own currents?

 Currently,

hip-hop is a monopoly

- They don't want us

to pass "go"

 Step up to be heard

 Step back to reflect

 We in the right direction,

but we ain't there yet

 So what comes next?

 First, look us in the eye

 Won't stop the music,

time to realize

 Step up to be heard

 Step back to reflect

 We in the right direction, but...

-We thought just our existence was a community-building thing,

so we didn't feel the need to,

like, say, "Hey, Hidmo --

we build community here."

But going through that experience with our neighbors,

we decided to organize

an open house.

Well, the open house

turned into, you know,

somebody just kind of

grabbed the mike

and started saying,

"Well," you know,

just pouring their heart out

about how important Hidmo was

to them, and then

another person got on the mike, and then another person,

and then somebody who'd never been at Hidmo was just like,

"I feel," you know,

"I feel the love."

And the neighbors were present,

and the assistant

city attorney was present,

and police officers

were present.

Here for dinner?

-I'm here to...

-Oh! You are...

Us going through that experience resulted in thinking about

what we could possibly do

about it,

but the gentrification

is obviously such a huge issue.

And so we came up with

something called

the Hidmo Community

Empowerment Project.

We're gonna

canvass the neighborhood

and find out what issues

the people are thinking about.

We're just gonna take on

a different topic

to talk about as neighbors

every month,

and so, say if, like,

safety is an issue,

what does safety mean

to each individual person?

And depending who the person is, where they're coming from,

where they live,

how long they've lived here,

what race they are,

what gender they are,

you know, that safety is gonna mean something very different,

and so trying to find out

if there is a way

that we can all kind of

live together

and get to know each other

and, you know,

build a sense of community

where it doesn't seem like

a strong sense of community existed anymore.

- My mother's homeless

 My brother's hopeless

 Never had a daddy, so I guess he don't matter much

-Most of the people

that come into the Hidmo

have come from marginalized

of the marginalized communities.

Our lives are not pretty.

Our histories are not pretty.

-We spoke of peace.

He pulled out his piece

and made everyone

get down on their knees.

-Those stories are here,

and you can't make that

look good, you know?

But what is good is that

if you really want a community,

then those voices

need to be heard,

and so if the neighbors

want a model

for things that are possible

in the city of Seattle,

they should truly

look to the Hidmo.

-[ Rapping indistinctly ]

-I always told her, like,

if we ever blow up

and make it really big, like,

we're gonna give Hidmo

the best that we got

because we owe Hidmo

basically our careers.

-Yeah, basically.

-Love Hidmo.

[ Both laugh ]

[ Gabriel Teodros and

Toni Hill's "Lovework" plays ]

- 'Sup, y'all?

 It's just the sunshine

after the storm

[ Woman vocalizing,

indistinct rapping ]

 We strive to get free

like my most style

 So fake, just a little bit

of know-how

 Music raised me,

the grace of my first child

 It's ageless,

y'all I want to ask God how

 She put me back together

and release what comes out

 My mouth 'cause it ain't me,

I thank she

 But these niggas came through

and they saved me

 Work is love,

and it forced out of face me

 And of course,

I've been lazy before

 But lately, been chasing

my heart through a war

 Until the day comes

that it don't hurt no more

 Either way, y'all,

I ain't never been poor

 Even though

I never had no money to show

 I've come to know

that this flow is priceless

 No money can buy it,

and no rapper can bite it

 We spit good medicine,

it shows that you aspired

- Loveworks

 Live life