

**NINA MOINI:** For the past few weeks, a group of young people in Duluth have been learning to write and perform music. It sounds like this

(RAPPING) Music means a lot to me

It helped me understand

All the feelings deep inside can be hard to comprehend

It inspires me

I'm grateful, becoming who I be

Spreading love to everyone

Yeah, not jealousy

Yeah, at MRC, I see the best of me

**NINA MOINI:** Those are the voices that make up That's a Rap!, a program by the Music Resource Center and the Kako Foundation. They'll have their final performance for this round tonight. Their instructor, Terrell Grier is on the line to talk about it. Thanks for being here, Terrell.

**TERRELL** Well, thank you for having me on today.

**GRIER:**

**NINA MOINI:** So happy to have both of you. We've also got Rudy Perrault, President of the Kako Foundation. Thank you as well for being with us, Rudy.

**RUDY** Thank you for having us.

**PERRAULT:**

**NINA MOINI:** It's so fun for us to end our week here with the both of you, hearing children's voices and people learning about themselves and learning about music. I'm just so appreciative of both of you and your time. Rudy, I understand you started the Kako Foundation to provide music education, though not just in Duluth, but also Haiti. Can you tell us a little bit about it and just what that work looks like in both places?

**RUDY** Yeah, in just very succinct, it was born out of a tragedy. My cousin's son was killed. Well, first, he was kidnapped  
**PERRAULT:** and then killed. And as a result, the family decided to start a foundation, a music foundation in his name because he was a trumpet player. So hence was born the Kako Foundation, exactly 18-- well, not-- 18 years ago is when he was murdered, when we found him on the streets. So in 2008, in November, we decided to start the foundation in his name.

**NINA MOINI:** I'm so sorry for your loss. And thank you for sharing that and for building something beautiful out of your experiences. Terrell, what is your mission with That's a Rap!?

**TERRELL GRIER:** My mission with That's a Rap! is to show the youth that they do have a voice, that they can overcome any obstacles that they may face, because a lot of our youth are dealing with trauma, anxiety, and depression across the board. So me, using my 43 years of lived experience and 30 years of music experience, I bring a certain background that allows the youth to see better than be told that change can happen. Me being the change and the inspiration inspires the youth of tomorrow to eventually want to take that same path themselves.

**NINA MOINI:** And I know-- so this round of the program has been going on since early April, I'm seeing here, Terrell. Can you walk me through what you and the students do to get to the point that we heard off the top of the segment there, hearing those beautiful sounds and words? How do they get there? Can you talk about the process?

**TERRELL GRIER:** Yes, of course. Initially, we have questions to get the youth brains going as far as we may ask them, what does family mean to you? What does friendship mean to you? What does happiness look to you? Have you dealt with any issues in the present that you want to speak about?

And they all come up with the decision collectively to pick the topic to write about. From that point, the youth, they work on the hook. They work on the verse. And they work on bridging. And they all have a part in the song themselves by creating 6 to 10 lines, or bars.

And we put them all together as one collective song. So they learned how to inspire themselves individually and also as a group, as well, by taking the time to get whatever is on their mind onto paper and out to the world.

**NINA MOINI:** Amazing. And Rudy, in addition to your work, you're also the orchestra director at the University of Minnesota Duluth. What do you notice about people and what it does for them to have experiences with music at a young age? I know you're seeing college students, as well. How do you think it impacts young people?

**RUDY PERRAULT:** I think the earlier we can start to have music in people's lives, the benefits of that-- not only we teach them leadership, we teach them also resilience. Actually, that's not a word that I very much. But still, I'll use it because it does show that, even through adversity, you are able to rise above that and still make something of yourself. This is something that we've done in Haiti after the earthquake, after the tragedy there for Kako. And we can see the impact of how the students are really thriving because they have had music in their lives.

**NINA MOINI:** Yeah, I know "resilience" can be a tough word. I know. But I mean, Terrell, what are some of the lessons that you think are most important to share with students? Resilience is maybe part of it. What do you think you're wanting them to really take away?

**TERRELL GRIER:** I want the youth to take away that their voice does matter, because a lot of youth, they want to be heard but are not heard, for whatever particular reasons. So I want the youth to that their voice is important. Their voice does matter. And they are important themselves, just building the self-confidence and courage to want to take on any challenges that life may throw their way.

**NINA MOINI:** And what do you think, Rudy? I mean, what do you like to see in students? Do they have a ever a growth in confidence, or do you ever see a student in the beginning who's very shy, and then they come out of their shell? What is that like?

**RUDY  
PERRAULT:** Oh, absolutely. And we live for those moments when, finally, they come out of their shells. At the beginning, they may just not want to say very much or be very quiet. But then, with the help of the teachers-- Terrell has been really great at getting those students out their out of their little cocoons, and then you see them really thrive and blossom.

And it's truly wonderful to have that sort of a program to help this. They have so much trauma. Some of them have so much trauma in their lives. And to have that as an output, as a way to really deal with their trauma and show that they're not just about the trauma, but also, they have creativity, and they have something to say. And they want to be seen. And through the music, through the performances, they are seen.

**NINA MOINI:** How beautiful to be channeling energy in that way. Terrell, would you tell us about what's going to be happening at tonight's concert?

**TERRELL  
GRIER:** Well, tonight is going to be an amazing event. You will get a chance to see the youth go on stage and perform in front of their families, the community, and their peers. And they will be performing their own original song that they created from the beginning to the end. It will be monumental to bring the community together and start the new generation of storytellers, entrepreneurs, and inspiring young people.

**NINA MOINI:** And so it's happening. 5:30 to 8:30 at the Sacred Heart Music Center, I'm seeing here. Terrell, where can people find information?

**TERRELL  
GRIER:** Well, you guys can always go online, and you guys can go to [dulutharmory.org](http://dulutharmory.org) to find any information about tonight's performance or any future performances. As well as if anyone would like to donate or provide any assistance to the Music Resource Center, you can go on to [dulutharmory.org](http://dulutharmory.org) as well to create that.

**NINA MOINI:** All right, thank you both so much for your time. I really appreciate it. Have a great time.

**RUDY  
PERRAULT:** Thank you very much.

**TERRELL  
GRIER:** You as well.

**NINA MOINI:** Thank you. Terrell Grier is artist in residence and instructor with That's a Rap!, a music education program by Duluth's Music Resource Center, and Rudy Perrault is president of the Kako Foundation.