

that is not traditional. Rape, arson, physical violence, and boycotts are familiar weapons against Dalits claiming equality. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes records the atrocities that are reported to it, and these vary from 25,000 to 30,000 per year. The statistics vary from state to state, and many violent encounters are not brought to the attention of the police or the courts.

BUDDHISM

Ambedkar rejected Hinduism as early as 1935, but he did not convert until shortly before his death in 1956. He had learned about Buddhism as a boy, read about Buddhism from then on, studied Pali, and compiled *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, based on Theravada texts but adding his own rational and humanitarian views. The fiftieth anniversary of his conversion was celebrated in October 2006. Conversions continue in many parts of India, especially in Delhi. Many use “Navayana,” the new vehicle, as a name for Ambedkar Buddhism.

SEE ALSO *Affirmative Action*.

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Eleanor Zelliot

DANCE

Dance has long provided a key means of expression for the movement of racialized bodies, and it has intersected

with notions of race in a number of ways. In particular, dance has been a literal stage upon which ideas about racial superiority and inferiority have played out. It has also been a means for promoting social mobility.

Practiced by nearly every human society in all eras and locations throughout the world, dance enacts the ways in which people relate to each other; it defines the terms of representation for bodies and behavior; it expresses spirituality and sexuality in terms of the body in motion; and it provides a way to physically resist political structures. Dance in all idioms represents an idealized combination of physicality, aesthetic and spiritual possibility, and social occasion. Dance is widely—and wrongly—assumed to be a “universal language” that can be understood easily by any who witness its movements. In truth, dance exists only in relationship to recognizable human interaction, and it is structured according to local beliefs and ideologies. Because dance encompasses so many powerful possibilities, it has always been tinged with material implications for racist ideologies. Thus, racist practices and racialized representations of cultural formations abound in the historical record of dance performance.

RACIALIZED DANCE IN THE UNITED STATES

In the United States, difficult race relations have allowed for an extensive permeation of racist ideologies through dance. Persistent stereotypes of ethnic action abound: Latino dances are “sensual” or “hot”; African Americans are “natural dancers” who specialize in “lascivious” and “grotesque” social dances; Native Americans are “spiritual” dancers who “passively” celebrate their ancestors and the land; and Asian dance forms are “delicate” and “mysterious” to their gathered audiences.

Each of these stereotypes deserves scrutiny. As a whole, Latino dances do indeed value accurate rhythmic meter. They stress fast-paced physical isolation of feet, torso, neck, hips, and arms, and they promote social interaction between partners or groups of people. Variations of group dances, including rumba and samba, are featured at festival events and carnival celebrations, while partnered social dances, including salsa and tango, bring couples into close physical proximity to explore movement possibilities as a single unit. For Latino dancers, these forms enhance social interaction, including group solidarity (in festival dances) and communication skills (in partnered dances).

During the European colonization of the Americas, Native American dances were considered to hold such power as tools of spiritual and social organization that white officials routinely banned them. For example, the Ghost Dance, performed by intercultural groups of Plains Indians from 1888 to 1890, emerged as part of a prophetic religion developed in the face of the hostile white takeover of North America. The dance, which lasted four days at a time, called

for a costume that included absolutely nothing made by the white man. In 1890, infamous massacres at Wounded Knee involved the interruption of Ghost Dances by U.S. Army troops. Even before this, Native dancers had been consigned to become secular performers in popular entertainments such as Buffalo Bill's Wild West stage shows of the late nineteenth century.

Asian dance forms practiced in the United States, which range from Indian Bharata Natyam through Javanese Kecak, often rely on symbolic gestures to narrate stories based on legend, mythology, and historical events. Because the term "Asian" encompasses hundreds of ethnicities, it lumps together diverse populations—including Indonesian, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean people—and their vibrant contemporary dance traditions. The broad variety of these cultures and their dance forms, combined with the important and coded gestural significations of each, perpetuates the impression of inscrutability for many Americans unversed in the particularities of any of these forms.

EARLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN DANCES

African-American social dances convey the most consistent ideologies of race in the United States. Black social dances have been banned by city councils and considered lewd and inappropriate for performance in public spaces. They purportedly signaled the breakdown of moral standards and society itself, thus effectively demonstrating the potential for social disorder. Significantly, African-American social dances have effectively defined each historical era of the twentieth century, as with the Charleston of the 1920s, the lindy hop of the 1930s, the twist of the 1960s, and breakdancing idioms in the 1980s.

The cakewalk offers a particular example of race in dance. Created by African Americans, this partnered social and performance dance derived from activities at corn-husking festivals in the early nineteenth century. The cakewalk emerged as a sly parody of the quadrille, a French-derived set dance popular among slaveholders in the South. African-American dancers made fun of the "genteel manners" of the quadrille, adapting its erect posture and precision patterns to include complex rhythmic walking steps, sequences of bowing low, waving canes, tipping hats, and a fast-paced, high-kicking grand promenade. In its competitive form, the cakewalk involved acrobatic stunts performed by duos who strove to maintain an upright stance even as they kicked higher and higher in tandem. Those determined to possess the most precision, grace, ease, and the highest kicks won a highly decorated cake prepared for the occasion.

Surprisingly, whites who witnessed the dance failed to notice its derisive origins, and they clamored to learn



The Cakewalk. An African-American dancer performs the cakewalk, an early jazz dance, in 1903. The dance originated among slaves as a parody of European ballroom dances. HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES.

it. The form transferred easily into blackface minstrel shows and early Broadway offerings as it spread as a popular pastime. The highly successful African-American minstrel team of Williams and Walker (Egbert Austin Williams and George Walker) became the most famous practitioners of the dance. Walker and his wife, Aida Reed Overton, a noteworthy dancer and choreographer in her own right, brought the cakewalk to the height of its international popularity when they danced a Command Performance at Buckingham Palace in 1897. Thus, the cakewalk, which began as a racialized parody of white manners, offered social mobility to its African-American performers who became professional entertainers to the very people that their dance mocked.

RACE AND THEATRICAL DANCE

As a realm, dance includes theatrical dance and social dance, its two most prevalent idioms in the West. Theatrical dance contains histories of racist exclusion for artists

and audiences in the United States, as in the routine barring of black children from ballet classes populated by whites, and the strict segregation of black and white audiences in many theater spaces until the mid-twentieth century. These exclusionary practices held profound significance in the formation of dance performance. For Americans, ballet has stood for the pinnacle of classical achievement in dance, inevitably tied to a winsome white femininity stereotypically considered to be antithetical to African-American womanhood.

The largest ballet schools have resisted efforts to integrate their student bodies in significant numbers, and ballerinas of color have yet to achieve international celebrity in any part of the world, except, perhaps, Chinese ballerinas who tour to Europe and the United States. Because ballet in Europe grew to reflect European ideologies of grace, precision, and physical achievement, many felt that it could not translate to other cultures or geographic locations beyond Europe and the former Soviet Union. But ballet has emerged with vigor in the United States, South Africa, Australia, the Caribbean, and China. Cuba, in particular, holds a place of importance as a training ground for exceptionally trained classical dancers of color who break the mold of “white only” participation in the form. Not surprisingly, Cuban ballet dancers in the United States, some of whom identify as white rather than as people of color, are typically described in terms of their “fiery Latin temperament” while Chinese dancers are often noted for their “shy reticence” and “doll-like stature.”

The founding of Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH) in 1969 by Arthur Mitchell and Karel Shook triumphantly confirmed an African-American presence in classical ballet. In sharp rebuke to racists who contended that their “joints” and “weak feet” rendered African Americans unsuited to ballet, DTH achieved international acclaim at the height of its popularity in the 1990s, drawing on a repertoire of some seventy-five ballets danced by a predominantly African-diaspora company of forty-nine dancers.

Mitchell, who had begun his career in 1955 as the only African-American dancer with the New York City Ballet (NYCB), was one of many individual artists who trained in ballet only to find limited possibilities for employment due to race. In Chicago in the 1920s, Katherine Dunham studied ballet with Ludmilla Speranza before creating her own Dunham dance technique. The Jones-Haywood School of Ballet, founded in Washington, D.C., in 1940, trained several significant African-American personalities including Sylvester Campbell and Louis Johnson. Philadelphia’s Judimar School of Dance, created in 1948, offered ballet classes led by Essie Marie Dorsey that produced several outstanding ballet artists of the 1950s and 1960s including Delores Brown, Tamara Guillebeaux, John Jones, and Billy Wilson. After the civil

rights era and the founding of DTH, several individual dancers, many of whom had affiliations of some sort with DTH or its school, rose to the ranks of principal dancer in white-majority companies. In the twenty-first century, important African-diaspora classical artists include Alonzo King, who directs the Lines Ballet based in San Francisco, and the dancers of Atlanta’s Ballethnic, who tether classical technique to modern dance and neo-African forms.

At times, some ballet companies presented works that explored racial identity or offered racialized representations to audiences. In 1911, Serge Diaghilev’s *Ballets Russes*, the premiere company of modern ballet of its era, presented *Petrushka*, danced to an original score by Igor Stravinsky. This fantasy ballet tells the story of a lover’s triangle between a female doll, the clown *Petrushka*, and the black-face Moor character, who brutishly slays the clown in a jealous rage. The Swedish-based *Ballets Suedois* premiered *Sculpture Nègre* in 1920 with costumes that imitated African statuettes.

During the civil rights era, representations of black people gained in humanity on ballet stages in works such as *Trinity* by Gerald Arpino (Joffrey Ballet 1970), which featured the Trinidadian-born dancer Christian Holder leading a cast of youthful optimists who imagine a color-blind utopia of dance, and the NYCB choreographer George Balanchine’s *Requiem Canticles* (1968), set to music by Stravinsky, which honored the memory of the recently slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. Balanchine continually expressed an interest in African American-derived jazz rhythms and movement sensibilities, often adopting a propulsive attack in his choreography that suggested the melding of neoclassical and social dance styles. Balanchine allowed black children to train at the School of American Ballet that fed his company, and in 1955 he hired Arthur Mitchell, who became the first principal African-American dancer with a major ballet company. Balanchine featured Mitchell in several original works including the plotless 1957 masterpiece *Agon*. Set to a commissioned score by Stravinsky, the work traded in a precise modernism and, in its central pas de deux, explored the color dynamics of the black and white skin tones of Mitchell and the white ballerina Diana Adams. Balanchine often lobbied for racial integration in ballet, and he refused to accept television engagements that would not allow black and white dancers to partner each other. Still, the ranks of ballet dancers continue to be largely segregated well into the twenty-first century.

MODERN DANCE

Modern dance forms offered a more hospitable climate for black dancers in the United States. The racial division of Americans led to the formation of several separatist,



The Joffrey Ballet in Rehearsal. Christian Holder rehearses the part of one of the ugly stepsisters for The Joffrey Ballet's production of *Cinderella*, in September 2006. For Americans, ballet has stood for the pinnacle of classical achievement in dance. AP IMAGES.

all-black dance companies, which have offered performing opportunities for growing numbers of classically trained dancers. Hemsley Winfield's New Negro Art Theater Dance Group brought concert dance to the New York Roxy Theater in 1932, effectively proving that black dancers would be accepted by largely white audiences. John Martin of the *New York Times* noted the dancers' refusal to be "darkskinned reproductions of famous white prototypes," and termed the concert "an effort well worth the making" (Martin 1932, p. X11). Winfield's company performed with the Hall Johnson Choir in dances of his own making.

Modern dance that explores African-American life has tended to valorize religious practice, particularly in myriad versions of dances set to Negro Spirituals. Alvin Ailey's masterpiece *Revelations* (1960) set a standard of exquisite choreographic imagination in telling the story of the African-American progression from slavery to freedom. The work includes scenes that depict profound social resilience in an abstract group prayer, an enactment of an Afro-Caribbean-derived riverside baptism, scenes of solitary penitence, and a gospel-inflected service in a rural southern sanctuary. This work, which suggests a vibrant and closed hegemonic universe of African-American perseverance, has been seen by more audiences than any other modern dance

work. Among contemporary artists, the dance company of Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane, founded in 1982, stands apart in its willingness to confront uncomfortable racial perceptions in large-scale works. Jones, an African American, and his Italian-American partner Zane offered audiences a study in physical contrasts in several duets. As their company's acclaim grew, Jones continued to work as a soloist, and his powerful performances sometimes included improvised movement layered with freely associated autobiographical text. In 1981, he danced an untitled solo built upon spoken oppositional statements such as "I love women; I hate women" and "I love white people; I hate white people."

Jones and Zane were both diagnosed as HIV positive in 1986, and Zane succumbed to AIDS in 1988. After Zane's death, Jones continued to make large-scaled works that addressed themes of racial identity, sexuality, and cultural memory, as in the epic *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land* (1990). This four-part, three-hour fantasia is loosely based on the Harriet Beecher Stowe novel and included an intergenerational cast, rap poetry, and scores of nude dancers in its final utopian vision. At the premiere of *Reading, Mercy and the Artificial Nigger* (2003), Jones and actor Susan Sarandon read aloud as the

multiracial company shifted in and out of the various characters detailed in Flannery O'Connor's short story *The Artificial Nigger*, underscoring the mutability of race in theatrical dance. O'Connor's story of a bigoted white southern farmer and his grandson's journey to the big city provided the narrative background for a charged exploration of race, gender, and theatrical representation.

Several contemporary dance companies resist racist presumptions surrounding dance technique, including Complexions Dance, founded by two former Ailey dancers, Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson. Based in New York, Complexions features a multiracial ensemble of ballet-trained dancers who work in sleek accord performing Rhoden's abstract choreography.

Dance on the Broadway stage has always embraced transformed African-American social dance forms as the preferred idiom of movement. Jazz dance, acknowledged as the foundational technique of contemporary Broadway-style dance, is built on the codification of eccentric African-American dance movements culled during the early part of the twentieth century. At intervals, segregated, "all black" companies of performers have been assembled to perform energetic or titillating fare on Broadway, from the Charleston dances of *Runnin' Wild* (1923) to the disco-inspired bump choreography of *The Wiz* (1975). Those shows reinforced the truism that African-American social dance forms, best embodied by African-American dancers, could easily entertain audiences of cultural outsiders. Some musicals attempted to confront race: The 1957 hit *West Side Story* pitted an Italian street gang against a Puerto Rican one in a series of danced battles inflected by ballet; while in 1992 George C. Wolfe's *Jelly's Last Jam* (1992) used tap dance and blackface to underscore a ironic narrative of racial jealousy among African Americans of different pigmentation.

By 2005, tap dance, like its footwork and rhythm-based kin flamenco and Bharata Natyam, had become respected as a classical form in the United States. This shift in attitude must be related to expanding information regarding the artistic nuances of the form for all American audiences. The elevation in status, reflected in a shift of venues from variety stages and community centers to concert halls, mirrors a rise in middle-class patrons of color able to support various art forms.

Another change in racist ideologies surrounding dance derived from its increased media representations. In film, from *Birth of a Nation* (1915) to *You Got Served* (2005), African-American dance has offered audiences an outrageously odd array of physical sociability. Many films of the 1930s and 1940s featured dance to enliven otherwise dull proceedings, as in the flamboyant maneuvers of Whitey's Lindy Hoppers in the 1941 feature *Hellzapoppin*. Another popular narrative strain offers black social dance

forms as a passageway to individual salvation, as in *Flashdance* (1983), *Footloose* (1984), or *Save the Last Dance* (2001), in which white teenagers find their mature social voices through their mastery of African-American dances.

Television programs, including *American Bandstand* and *Soul Train*, also introduced black social dances into the living rooms of whites and others who would never have seen them otherwise. More recent television shows include culturally diverse casts of dancers, such as *Dancing to the Hits* (1980s), Debbie Allen's several award show choreographies (1990s), and the syndicated competition show *Dance 360* (2000s), in which dancers of every ethnicity try to imitate each other in African-American-derived social dance forms.

The discipline of dance studies, which came into focus only after the civil rights and women's liberation movements, contributed to an expanded humanitarian sensibility of dance documentation in terms of race. The 1993 video series *Dancing*, created by Rhoda Grauer for PBS and accompanied by an oversized book written by Gerald Jonas, offered an essential, cross-cultural assessment of dance as a realm across geographies and cultural traditions. The video series includes many examples of rarely seen dance cultures, such as Yoruban egungun dances, that might have served as exotic spectacle for earlier generations. Documentary films about African-American dance cultures, including *Paris is Burning* (1991) and *Rize* (2005), have introduced wide audiences to specific scenes of racialized lives deeply invested in dance practice. These films highlight the difficulties of everyday life for young people of color, as well as the ways in which dance mediates some of those struggles.

As the scholarly study of dance has grown, so have the variety of its representations. A vibrant literature that complicates assessments of race in dance has emerged in journals, books, and Internet sites. Outstanding offerings from dance historians such as Lynne Fauley Emery, Richard Long, and John Perpener have detailed African-American dance practice; while the performance theorist Brenda Dixon Gottschild routinely writes about the role of race as a lens that clouds perceptions of dance among African-diaspora people. A cohort of other authors and artists continues to address the persistence of particular cultural practices in dance framed by racial stereotyping.

More recently, queer and feminist activists and scholars have worked to enlarge perceptions surrounding identity in dance, as in the work of feminist choreographer Chandralekha, from India, and the group ethic of the U.S.-based Urban Bush Women, led by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar. Still, even as dance moves beyond its obvious boundaries of performance and social practice to become a valued agent of aesthetic and social change, race becomes a guiding trope that defines its appreciation. "Classical"

forms of dance, recognized as the highest forms of physical expression, are often regulated to whites, while dancers of color are often thought to be experts only at “lower-value,” social dance forms. It seems that race, alongside sexuality and gender, constructs difficult barriers for artists and audiences to surmount as they approach the realm of dance.

SEE ALSO *African Diaspora*; *Black Popular Culture*.

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Thomas F. DeFrantz

DAVIS, ANGELA 1944–

Angela Y. Davis was born on January 26, 1944, in Birmingham, Alabama. An activist and scholar, Davis was appointed a professor in the History of Consciousness Program at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 1991. She is one of the main architects of a global movement to abolish what she has called the “prison-industrial complex” in the United States and elsewhere in the world. Davis has campaigned against all forms of racism since the mid-1960s, publishing numerous articles and essays in both the popular media and scholarly journals, as well as a half dozen books. A sensational trial in which she was charged by the state of California with murder and kidnapping because of her prominence in a movement for prisoners’ rights resulted in her acquittal on all charges in June 1972. As a result of the movement to “Free Angela Davis,” she became an icon of revolutionary movements and national liberation struggles worldwide.

The oldest of four children, Davis’s mother was Sallye B. Davis, an elementary school teacher, and her father, B. Frank Davis, was the owner of a local service station in Birmingham. At the age of four, her family moved to an all-white section of town, which became known as Dynamite Hill because of the number of racist-inspired bombings undertaken to drive out African-American families. Her family however, persevered. Davis went on to attend Elizabeth Irwin High School in New York City, and she graduated from Brandeis University in 1965 with a degree in French literature. After two years studying abroad, Davis returned to the United States and resumed her graduate studies at the University of California, San Diego, under the tutelage of the Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse. She joined the U.S. Communist Party and worked closely with the Black Panther Party in the late 1960s, while also writing her dissertation and teaching in the Philosophy Department at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Her academic career was interrupted by her imprisonment and trial. Davis was charged with first-degree murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy to commit both following an attempted escape by prisoners from San Quentin on August 7, 1970. The escape attempt was organized by Jonathan Jackson, the 17-year old brother of George Jackson, one of the Soledad Brothers. Davis knew Jonathan and was involved in the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee. In the attempted escape Jonathan and two prisoners were killed by San Quentin guards, and a judge was also killed. Another prisoner, Ruchell Magee, was badly wounded, and so was a woman juror. Davis was placed on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted list and was eventually arrested in New York City. She was then extradited to California to stand trial. Her case galvanized a global movement for her freedom, and catapulted her into international fame. Whereas the President of