



UArts   
SCHOOL  
OF DANCE

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Title

Arabia Richardson

Esther Siddiquie, Thinking Partner

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Fine Arts, Dance 2022

The University of the Arts



Si tu ne

sais pas où

aller, regarde

d'où tu viens: If you don't

know where to go, look to

where you've come from - Germaine

Acogny

April 6, 2022

Dear Family,

As most of you may know, I am completing my Masters Degree at The University of the Arts. I will graduate this summer in France. As my final assignment for Graduate school I have to complete a Thesis we call these, "Research as Actions" and for my Research as Action I will be making a short documentary featuring you and some other members of the Oliver Family.

I am looking for people willing to share their stories/experiences of, with and about the family, growing in Dayton, and any connection(s) you have with dance. You will be a collaborator in this project.

For the sake of this project, there is a necessity for vulnerability, honesty and generosity. The Intended original audience does not know you, so this requires use of very descriptive words when describing places and things.

I will be home May 23rd-29th. Once you have replied to me letting me know that you would like to be involved, I will send date and time options.

Since I will be funding this entire project on my own. Donations are welcomed. I will be purchasing a camera, a lens, lavalier microphones, a tripod and extra batteries to ensure great quality and successful interviews. Attached below is my cash app tag and Venmo name. Anything helps!

\$ArabiaRichardson and @Arabia-Richardson

Thank you so much, for your time and energy and efforts. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to reach out (937-701-\*\*\*\*)

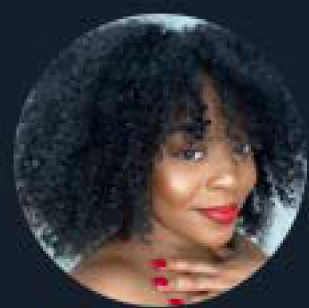
I look forward to working with you.

Arabia Richardson

The diagram illustrates two parallel paths of a person's interest in archiving. The left path starts with a blue box containing the text "My exposure and love for archiving began in 2014, my senior year of high school." and leads to a green box containing the text "My exposure and love for archiving began in 2014, my senior year of high school." The right path starts with a blue box containing the text "My exposure and love for archiving began in 2014, my senior year of high school." and leads to a green box containing the text "My exposure and love for archiving began in 2014, my senior year of high school." Both paths are connected by a vertical line on the right.



# Tweet



**Arabia Richardson**

@PassItToArab\_\_



Striving be a credible **source**.

10:29 PM · 2/9/20 from [Capitol Heights, MD](#) ·

[Twitter for iPhone](#)

||| [View Tweet activity](#)



“It is never too late to begin archiving. The memories one has are all that are needed to get started. Write down these moments in a journal or start a scrapbook, have a gathering with family where everyone brings something from the past to add to this book, draw pictures of an old room from memory, have conversations with a sibling/family and record them. These are some simple ways to get started on a journey to personal and family archival. Start small and keep working towards growth.”

archiving.

It is never too late to begin

“Many Black Americans struggle to preserve their family’s history because they lack the resources and the knowledge to do so. For many people to assure their history lives on, donating to the museum might be the easiest thing to do. Unfortunately, taking the easy way out is not always the best option. Donating your archived history to the museums puts the generations after you at a disadvantage. Another option would be to preserve the items yourself or find people in your family that may also want to join in on archiving.”



DO YOU THINK ABOUT  
THE FUTURE?

PAGE 6

what are some  
of the ways you  
are connected to  
dance?

PAGE \_\_

MOMENT IN LIFE YOU  
WISH YOU COULD  
HAVE RECORDED?

PAGE 12

WHAT DOES FAMILY  
MEAN TO YOU?

PAGE 8

WHAT DOES FAMILY  
MEAN TO YOU?

PAGE 8

HOW DO YOU FEEL  
WHEN YOU WITNESS  
DANCE?

PAGE 23

WHAT DOES FAMILY  
MEAN TO YOU?

PAGE 8

DO YOU THINK ABOUT  
THE FUTURE?

PAGE 6

SOMETHING YOU WISH  
YOU COULD HAVE  
TOLD YOUR YOUNGER  
SELF?

PAGE 14

SOMETHING YOU WISH  
YOU COULD HAVE  
TOLD YOUR YOUNGER  
SELF?

PAGE



SOMETHING YOU WISH  
YOU COULD HAVE TOLD  
YOUR YOUNGER SELF?

PAGE \_\_

Me: what are some of the ways you are connected to dance?

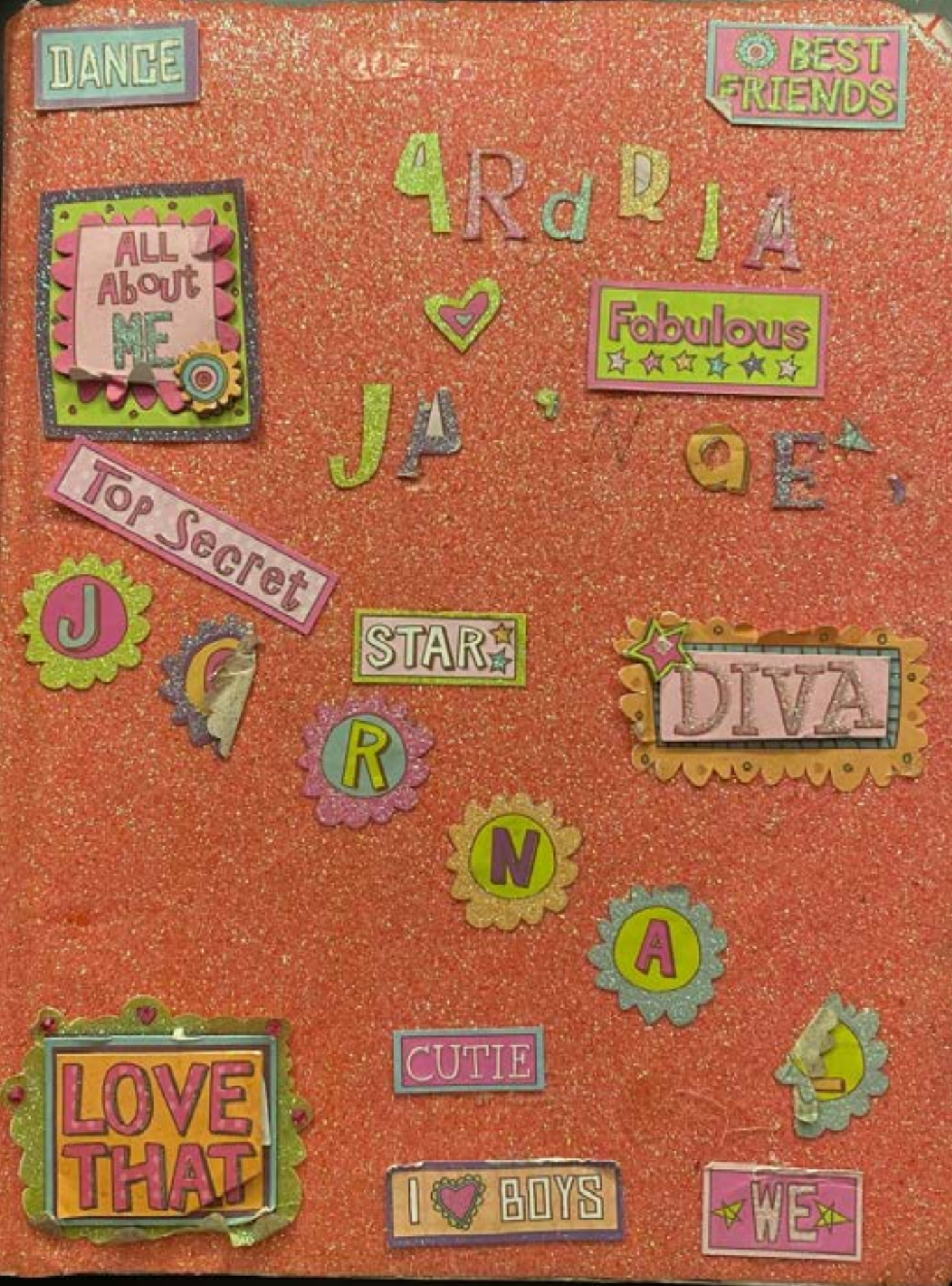
Mom: I was surrounded by dance all the time. I loved to dance. Just like street dance, or you know club dances, I danced all the time. Just at home like I would turn my music on and just dance around the house. My grandmother always danced. My grandmother, honey, would always dance. She had a big ol' booty.

Both: \*laughs\*

Mom: She would shake her booty and just dance. She would show me all the dances that were in style when she was growing up. My mom danced, she did ballet, jazz and tap. I've seen all kinds of pictures when she was in dance as well. It's been a history of dance in our family from way back.

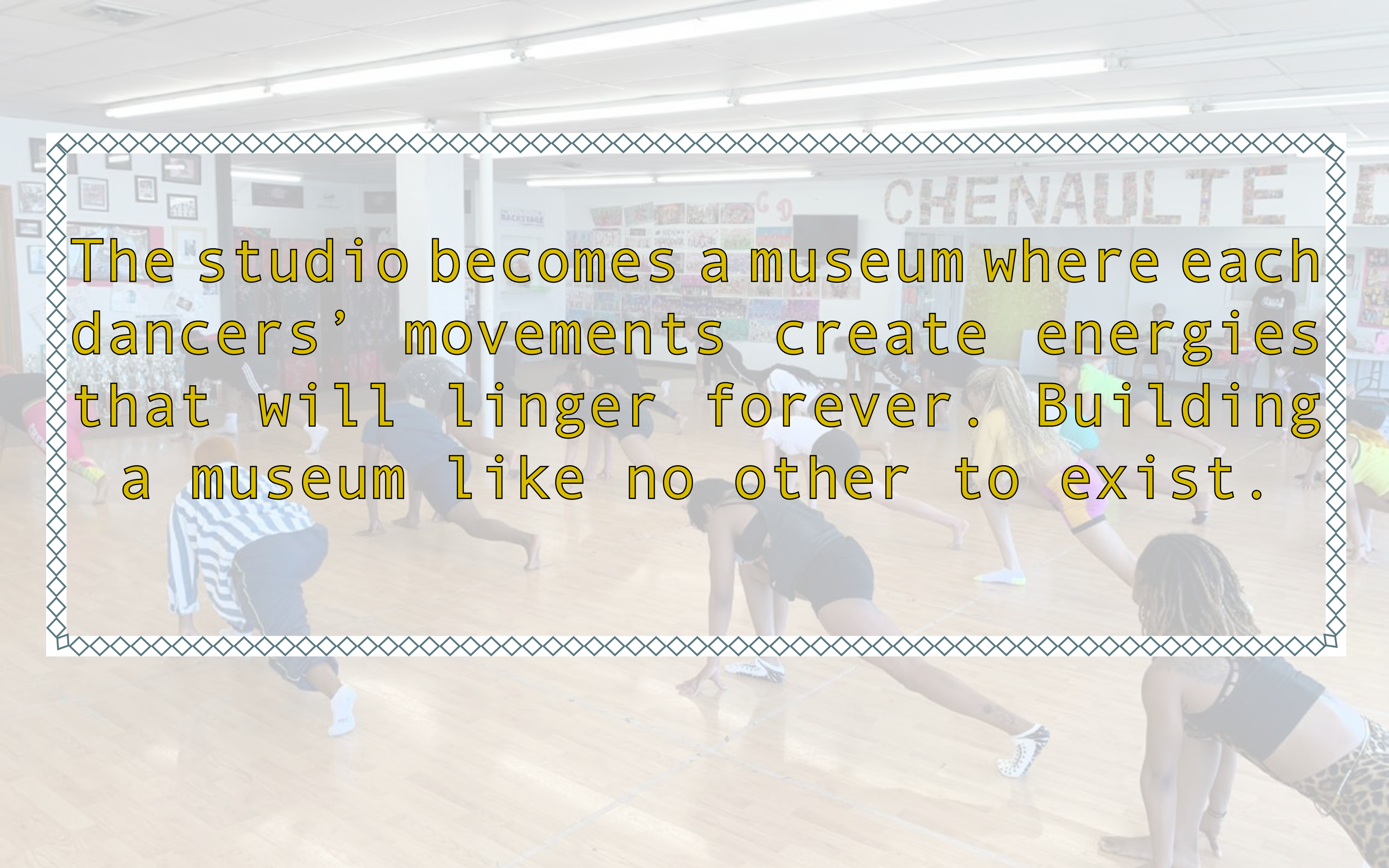
Me: wow!





My seventh grade journal turned out to be a time capsule catapulting me into the future while using my past to fuel the journey of becoming a Dancivist.



A group of dancers in a studio, with text overlay. The dancers are in a low, wide stance, possibly performing a dance move. The studio has a wooden floor and walls covered in various posters and artwork. A large sign on the wall reads "CHENAUITE". The text overlay is in a yellow, outlined font and is enclosed in a decorative border.

The studio becomes a museum where each dancers' movements create energies that will linger forever. Building a museum like no other to exist.

HOW DO YOU FEEL  
WHEN YOU WITNESS  
DANCE?

PAGE \_\_



Me: what is some advice you  
would give to your younger  
self?

Armani: Shoot...Stay prepared.  
I'd say, be strong and stay  
prepared for the worst. Shoot!  
Like I'm already an over-  
thinker.

Me: Mhmm-hmm

Armani: So like before I even  
go into anything I've prob-  
ably already thought about the  
worst possible things that  
could happen. So just be pre-  
pared for anything and what-  
ever comes at you just stay  
strong.

Me: That's really good advice.

Armani: yeah.



2021

December

Dance is a way to be constantly reminded of your ancestry. It reminds us of the people that came before us and paved the way. I dance because my ancestors danced. A recent practice of mine incorporated archival meshed with dance. Each time I enter the stu-

dio for a “solo session” I carry with me written cards from my loved ones. I take these along with me so that I am not alone. I dance with the voices of others. I call this practice, The Continuation. I am continuing the work for my family, friends and future self. I will generate

A living and breathing archive.

movement from the archived cards which will eventually become a dance that I will share out. I will allow the cards to be touched, and read by the viewer.



**Me: Can you tell me a little about yourself?**

Dahlia: uh, yes! My name is Dahlia Williams, I am from Dayton Ohio. Ummm..... I— hahahah! I don't know.

**Me: Anything! What's your favorite color? what's your zodiac sign? Anything...**

Dahlia: Uhhh...okay. My favorite color is Tiffany blue or teal and I am a Taurus

**Me: Whoop whoop!**

Dahlia: Yeah. I don't really think I am that interesting, but ummm yeah.

**Me: You are**

Dahlia: Thanks!



DO YOU THINK ABOUT  
THE FUTURE?

PAGE \_\_\_\_

*Exhuming*

recovering

unearthing

bringing to a surface of connection



*Archival*  
putting it away  
storing  
securing  
maintaining





MOMENT IN LIFE YOU  
WISH YOU COULD HAVE  
RECORDED?

PAGE \_\_

Me: What are some of the most important lessons you have learned that you think the next generation should learn as well?

Whitney: Saving! Now, every year for christmas we would get a much of money and Ima fashionable girl so I would literally go to the mall \*Claps\* gone! And I wish my mom or somebody would've told me like, "just save a little bit". If I would have saved a little bit from every christmas, from every birthday or if they would have even taken it and invested it...could've been somewhere. So now for my son every year when people give him money, I give him a certain amount of that money and I take it and for example last year I bought him Apple stocks. So

Me: Nice!

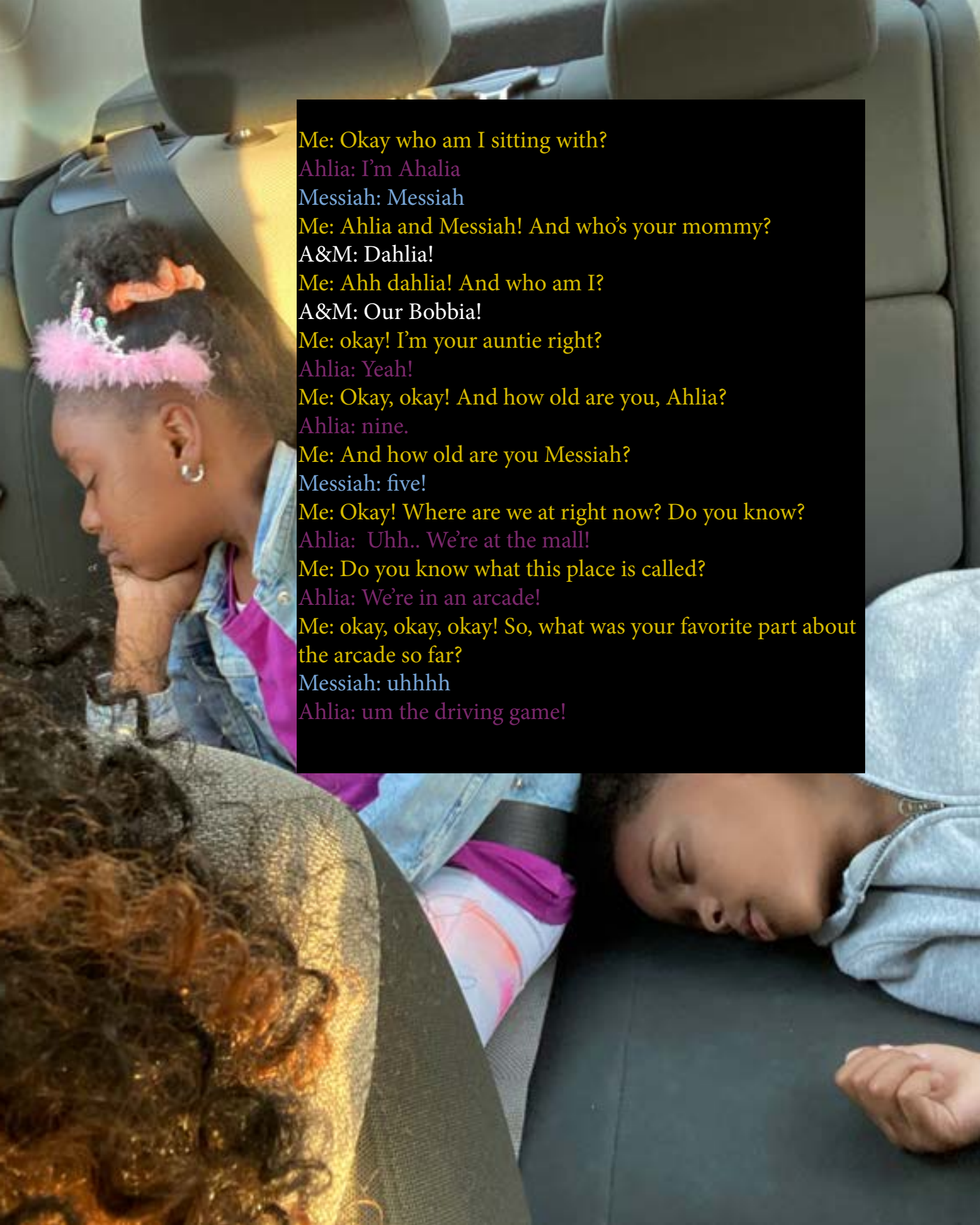
Whitney: We also explained that to him and explained what apple stocks were. "You like Apple phones so why not have apple stock"

Me: Right!



It's been a very important moment that we are beginning to see where it's not just 1 or 2 black artists

its groups of black artists with many different perspectives, many different backgrounds, many different journeys, none of us are speaking for everyone, we're only speaking for our portion of reality. Our own individual portion of reality and it's all of these artist voices together that make the full picture" -Lorraine O'Grady



Me: Okay who am I sitting with?  
Ahlia: I'm Ahlia  
Messiah: Messiah  
Me: Ahlia and Messiah! And who's your mommy?  
A&M: Dahlia!  
Me: Ahh dahlia! And who am I?  
A&M: Our Bobbia!  
Me: okay! I'm your auntie right?  
Ahlia: Yeah!  
Me: Okay, okay! And how old are you, Ahlia?  
Ahlia: nine.  
Me: And how old are you Messiah?  
Messiah: five!  
Me: Okay! Where are we at right now? Do you know?  
Ahlia: Uhh.. We're at the mall!  
Me: Do you know what this place is called?  
Ahlia: We're in an arcade!  
Me: okay, okay, okay! So, what was your favorite part about the arcade so far?  
Messiah: uhhhh  
Ahlia: um the driving game!



Messiah: The basketball!  
Me: You're a basketball player now right? Do you like it alot?  
Messiah: \*nods\*  
Me: yeah? Ahlia, do you like sports? You were doing gymnastics last time I checked.  
Ahlia: Uhhh no! My mommy is going to put me in gymnastics  
Me: what do you do now?  
Ahlia: nothing. My mommy is signing up for something for me so I can go to gymnastics.  
Me: okay, good! Well I just wanted to ger on here to see your faces. Yall give me a nice big smile, put your faces together. Let me see I'm going to zoom in on yall. Say "cheese"  
A&M: Cheese \*smiles\*  
Me: And were about to eat some pizza! Yeah. Im excited about that! Say bye!  
Ahlia: Bye \*waves\*  
Messiah: Bye bye!

what are some of the ways you are connected to dance?

page \_\_\_\_





Me: how was the transition moving from from Goshen, Alabama to Dayton, Ohio.

Uncle John: Boy it was so different, cause the area I lived in you might see a house every mile or so you know, you were spread out. The we came to Dayton and by the way I saw Television before I came to Dayton.

Me: wow!

Uncle John: I was born before television. You know television isn't that old really.

Me: No, it's not!

Uncle John: And then when I came to Dayton, everybody had black and white televisions, everybody had party lines. We didn't have telephones back home either. If we wanted to make a call we had to walk, or get on a mule or tractor and ride way into town to make a telephone call. You didn't have anybody to call really. So um, nobody had telephones. I used to do my school work with a kerosene lamp, get right up under it and do my homework. It was the way of life. You didn't mind it because that's all you knew.

Me: right.

Uncle John: And Uh, I tell folks, my vision was very very narrow. All I knew was farming, and driving a big truck up and down the highway. That's all I ever saw.

Me: mmmm...

Uncle John: We didn't see anything else cause we didn't have a television. My vision was in that little area I live at. We came to Dayton and we bought a black and white television. Maybe about this big.

Both: \*laughs\*

Uncle John: Then we got a telephone, you ever heard of a party line?

Me: yes!

Uncle John: That's forreal. If you got down to a two party line, you were fortunate. You pick up the telephone and had to be very careful on what you said on the telephone, well you still should be really. It was so different coming here. It's a big difference coming from a rural area to a city... mmmm.



I am really happy I  
came. My spirit is  
Vibrant. We all have  
creativity, just don't be  
afraid! Everyone  
expects to see her.  
Finding their "Ultra-  
selves" amplified. THIS  
**SHIT** IS CRAZY. sugar,  
butter

A way for generations  
after me to remember the  
people that came be-  
fore them, it is a way  
to remember traditions  
and accomplishments of  
our ancestors and it is  
also a reminder that  
we can overcome what-  
ever obstacles stand in  
there way with the guid-  
ances of their loved  
ones through, words,  
recipes, images and  
video archives.

## Questions

1. Do you think about the future?
2. What does family mean to you?
3. Who are you?
4. How did you get your name/who are you named after?
5. Your most prized possession?
6. Would you start to archive if you knew it meant a way to preserve our families history?
7. Moment in life you wish you could have re-recorded
8. A moment in time you regret/wish you change  
What makes you, you?
9. Do you have any connections to dance?
10. How do you feel when you witness dance?
11. What do you hope for, for the next generations of family?
12. Something you wish you could have told your younger self?
13. While growing up in Dayton, is there anything you felt like the city was missing?
14. A skill you want to learn



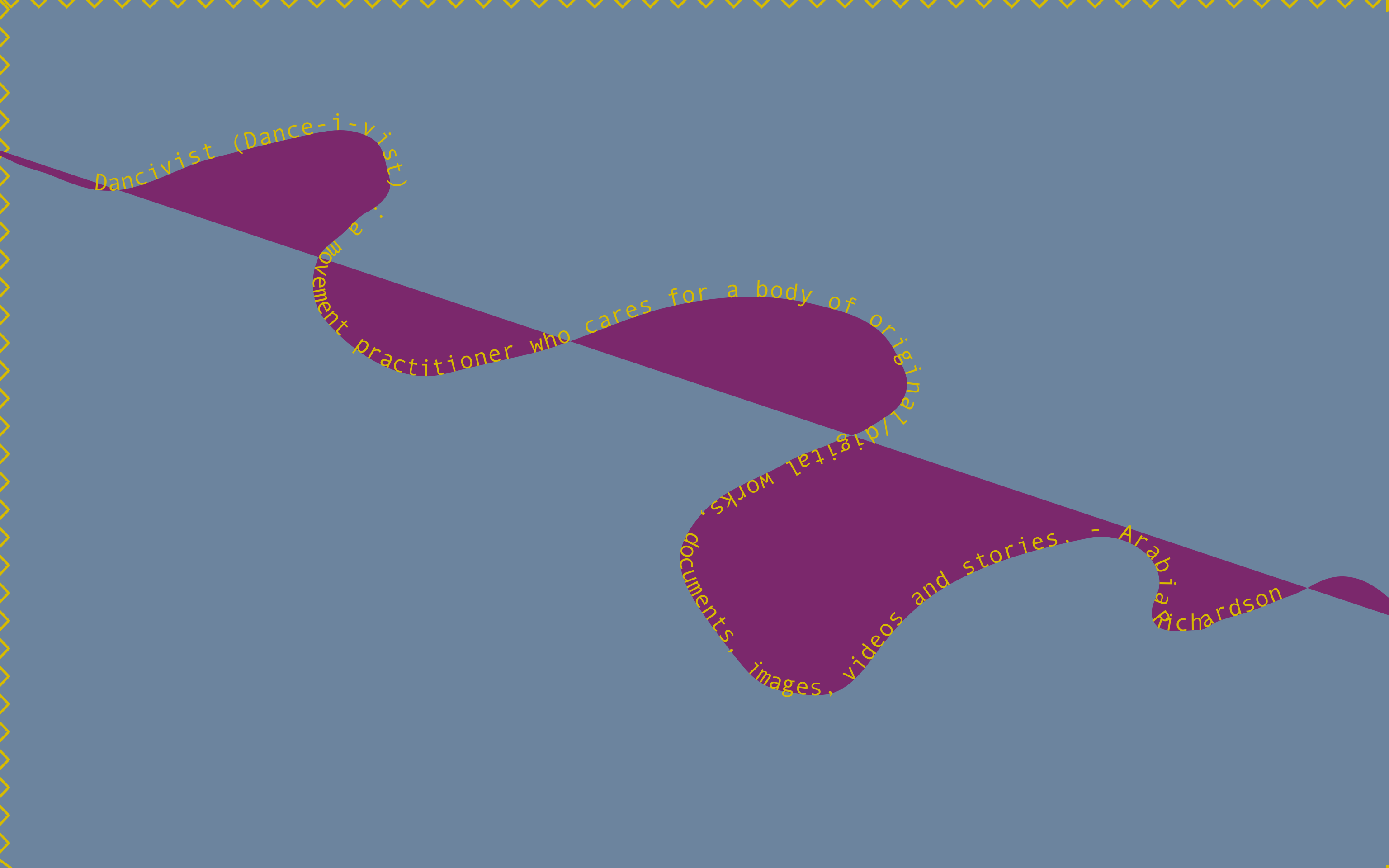






## List of Image Captions

## Acknowledgements



Dancivist (Dance-i-vist)

movement practitioner who cares for a body of original

digital works, documents, images, videos and stories. - Arabi

Richardson