

Danspace Project

Conversations Without Walls:

devynn emmory & Angie Pittman

This Conversation Without Walls (CWW) was recorded on February 16, 2021 and first broadcasted on YouTube Live on Friday, February 26, 2021.

Judy Hussie-Taylor

Welcome to Danspace Project and Conversations Without Walls. I'm Judy Hussie-Taylor, Executive Director & Chief Curator. I'm a white woman of Irish descent with long, sandy hair, black glasses, hoop earrings, and a red scarf. Today, I pay respect to the Lenape people, acknowledging that I am currently situated on the land of the Canarsie people in Lenapehoking. We pay respect to the Lenape land, water and ancestors past, present, and future. I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge that Danspace's venue, St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery in the East Village in New York City, was completed in 1799. That same year, New York State enacted the Gradual Emancipation Act. So, as Ishmael Houston-Jones has written, "It is reasonable to assume that the building where we are when we stand, sit, dance, and some still worship was built by en-slaved individuals on what was the homeland of the Lenape people." I am joined today behind the scenes by Danspace's digital wizard, Yolanda Royster. And I'm joined today and honored to welcome two remarkable human beings and artists who have been actively involved with Danspace over the last several years: devynn emory and Angie Pittman. Angie has performed many, many times at Danspace, including in her own work as a part of "Dancing Platform Praying Grounds" curated by Reggie Wilson in 2018, and "Came Up in a Lonely Castle," also in 2018. devynn emory was to premiere their new work "deadbird" at Danspace last spring, before the shutdown. Fortunately, devynn will premiere a film version of "deadbird" as a part of Danspace's virtual season on March 31st, almost exactly a year from the original premiere, which is amazing. Both Angie and devynn have been part of our Artists Research Fellows cohort. And I am personally grateful for them to continuing--for their continuing engagement with and inspiring, well me personally, but also our collaborative work, especially around land and site acknowledgments. So, I'm going to hand this off to you both with much love and much gratitude.

[Music: "Spirit" by Beyoncé plays. The song begins with a chant in Swahili "Uishi kwa muda mrefu mfalme (Uishi kwa uishi kwa) Uishi kwa muda mrefu mfalme (Uishi kwa, uishi kwa)." Beyoncé then begins to sing. The rhythm picks up and becomes more pronounced. The song is uplifting and impassioned. She is accompanied by a chorus, which echoes the lyrics she sings. "Yeah, yeah, and the wind is talkin' Yeah, yeah, for the very first time With a melody that pulls you towards it Paintin' pictures of paradise Sayin' rise up To the light in the sky, yeah Watch the light lift your heart up Burn your flame through the night, woah Spirit, watch the heavens open (Open) Yeah Spirit, can you hear it callin'? (Callin') Yeah Yeah, yeah, and the water's crashin' Trying to keep your head up high." The song fades out.]

devynn emory

Thanks, Yolanda. Ugh, Angie I love playing this song with you.

Angie Pittman

It's really every--like everything.

devynn emory

It's all the things. It does all the things, every single time. I feel like it came into the room with us when we were in our rehearsal process together. And what I love about it, its memory in my body, is that it was always played without the need of an outcome. It was like to get our bodies warm, to bring some joy into the space, to be with spirit, before we begin.

Angie Pittman

Mhm

devynn emory

I feel like it's, you know, I did like a little dance and recorded myself with it and sent it to you during this change of presidency as a way to just kind of bring in some spirit, and it's found its way into our conversations and our continued work together.

Angie Pittman

Yeah.

devynn emory

And for me, you know, talking about some of these topics, grief and rage in Black and Indigenous communities, it's a good reminder for me to bring in spirit and bring in some joy all the time.

Angie Pittman

Yeah. And it's--the song does the valley into the peak so beautifully.

devynn emory

Mm

Angie Pittman

Like, to the small to the big and the crescendo and the--Yeah, it's nice to be guided through that sometimes. Because, yeah, it gets really like low vibrational, like warm up, or like living and being, which is a great, important way to be. But it's nice to be guided by such a--such a song, by a person that's so--I mean, just like not--not of this world. Beyoncé--

devynn emory

Yes, yes, yep.

Angie Pittman

But we don't have to talk about--

devynn emory

I know. That's a whole podcast.

Angie Pittman

That's a different conversation--

devynn emory

So I'd love to--I'd love to begin some of the work here by landing in this question that we came up with together, based on some dialogue around spaces that we have felt really held in our bodies and respected in our bodies--historically. We came up with this question: "Where you coming from?"

Angie Pittman

Yeah.

devynn emory

So, where you coming from, Angie?

Angie Pittman

I know! I do know where I'm coming from. And that's nice. I come from my mom and my dad. My mom's name is Joyce Pittman. She does not have a middle name. Her mother did not give her a middle name, which is really cool. J.P. Yeah, her birthday--we decided her birthday is March 13th this year. Her mother--all of her life, her mother--and I will talk about my maternal grandmother a lot now and later in our conversation. My maternal grandmother's name is Vinnie Lee Henderson. And, yeah, me and my maternal grandmother never had a conversation. When I--by the time I was of age to realize I was in the world, my maternal grandmother was bedridden, and she was--in her bed all the time. And she was nonverbal at this point, because she had strokes, because of what I'm perceiving to be institutional stress of being a Black femme at that time. Uh, where was I going? Ah! So, my mother's birthday is coming up. March 16, is the birth--is the day that my mom said that her mom told her was her birthday her whole life. And at some point, my mom needed to get a new birth certificate and on the birth certificate it was March, 13th, 1957. And she was like, huh, that's interesting. And so it was just like this--this knowledge that she was told by her mother, that her birthday was March 16th. So we were like, oh, your birthday is March 16th. And like, well into her adult years, governing bodies told her that her birthday was March 13th. Confusing, but she made the choice this year that she's going to celebrate it on March 13th. So like choice making inside of that. So, I'm coming from Joyce Pittman and Vinnie Lee Henderson . On my dad's side, he--my dad's name is Lawrence David Pittman. My paternal grandmother is also really important to me. Her name is Carmencita Rosalita Pittman. She lived in the Bronx. She's from Jamaica originally. She was a cleaner like, not like a cleaner as her job, but she just like cleaned things a lot. Like she would come--I remember growing up, she would like come to my-our home and she would like do laundry. Clean, like everything was like spick and span after she left. So like that sort of energy of tidiness and cleansing, I try--I attribute that to my paternal grandmother, Carmen. I'm also an Auntie, speaking of Carmen. One of my niece's names is Carmen, after my paternal grandmother, of course, but I feel like that's where I'm coming from. Like, Auntie life is real important to me. And I always admire my Aunties being incredible, like, monumental, Black femmes,

examples-- examples of Black femmes for me, and I'm just like, wow, they're so cool. So I feel like my whole life I'm like, I didn't really think about like motherhood really that much. But I'm like, oh, like Auntiehood, like, that's my--that's my thing. That like power to like, be a person for a younger generation, but not actually having that--wanting to have that that particular experience of having a child from your, from your body as of right now. So Auntie life is really important to me. So I'm coming from also my nieces Carmen and Harmony. Carmen Angela Pittman and Harmony Joy Pittman. They're identical twins, which is great. devynn, where are you coming from?

devynn emory

Well, first, I just want to say thanks for sharing all that. And I feel lucky that I got to meet those two little twins before everything shut down. Talk about joy.

Angie Pittman

That day!

devynn emory

That day. That day before we knew what was to come. I actually, you know, we talked about this question, "Where are you coming from?" And I wrote a little something because I'm like, oh, you know, I feel like this conversation can go in so many ways, and I just want to make sure that I cover some things that are really important for me to say, including, you know, where--part of where I'm coming from is an assimilated place as an Indigenous person, which is a really common Indigenous story. So I'm coming from some of the, the harm of that. And, you know, I know we're--we've come together, you and I, to talk about, like I said, like Black rage and Indigenous grief and how they overlap and where they don't overlap. And the combination of repair that can be done in these two communities, but including, like, how to work within institutions to bring some of our knowledge and bring some of our truth to the institutions. And before that, I think it's important to bring some of the truth to where I'm coming from, which is an assimilated Indigenous person, because it was very harmful or scary to be my father, an Indigenous person, in this life. And so, my-- I'm going to read something. So I'll say first thing, thank goodness, due to a complicated upbringing, I have had a lot of people raise me and bring me into radicality, so then I can break this assimilation cycle. So, and as I continue to practice relearning some of my culture that was taken from me as well as my language, I will say Shiki hèch wanishi, ntèluwènsi devynn emory. And that's to say, "Hello, how are you? I'm coming from this place. Thank you for having me." And it's a way to kind of begin an introduction and honor the language. So my paternal side I come from the Lenape Delaware people, who come from the Lenape diaspora which includes the Delaware Nation and Delaware Tribe of Indians in Oklahoma; the Stockbridge-Munsee Community in Wisconsin; the Munsee-Delaware nation, Moravian of the Thames First Nation, and Delaware of Six Nations in Ontario. Lenapehoking however is our original Lenape land and spans from Western Connecticut to Eastern PA, the Hudson Valley to Delaware with Manahatta at its center, and due to a lot of assimilation in my family, as well as adoption and hiding and war, luckily, my family was able to remain here. We're from Delaware, then moved to Pennsylvania, and then New York, so kind of following the trajectory of my people. And also on the paternal side, I come from bison hunters and trout fishermen of Siksika, which is the "Blackfoot" Confederacy. Then it spanned the northern Great Plains of western North America and now have three First Nation band governments as well as a federally recognized tribe called the Blackfeet Nation, which is today known as Montana. And so that's a little bit

about where I'm coming from on my--on my paternal side. On my mother's side, I come from settlers and English people. And you brought up grandma, so I will say I really come from--a woman who really influenced a lot of my life, who I learned so much from and who was a big guide and parenting figure in my life. My Nana, Shirley Trostle, who recently passed due to COVID, and I lost another grandma Mary Kroliki, who also died of COVID in this time, on my father's side. So I come from those two incredible women. Yeah.

Angie Pittman

Thank you for sharing that. I also call my--called my grandmother Nana.

devynn emory

Oh, really?

Angie Pittman

Yeah. She was like I'm not with that grandma shit, like call me Nana. That was like, more cool to her, which I agree. Well, I really appreciate hearing those words from you. And yeah, just thank you for sharing that. And that made me just think about, yeah, land, acknowledgement of land and lineage. And what I felt like I was missing when I--when I--or when I talk about where I--where I come from, I I feel like I can really go into like, oh yeah, my mother, Joyce. My grandmother, Carmen, like people and--but the when what when words fail me is when I talk about like, actual space and land and like, voyages around--Yeah. Where? Yeah, where? Like, where? Um, which feels--Yeah, I mean, just personally, that feels like a lot of things. I'm like, yeah, where where am I? Like, sometimes I think about, yeah, ascribing to like the Sun Ra, like I'm from--we're from the cosmos. That feels really liberating. And being like, yeah, I'm not from here. But also, like, on the other side of that, it's like, okay, there is power in the specificity and importance in that specificity. So I really, yeah, I just appreciate this conversation.

devynn emory

Yeah, thanks for saying that. I think, yeah, me too. And I think we talked about this--I was in a room with two Indigenous Aunties, speaking of Aunties, who began with this question, "Where are you from?" And it was a room of a wide range of humans. And, you know, when an Indigenous person introduces themselves, it's, it's, it's known to name people like, like you did, and also spaces, and including actions that, that one--or I guess we would today called the professions, but like work in the world, like hunting and fishing, and that for me, always feels like oh, I come from that. So I can understand how I trace it into my work in the world today and also in respect and honor of, of that lineage. Because as someone who's, you know, I mentioned having kind of a complicated upbringing, but when you look back it's really great to, to not feel like you have to reinvent the wheel to say to say like, oh, today I'm a healer. Oh, that person was a healer back in my lineage and like, oh today, my folks--there's a lot of fishing in my my family. And like what what remains? What remains and what is let go of? And then you can think from there like, what do you want to hold on to what's important to hold on to and keep carrying forward?

Angie Pittman

Wow, yeah. That--yeah, I think I think it's the reason why I shy away from place is just because it feels like it's like another--What do I want to say? A narrative that is true, that holds rage, and grief, and and

yeah, harm. So yeah, when I think about, like, how my people got here to where they were, you know. If I were like, even just tracing back one generation, like, my mother grew up in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, which is nicknamed "the atomic city," which is like one of the places that they built one of the atomic bombs, you know. There's like, so much radiation and like, detritus--standing there, and I and I'm just like, thinking like, even like, one--I like, yeah, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, you know, that's a site. And like, the way I'm talking about these, like peaks and valleys in the, in the Beyoncé song where I'm like, oh, that I just feel mostly valley when I when I think about that. Like all of my mom and and my aunties were, like, left when they were like, 16 because they were just like, we got to get out of this place. So yeah, it's that sort of--the fleeing, the fugitivity in terms of, of like, where, where my people are, you know, where my mom where I'm coming from, is that feels wrapped into this conversation of acknowledging land and where you're coming from. And I have to acknowledge that where I come from, is, (pause) is hm so many words just popped, popped into my head, but I have to acknowledge where I'm coming from is laden with choice making around harm.

devynn emory

Mm hmm. Yeah, that makes sense. And I think something that I think Northern America keeps pushing forward to is this kind of narrative of the history of this country, which is something you and I talk about, which is, you know, the, the stealing of Indigenous land, and then the enslavement of Black folk. And so that is like, where we begin the conversation. And I think that out of that, sometimes land acknowledgement and acknowledgement of grief and rage is born out of which is a place to begin conversation and also begin repair and healing. However, I have to say that I feel like I don't, I don't consent to that being the beginning of our story. Because when you begin there, really we're beginning with like settlers arrived, and then these things happened. Like, what about all the culture of our people before we got to that moment, which I think is where some of the joy comes from. And I think you know, where you and I kind of connect sometimes. I don't want to erase that part. And the land acknowledgement, you know, which has become popularized only in the United States not that long ago, has become a place for almost like stagnant, stuck, performance. And often, it's been used for institutions to kind of like introduce the evening or like, introduce what's about to happen next. And I, I want to, I think that is a it's always great to acknowledge that we didn't always have that and that is a growth. And I want to also invite us and others into what do we want it to be? Because for me, I want it to feel vibrational, I want it to feel multi-layered. It's it's not just about naming the harm. It's about including the resiliency and the support of living Indigenous people and thriving Black people and what do our communities need now to continue that thriving? And to me, that is part of acknowledging. It's not like a check, check it off, like let's just name the harm that's done so so we keep moving forward. The repair part is also how are we being with Indigenous and Black folks today? And what are we working on? What do we want it to look like? And where do we come from? Acknowledging whoever's speaking to it, where they come from. Like it is a practice to, even as an Indigenous person of course, to understand where I come from as an act of resistance to being erased. And I think anyone who's speaking in an acknowledgement of where they are standing, also acknowledging where they are from is a huge way for community to be--community to be built. So we can all kind of be in the room with each other and understand that as a base. And an Indigenous Auntie said to me, yeah Indigenous people come into a room and they say where they're from, and listen to where other people are from so they can decide, are they safe or not? Are they safe to continue a conversation? And, and who do they want to be in communication with and that is a choice I think we all get to have, especially since there's

been so much harm done. And then choose to be like, there's been harm done, but who do I really feel like I want to repair with? Who would I want to build with? Where do I want to move towards joy as an action?

Angie Pittman

Yeah. Yeah, it's deep when you when you are going way, way back. And then also like, going way forward, which isn't just about the now. Yeah, and I guess that like, yeah, thanks for saying that.

devynn emory

Yeah. And, you know, you're talking about being an Auntie and I'm like, right, because we are building what folks are gonna be like, oh, what did devynn and Angie do in their lifetime? Like, I want to be known as bringing some joy to this moment, and as well as the naming the harm. And I don't mean, of course, in a "Live, laugh, love way." I mean, in a how can we--Yeah, in a real way. How do we thrive today?

Angie Pittman

Yeah.

devynn emory

Um, and you and I, we, we talked a lot about grief and rage, as we built a land acknowledgement for Kin & Care, Platform at Danspace here. And we continue to talk about expanding that, which is really exciting to me. Do you want to touch in on what we did?

Angie Pittman

Yeah, I would love to, I feel like--yeah, this is what we're talking about. I mean, Judy just gave that beautiful intro of like, okay, we're at Danspace Project and we're not at Danspace Project. And we're in relationship and in conversation with Danspace Project. So I feel like that site has really grounded some of these conversations to really flourish from our individual experience in relationship to this site. So I think we--you and me, both have individual work that we're doing, that we just sort of like spoke to, and personal and like choreographic. And though, those have intersected in many different ways, like, you know, me being able to dance in some of your work, and like being in conversation with that, and us just being in conversation through the Kin & Care Research Group at Danspace Project, and also this research, being a Research Fellow this past season. And yes, so it's individual, and then us together and then like us and Danspace Project. Like it feels important to name these like, layers, because for some reason that makes--organizes my brain a little bit more. So it, it's like why, and then, and then I can go back to the specificity. So this yeah, so this land acknowledgement and the acknowledgement of enslaved people of St. Mark's Church felt really important to do in terms of being two people living inside of our experiences being an Indigenous person and a Black person living inside of this experience taught--being in conversation with each other, and how do we acknowledge the specific site that we stood on then? Yeah, and I so I would love, yeah, I would love to share that acknowledgement that I did. And it's changing and morphing. So I would love to acknowledge the people enslaved by the--I want to--I actually want to read it a little bit if that's okay.

devynn emory

That sounds great to me. Yeah.

Angie Pittman

Cool. Yeah, because this, this feels like a heavy part of this conversation. Yeah, okay, so I wrote: "In my experience of the Black Pentecostal tradition," I come from a church background. "I think mostly about spirit and blood. Spirit being hard to see with your eyes and blood being the most visceral evidence of sacrifice and struggle. There is power in speaking a name out loud. It is affirmation of seeing the presence of the work of that person, not with your eyes but with your whole body, and calling them to the present here and now. So in that spirit, I would like to read and acknowledge the names of people who were enslaved by members of the congregations of Stuyvesant Chapel and St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery. People enslaved by the Dutch West Indies Corporation: A. Francisco, Gasinte, R. Antonio, Diego or Jacob, John, Barbara, Christopher, Bastiaen and Lucia, Fernando and Balthazar, Maria, Juliana and Maria and the children, John, Madelina, Catelina and her children. Enslaved people who sought escape: Spier, Primus, Scipio, Syphax. Enslaved people who were released from slavery: William and Hagar Daley, Joseph Johnson, Jane or Jenny, Bella Williams, Caroline and her son Moses, Adam Johnson, John Cherry, Susanna, Caesar, Anthony, Bill or William. Children and their mother's registered for gradual emancipation: Mercy and her unnamed daughter, Hagar and her daughter Nancy, Cate and daughter Nany, Jane and son Henry, Dine and son Samuel, Cate and son Sal, Dine and son James, Pompey and Margarett James and their daughters Eleanor and Brunette. Enslaved people whose names we do not know yet: The 4,398 imported enslaved people into New York between the years 1715 and 1764. The 40 people enslaved by Peter Stuyvesant, the 290 enslaved people on the Gideon." So this memorial plaque actually is outside of the church on a thing that actually you could probably see from outside. And there is a plaque on the inside, which is not open currently. But in that spirit, I would love to pour a libation. And I invite you, devynn, to join me and for people who are watching. So if you could just grab water or water beside you. Thank you. I would like to pour a libation in the name of Eshu. And this also was a practice that I was blessed to be in conversation with Orlando Hunter from Brotherhood Dance. And they beautifully offered this ritual after the reading the acknowledgement of these enslaved people and I--today I'm continuing that--tradition in that spirit and also summarizing and adapting it for my own spiritual practice. So I invite you to bring some water and just pour some in your hands just a little bit. And I invite you to rub it between the palms of your hands to warm it up a little bit, and just bring it to your forehead.

devynn emory

Mm hmm.

Angie Pittman

The space in your third eye, that space where there's intuition. And just thinking about this water as a little bit of a cleansing, outside of that acknowledgement. Water as a way to like bring us out. Cleansing the forethought. Cleansing that intuition, so that we can make choices about where our bodies are right now. Cleansing, not as forgetting, but making more space for more choices. I invite us to get some more water. Do the same rubbing to warm it a little bit. Bringing that cleansing to your heart. You can do through clothes, if that feels good, or if you want skin to skin contact, that also is important. We're just going to bring this cleansing element, this water to our heart. Really thinking about it as like a love center. We can make so many choices about love and joy from our heart. So just bringing that

cleansing energy there. And lastly, we're just gonna pour some water in our hands. And we're just gonna bring that water element and just rub it on our hands. Sometimes I think about--I forget to think about my hand. I think about them as like a vehicle to like touch or--But really thinking about our hands as a space that we hold, hold ourselves, hold other people, hold information. And I'm just going to bring this cleansing energy so that we can wash what was once there, so that we could possibly hold more, or make choices about what we hold. Yeah.

devynn emory

Thank you. Thank you for that sharing.

Angie Pittman

Yeah.

devynn emory

Um, while we're here, I'd like to offer a little cedar. I'm just gonna--This is some cedar from Prospect Park, near where I live. This was foraged by myself and my indigi-kin Joseph Pierce. I'll just offer it to us as a way to kind of neutralize the space and clear out clear out some of that, knowing that we are both with it. It is with us and clear the space for what else.

Angie Pittman

Mm hmm.

devynn emory

Thank you.

Angie Pittman

Thank you.

devynn emory

Yeah, that acknowledgement together was really powerful. And I really believe that a lot of work we have to do is in the repair of the Black community with Indigenous community. Within that, just like any community, there's anti-Blackness in Indigenous culture. And again, this moment of settler colonialism where the land was stolen, Black people were enslaved, I feel like we were kind of poised against each other. And I think in a real balm for me is to kind of come together and say, you know, that was that was years, but we don't take that that action on we can kind of reclaim and repair it. In that work we did you know, we asked people to join us in some of the questions we had in acknowledging and it kind of brings us back to the beginning of a conversation asking people who is your family? How do you honor the land you're on now? How would you like to honor the land you're on now?

Angie Pittman

Yeah.

devynn emory

What is your relationship to honoring enslaved Black folk? What is your relationship to Indigenous people in your life, if you have any? And speaking of Indigenous people in our lives now, of course, I need to say we talk about Indigeneity as something of the past, as something that has been historic and removed. And there's a lot of us here today and thriving. And I want to mention that. Also harm done is not a thing of the past. Very recently, we had a harm, very public, thank goodness, so we can all engage it. Indigenous artist, Emily Johnson, was also doing some land acknowledging or asking for land acknowledgement to be part of an artistic process in an institution, which is needed and is a part of Indigeneity. It just is. And so unfortunately, the response was harmful and violent, and is another example of just contemporary erasure of an Indigenous need. And I bring it up only to really make the point that land acknowledgments have to hold how we're supporting Indigenous people today as an action.

Angie Pittman

Yeah. Yeah, thank you for bringing that up. I mean, Alice Sheppard's question, who was also a member of the Research Group that we were a part of last season, Alice's question of where do we begin? Like, it just keeps on ringing out in my brain because it feels like this conversation is, is one way to begin, you know. There's a before, there's a present, then there's an after. And spending time with like, the before feels like important before we even begin, begin to lead, you know, or to dialogue with institutions and like, yeah. Yeah, like, "Where are you coming from?" That that Yeah. I just had so many thoughts, but that's what I-

devynn emory

Yeah, yeah. And where and where you're coming from? First of all, I like love hearing where you're coming from and I think it's a great question that I just heard it almost as like, it could be heard as a defense, like, Well where are you coming from? But what an opportunity to sit with oneself and to then meet another. It's like, what a pleasure to hear where you're coming from. And I learned so much. You know, I feel like we know each other quite well. And, and there's always more to learn. And I'm honored and humbled to learn more about your family and part of your people.

Angie Pittman

Yes, I -- What you heard with that, like, "Where are you coming from?" That was like the blank was [indecipherable] -- Montclair State, like, where you coming from? I mean, we can redact that from the record. But I'm not, I'm not--Um, but that that's, that was where that anger was, like, if yeah, if it's like, sort of like people who have power and, or like, who are giving artists opportunities like it, you know, I'm just, yeah, where are you coming from Jedediah was the end of that question.

devynn emory

I mean listen, you're welcome to be angry. There's anger--

Angie Pittman

There can be anger and, yeah, all that.

devynn emory

And I think what you're, what you're pointing to is "Where are you coming from?" is like, what are you working on? Like, if you're going to be a part of the conversation, what are you offering? What do you-- Where have you come from? Where are you now? What would you like to bring? Yeah, which is important for all of us.

Angie Pittman

Can we--I think our time is almost there, but can we end in a joy, joy share?

devynn emory

Yeah, let's do another joy share. This has been another song that you and I kind of come together around, that—woof—really gets me every time also.

Angie Pittman

Yeah, should we--I want to share a story about my grandmother.

devynn emory

Oh, yeah.

Angie Pittman

Like a grandma joy.

devynn emory

Let's do it.

Angie Pittman

Anyway, I was just thinking about my grandmother, Carrie, who's a chosen grandmother. And I just was thinking about this moment with her of like, I was too big to be on her lap, but I loved being on her lap. I was always a like a tall, big kid. Whatever, big is relative. I was healthy. And I always like looked--The reason why I loved getting into her lap, so I would like fake and be like (whimpers). Like act like I'm like hurt, or like sad, or like whatever because I just wanted to be able to crawl into her lap. And I'm just--the image is coming up that feels so joyful to me is like seeing the cross. She wore this like gold cross and like seeing the pores on her chest, and being so close to them that that that's all I saw, you know, like the scale felt so vast that all I saw was like her chest, her bare skin, and her cross and I would like play with her cross and like make little worlds with this cross on her, on her like, on her skin. So that feels like joy, joy to me, and I think I wanted to end on that note.

devynn emory

Yeah, ugh. I love imagining that little cross in the crevices and folds of her porous skin. I'll leave my--a saying from my Nana, who is my favorite person on this--she's in another realm. I will say my favorite thing that she's ever shared with me is "Don't you let anybody let you down."

Angie Pittman

Work.

devynn emory

Yeah, Nana knows the truth. Sip on that. Angie, don't you let anybody let you down over there.

Angie Pittman

You know what? Thank you Nana, that's great. I needed that.

devynn emory

That's out. Let's let's get to some outro music.

Angie Pittman

Oh yeah. Joyful song.

[Music: "Joyful Joyful" plays from a scene in "Sister Act II." The joyous hymn begins with a few simple piano notes. Lauryn Hill then begins to sing with soulful lilts and runs: Joyful, Joyful Lord, we adore Thee God of glory Lord of love] We just have to list till the beat drops and then-- [Chattering from the scene can be heard over Lauryn Hill's singing—Melt the clouds of sin and sadness Drive the dark of doubt away Giver of immortal gladness Fill us with the light Fill us with the light Oh, fill us with the light of day.] [The beat drops and the full choir joins in jubilant song: Joyful, Joyful Lord, we adore Thee God of glory Lord of love Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee Hail Thee as the sun above Melt the clouds of sin, sin and sadness Drive the dark of doubt away Drive it away Giver of immortal gladness Fill us Fill us with the light of day Light of day!]

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[CWW Outro]

Seta Morton

Thank you for joining us for this Conversation Without Walls. The Conversations Without Walls 2020 digital series will be broadcasted on YouTube Live for one time only viewing parties. Don't worry if you don't catch us there, the conversations are all pre-recorded and will be posted ultimately on the Danspace Project website in our online Journal in Issue eleven: trembling archive. Our Journal issues accumulate over time with new material added regularly. Apart from this series, you will find video audio and written work by Danspace Project artists, curators, and writers. Please also check out issues one through ten to find work that centers the Danspace Project past Platforms, seasons, experiments. The online Journal is really a place to get more insight into some of the internal conversations, research, and work that goes behind our more mainstage public facing programs. So check out the online Journal, and we look forward to having you at the next Conversation Without Walls.