

ARIA EVANS: Hi, I'm Aria Evans. Welcome to The 'D' Word Podcast, where we work to demystify dance. Forms of movement have been practiced since time immemorial. I'm here to reveal insights into why physical expression matters, what it does in our bodies when we watch it, and how it lives within our daily lives. This season, our theme is transformation-transforming relationships, identity, our way of thinking, and social hierarchies through movement. Today we're chatting with Robin Lacambra, a queer Filipinx creative, speaker, and facilitator. Drawing from somatic relational psychotherapy, mindful movement, and conflict mediation, Robin's work aims to demonstrate how interconnected we are, highlighting our shared responsibility to co-create a just and liberated world. Alongside their roles as the creator of GOODBODYFEEL movement and therapy, the director of the Safer Spaces Project and a counselor at SACHA - Sexual Assault Centre (Hamilton and Area), Robin works with individuals, groups, and organizations to foster self awareness, resilience, and healthier relationships.

Hi Robin, I'm so happy to have you here today.

ROBIN LACAMBRA: I'm so happy to be here. Thanks for having me.

ARIA EVANS: So in this fantastic intro we just had of you [laughs], it speaks about how your therapeutic approach blends relational psychotherapy with somatics and creative expression, including mindfulness, movement, and play. Can you explain to me what that looks like?

ROBIN LACAMBRA: So we have like an hour for me to answer this one question, right? [Laughs].

ARIA EVANS: For sure, yeah, we actually have all year. [Laughs]. You can just do a PhD on this podcast with us.

ROBIN LACAMBRA: Okay, here we go. So it looks like different things depending on the context and the person, but really the through-line is, can we create relationships between all aspects of ourselves and help create a bridge between our internal world and our

external expression? So in a therapy one-to-one context it looks like folks telling me what they're coming with today, me having them check in with their body, how does that share feel in their body? What is their "anatomy of their sadness"?, for example. If they're coming in feeling sad, what is the anatomy of the sadness? Where do you feel it? How does sadness move? What does sadness say? And we really get to know this part, and embody this part, and learn what this part needs, what it desires, what feels supportive to this part, et cetera. So the play comes in, in how we embody and express and create the profile of our various parts. It might feel clowny to some people because I will have them, you know, embody their sadness. Like how does your sadness move around the room? How does your sadness sing a song? How does your sadness dance? And then can we take that shape with our body? Can we make contact with our body in that way? So that's how it might look in a therapeutic context. And then if we flip it to holding space in a workshop, for example, where folks are coming in prepared to be embodied and be in their body, then the therapeutics will come in of being in this group. What feelings are coming up? What parts are here when you're in a group and are asked to occupy space together, share space together, share vulnerably? What parts are here? What narratives are here? Where did that belief come from? How long have you been holding this belief? Is it an unconscious bias? Is it now conscious? So just trying to bridge our internal worlds with our external world and create relationships between all of these various parts of ourselves and each other.

ARIA EVANS:

It's so interesting to think about the difference between that individual practice- I love what you said about how a sad song would come out of you, how would that sort of manifest itself in your body? And then also thinking about in a group dynamic, there's other things at play. We then have our shame of like, 'oh no, now I have to do this in front of other people', but there's something really beautiful about being able to facilitate the space between an individual and then a group that's really moving. One of the things that you said

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when we were speaking in our pre-interview was how we're often socialized from the neck up. And I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit more about that practice of embodying and being fully engaged in the practices you've just spoken about.

ROBIN LACAMBRA: Yeah. So our brain is such a big, beautiful muscle. It's so strong.

ARIA EVANS: [Laughs].

ROBIN LACAMBRA: So it makes sense that we are more aware of what's happening neck up. And our thoughts are often privileged. What's happening in our brain, our mind space, our mental space, narrative from the neck up, is often privileged because it's often loudest. So through my somatic practices and movement practices in general, it's like, 'Oh, can we gain awareness of the wisdom from our neck down?'. There's so much information in our sensations. And if we're having a sensation in our heart, what does that sensation need? What is it trying to communicate? What is it trying to bring our awareness to? If we're having a sensation in our gut? If we're having sensation in our feet? And so attaching visuals to it and words to it, so like, if your gut was a landscape, what would it look like? If your heart was the weather, what is the weather report of your heart today? And then how can we prepare for the weather? You know, like the way that we can't control the literal weather. Like we can't control that there's a heat wave right now.

ARIA EVANS: [Laughs].

ROBIN LACAMBRA: How can we exist in this heat wave in a way that is most sustainable, most supportive for us in a way that doesn't deny the weather? Right. So I can't deny the sensation that's in my heart. Well, I can try. I mean, I can try, and a lot of us do, but how can we accept the sensation and the weather of our heart? And that's my goal when working with folks to gain awareness of neck down, is there's so much information. We have so much more body to us. [Laughs].

And our body is full of data and interpretive processes. And can we tap into what we're interpreting in the neck down?

ARIA EVANS: You talk so richly about the different movement practices that you engage with. And I know you have a yoga and Pilates practice, but I'm curious, what other modes of creative expression embed themselves into your various practices?

ROBIN LACAMBRA: I love talking. [Laughs].

ARIA EVANS: [Laughs]. What?

ROBIN LACAMBRA: And I'm trying to wear the label of storytelling. Like, I want to be in a storytelling practice and a story listening practice with folks because there's so much richness there. And so much of my own personal storytelling comes out through my body, or is about my body and what I'm experiencing in my body. And it's the way to make that internal external so somebody else can know me better. And if you know me better, then hopefully you can support me better. And if you learn how to support me better, then hopefully I can feel safer here, and I can belong here. So, storytelling, i.e. talking, [laughs] is one of my go-to practices. And then storytelling in general without necessarily words. I'm exploring more and more what storytelling means through dance. What storytelling means through space holding with folks. And then when I reflect on how I want to show up in the creative world, or how I want to show up creatively, I want to create experiences and spaces where folks can feel courageous enough to move their body, to listen to their body, and then to tell us about it.

ARIA EVANS: And I feel like you've done just that with GOODBODYFEEL. [Laughs].

ROBIN LACAMBRA: [Laughs]. Expert segue!

ARIA EVANS: Whaat? Why thank you. [Laughs].

ROBIN LACAMBRA: [Laughs].

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ARIA EVANS: But it's so interesting, right? Like, dance can be so inaccessible to so many folks. It's expensive. It's a huge time commitment. It's super gendered, and it can be culturally exclusive. So I'm curious where GOODBODYFEEL found its way into something that you wanted to offer? And if you can talk a little bit about what it is?

ROBIN LACAMBRA: Through GOODBODYFEEL I was hosting, and still- but just not brick and mortar anymore, movement classes. I had a drop in schedule and workshops, as well as trainings around how to be a facilitator. And it really was a response to feeling like I couldn't comfortably, safely, bravely occupy spaces in my body in the Western wellness world. It wasn't until like a few years ago that I realized how much masking I was doing in Western wellness spaces and movement spaces, and that just is so much labor to pretend that you're okay.

ARIA EVANS: Yeah.

ROBIN LACAMBRA: [Laughs]. It's like, oh my God, so much labor. And then that labor acts as a barrier to me accessing what I truly am feeling. So GOODBODYFEEL was a response to 'If I had everything that I needed in a space to actually feel like I belong here, and that I am safer here, and that I can be brave here, what would that space look like? how would that space be governed? How would that space offer services? How would that space teach classes?'. And so it was that. It was an ongoing experiment of 'What is it that I personally need for my own journey of healing and embodiment?'. And then getting curious about, 'Oh, does this work for you too?'. You, in a different body than me and a different experience than me. And then expanding the way that I accommodate or can accommodate folks by really listening and asking questions and being curious about what is my impact. Is it working? 'Oh, it's not?', Okay. Let me try again. Let me try better. Let me try differently. And so GOODBODYFEEL had Pilates/yoga classes. And for me it kind of felt dancey because it was very playlist-driven, like it was very music-driven. And there would be like an arc in the way that

we, quote unquote, told the story of the Pilates class. And there would often be a dance moment where I felt like I was holding the hand of my inner child of like, 'Okay, we're just going to step to the side. Okay? Step to the other side. Okay. Step to the side'. Like where there's a frame and hand holding. And then once comfort is here, then courage can be here. And then it would turn into this, like, do whatever you want, like move your hands however you want. If your toddler was on the mat, how would your toddler dance this song? And it would only be just for that song. So it felt safe enough to be clowny and for folks to access that feeling like, 'Oh my God, I'm gonna break form here!?' And I'm just gonna, I don't know, do a jumping jack, or dance off beat'. Like, we can survive almost anything for three minutes.

ARIA EVANS: [Laughs]. Is that the capacity? No longer than three minutes?

ROBIN LACAMBRA: [Laughs]. Yeah, exactly like 'Cut it off in three minutes'. [Laughs]. And this continues to be the goal is, how can we stretch our capacity and discover how our capacity is stretchable? Can we notice our limits, whether it's through, 'Oh my God, holding this squat is really hard'. And how do I talk to myself when I'm in that squat? Am I nice? Am I an asshole? Can I, in this squat, start to pay attention to historic patterns and then maybe take agency over how I want to show up for myself? Same thing with the dancing. Like, 'Okay, I got three minutes. Can I, like, really let myself loose for three minutes? And O-M-G, step off the mat in a yoga class?'. [Laughs].

ARIA EVANS: I love that proposal of, who do you become in a squat? Because I'm like, oh yeah, I know I'm a jerk when I'm in a squat for sure. And what's that about? But the relationship to consciousness is really beautiful. Like, how can these practices that are accessible to people like yoga class or Pilates class then be expanded into these places that, you know, we're considering our inner children and where we're really self reflecting. That's such a beautiful offering. I'm curious because you also carve out specific spaces. Like

your identifiers, like being a person of color and being queer, you've also given very specific spaces for people who have those identities to gather. What learnings have you had from cultivating those spaces on behalf of these groups?

ROBIN LACAMBRA: Thanks for that question. Like I said earlier, masking is so much labor. Or the labor of pretending that we're okay in all spaces- that's a lot. It's carrying so much armor. So when our social locations are those of which we are forced to be marginalized, it's a lot. It's a lot. It's holding a squat. [Laugh].

ARIA EVANS: [Laugh].

ROBIN LACAMBRA: With weights and, and, and, and.

ARIA EVANS: Yeah, in a heatwave.

ROBIN LACAMBRA: Like it's the hardest squat! In a heat wave! Yeah, exactly. [Laughs]. On a balancing beam, you know, like it's so hard. Yeah. My curiosity with hosting affinity spaces is, how would a group experience shift if we could take off all layers of armor? How would that change our experience of being in a group if we could pull up on the eye guard, or take the helmet off, or take one glove off? And then how does that change our experience? And then how can we maybe learn how to take more of the armor off together? And then when we learn what the conditions are for us to take our armor off in a group setting, then we can advocate for those conditions in all settings, or in more settings. And what I've been learning through hosting those affinity spaces is just how rich the collective experience can be when more folks come in with less armor. It's really, really beautiful. And like the depth of the exhales just feel all the more cathartic. And it feels so nice to share space with folks who get it, who get what it feels like to walk around with armor and then not have to explain why we walk around with armor. Where sometimes in spaces that aren't affinity spaces, so much labor goes into justifying why we're wearing the armor. And that adds to the labor. That's so exhausting and it's de-validating. And then I have to feel like I have to prove why I'm showing up this prepared. You know, why I'm wearing armor to the potluck.

I'm wearing armor to the potluck because I'm not sure. I'm not sure what you're going to say to me and how it might trigger this, that, or the other thing.

ARIA EVANS:

The Dance Current magazine wants to help you breathe a little easier when it comes to your budget. We know it's important to you to stay up to date on the latest dance news, so we've made it more accessible. From now until the end of August, we're offering The 'D' Word listeners 25% off subscriptions. Just use the code TDCsummer. That's t d c s u m m e r at thedancecurrent.com/subscribe. Don't miss our fresh summer issue on newsstands at the end of the month. Want to contribute your voice to the fall issue? Email submissions at thedancecurrent.com by August 26th.

I'm going to segue a little bit, and one of the things you've talked about is this metaphor of the armor, which also to me links to safety. Like how we do have to protect ourselves, and where care comes into the relationship that we have with the world. And in my practice as an intimacy professional and in my direction practice I'm often thinking about how do we make spaces safer? How do we hold space in the leadership area, being in the Arts, or in any industry, really? And I know that you've been working on the [Safer Spaces](#) project with Industry, Hamilton Fringe and the Culture Guide, which we will link to for everyone. Everyone Google this and look into it. But for somebody who is stepping into a leadership role, are there practices or techniques that you would suggest that they consider when using that guide?

ROBIN LACAMBRA:

Mmm. Learn how to apologize.

ARIA EVANS:

[Laughs]. Woo! Say it louder, say it again!

ROBIN LACAMBRA:

Yeah! Learn how to apologize! Flex the muscle of taking accountability. Over and over again. Flex that muscle. Because when we think of safer spaces, there's no such thing as a trigger free space. There's no such thing as a harm free space. But what we can work towards is an

accountable space. Like, I'm going to disappoint you. I can guarantee that. And not because I'm an asshole, but because I'm a human. And when I disappoint you and you are courageous enough to tell me that I disappointed you, I will say sorry and I will take accountability. I think because there's the injury of the trigger, or the thing that was harmful, and then that injury gets exacerbated by defensiveness, by denial, by gaslighting, by tone policing, et cetera. The lack of accountability makes that wound all the more gaping. And can we just put an end to ripping open a wound and just be like, 'Sorry. Yeah. You're right. I said something mindless and it impacted you negatively, and it made you feel alienated in this space. And I'm sorry. How can I support you? What do we need so we can continue to occupy space together in a way that allows you to feel like you can begin to trust me again?'. That's what leaders need to know, is that one: You're human. You're harmful. 100%. You're 100% harmful. [Laughs].

ARIA EVANS: [Laughs]. Yup. You're gonna mess up.

ROBIN LACAMBRA: You're gonna mess up. And so it's not about preventing messing up. It's about preparing for it so that when you mess up, you don't make things worse. And then there are, of course, preventative things that folks can do. But like in the interest of time and in the interest of potency, just learn how to apologize without being an asshole.

ARIA EVANS: Yeah, that is probably the most fulsome advice I've ever heard. You've talked a lot about the inward versus the outward, and I know that there's also a workbook that you are developing that quite literally is The Inward/Outward Guide to Self-Awareness and Relational Care. Can you talk about what your focus is and what you hope people receive from this new offering?

ROBIN LACAMBRA: Yeah, so Inward/Outward goes through various exercises of getting to know our own nervous systems. Like our own reactivity, what triggers us into this feeling or that feeling, what are the ingredients of our happiness? What are the

ingredients of our sadness? What are all of the ingredients? Who are you when these parts of you are present? Are you able to hold the multiplicity? Like are you able to hold sadness, anger, and happiness at the same time? Because sometimes all three of them are here. And what is your capacity to hold space for paradox within you? Because that correlates to your ability to hold paradox outside of you. And we're living in paradoxical times. There's a heat wave because of climate change. There are multiple genocides happening around the world, and people are having trouble naming climate change and naming genocide when it's right in front of us!

ARIA EVANS: Yeah.

ROBIN LACAMBRA: So, what is our capacity for paradox? Are we immobilized by paradox? And if we are, what is it that we need to do to re-mobilize so that we can show up intentionally and purposefully, regardless of multiplicity or paradox? So some of the exercises are about getting to know, I call it, the anatomy of our self-states. Like what do you say internally? What's the narrative? What's going on in your brain? What's going on in your body? What sensations? What's the posture? What's going on in your heart? What are the emotions? And then, what are you mobilized to do or not do? So those are the different things that I invite folks to consider when painting the anatomy of their self-states. So there's that, and then it's like, okay, how do we let other people know that that's who we become? Because my anger, and what my anger needs, is going to be probably very different from yours. And it's ignorant for me to assume that what I need for my anger is what you need for yours. And that's often what we do, right? We assume that how to support another person is the same as what we need. And so often I hear in the therapy room, 'They should just know', like, no babe, they should not just know! [Laughs]. You've got to tell them.

ARIA EVANS: [Laughs]. Can't they read my mind?

ROBIN LACAMBRA: So the Inward is like anatomy of self-states, and how to manage the nervous system, and then the Outward is how to let people know. Right. Can we have these courageous conversations with folks? And I have scripts and journal prompts for folks to practice informing people of, 'When I'm sad this is how you can tell', and, 'When I'm sad, this is how you can best support me'. And that same sort of prompt for all of our various self-states. And then the hope is that you can hand that Inward/Outward workbook to your trusted others and be like, 'Here's the manual to me, in case I can't communicate it. You can read about it and now you know how to show up for me. Or now you know not to take it personally when I'm an asshole to you because I was in a squat. And I'm sorry in advance for the things that I said when I was hangry or whatever.' But, yeah, it's my way of bridging all of the three pillars of GOODBODYFEEL, the therapy, the movement, the learning. So Inward/Outward feels like a sort of really exciting way of holding the paradox.

ARIA EVANS: Yeah. And what a beautiful gift. I'm just like, imagining having this book that I can hand to a loved one and be like, here. [Laughs]. And it's for both of you, right? It's about communication. And Robin, remind me, this book is available now, right? Or is it going to be launched? Where are you at in that process?

ROBIN LACAMBRA: You can go to goodbodyfeel.com and join the mailing list to get the update when the second edition is ready, or/and a rerelease of the first edition, whichever comes first.

ARIA EVANS: Has there been a transformational moment for you in your life as an embodied educator that you feel like you want to share with us?

ROBIN LACAMBRA: Yeah! Actually one was so recent, as in Friday, as in, wow, four days ago. I performed a story for the first time ever. And the story was about performance anxiety that was born from daddy issues. [Laughs].

ARIA EVANS: How meta. [Laughs].

**This transcript has been edited for clarity.*

ROBIN LACAMBRA: Exactly. And it really felt like exposure therapy in real time. Because I talk about in the story, the various somatic things that happen in my body when performing because my dad was not the kindest human and made me feel very hard to feel feelings as a young one. And leading up to my turn to share on the stage, I was having a true somatic flashback. Like my tonsils were swelling. I could feel, like, layers of mucus happening. I could hear my old narrative of like, 'Don't crack, don't crack, don't crack, don't fumble, don't crack, don't fumble. Clear your throat right now so that you can sing the song...'. And that was my dad. And I felt myself use, in real time, my nervous system management tools and my self coaching and my self-compassion of, like, 'Baby girl, it's okay. One, your dad's not in the room. Two, I got you. Three, you can crack if you want to. Four, if you fumble the whole way through I'm proud of you'. Like all of that talking and self-soothing, self-care, self-regulation. And then I did it! I told my story, I didn't crack, and it was amazing. Like, it doesn't even matter the response or how the story was received- though it was received very well.

ARIA EVANS: [Laughs].

ROBIN LACAMBRA: The process was so transformative. It was a rewiring. It was a nervous system rewiring, a trauma healing, right then right there. It was magic. And that's the power of creative expression and being committed to our healing tools. It actually does the thing!

ARIA EVANS: Thank you for sharing. It shows the payoff, shows the possibility of engaging with these kinds of practices.

ROBIN LACAMBRA: Thank you!

ARIA EVANS: You can find Robin and her Inward/Outward program at goodbodyfeel.com or find their Safer Spaces Culture Guide at saferspacesproject.com. The 'D' Word is presented by [dance: made in canada/ fait au canada](http://dance:madeincanada.com), a biennial contemporary dance festival featuring Canadian dance

artists with unique artistic visions from all cultural backgrounds. The 'D' Word airs annually, as well as our dance film screening series available at dancemadeincanada.ca. The 'D' Word is produced by Mayumi Lashbrook with Taylor Young, editor and composer Jamar Powell, sound engineer Chris Dupuis at 1990 Studios, and cover photography by Marlowe Porter. And I'm your host Aria Evans. Thank you to Canadian Heritage, the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, and Toronto Arts Council for making The 'D' Word possible. Find us wherever you get your podcasts and don't forget to rate and review. Let dance transform you.