

IMPORTANT MEDIA RELEASE

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African-American Dance Performances to Commemorate 150th Anniversary of the Ending of Slavery

The History of Black Dance in America to be performed by the Central Avenue Dance Ensemble, June 19-21, at California State University Dominguez Hills

CARSON, CA – Returning to the stage after performing to sold-out crowds, Ron Parker, Chester Whitmore, and The Central Avenue Dance Ensemble present "The History of Black Dance in America," a spectacular multi-media dance concert showcasing the African-American contributions to American social dance (www.HistoryOfBlackDance.org). Starting from the late 1800s and progressing to the modern era, audiences are mesmerized by authentic renditions of vernacular dances such as Zulu, Work Songs, Cakewalk, Spiritual Dances, Shim Sham, Lindy Hop, Foxtrot, the African inspired Latin-American dances, plus live singing and tributes to Nat King Cole and Sammy Davis Jr. The 2015 performances were funded by a successful Kickstarter campaign, and observe the 150th anniversary of Juneteenth, the oldest known celebration commemorating the ending of slavery in the United States.

The goal of the History of Black Dance in America is to educate the public about the black cultural influence on American social dance in exciting and entertaining way. While most of the dances to be performed are recognized as an integral part of American culture, many Americans may not know of their history. For example, the Cakewalk began as a plantation dance danced by slaves to mimic high society Whites. The dance was so amusing that plantation owners held competitions, and the winning slaves would receive cake as their prize, hence the name, "Cakewalk." This story and many more will be told through live performances and narrated video, starting with the plantation dances of the slavery era through today.

On the significance of the presentation, HBDA director, producer, and dance historian Ron Parker says, "Vernacular jazz dance, the original American dance form, and it's history is not performed by major American dance companies, nor is it funded by the major arts funding organizations. If we don't do it, no one else will. I also like the fact that, in addition to educating the public about Black dance history, we are bringing awareness to the 150th anniversary of Juneteenth, commemorating the abolition of slavery in the U.S."

The History of Black Dance in America will be performed at University Theater at California State Dominguez Hills, 1000 East Victoria St. Carson, CA 90747. Performances are on Friday and Saturday, June 19 and 20 at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, June 21 at 2:00 p.m. General admission is \$37.50, and VIP Seating is \$40. Tickets may be purchased online at <http://centralavedance.tix.com/>, by calling (800) 595-4TIX, or at the theater box office one hour prior to show time.

Proceeds from the performances will be used towards next year's show, to attract youth involvement, and to develop a touring program.

For more information and a video preview of The History of Black Dance in America, please visit www.HistoryOfBlackDance.org

Who/What:

The Central Avenue Dance Ensemble, directed by Ron Parker, presents "The History of Black Dance in America," a retrospective of African and African-American inspired social dances from the 1800s to today.

Why:

To entertain and educate about the history and cultural relevance of African-American inspired social dances popularly danced in the United States. The program also honors the 150th anniversary of Juneteenth, the oldest know celebration commemorating the ending of slavery in the United States.

When:

Friday and Saturday, June 19 and 20 at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, June 21 at 2:00 p.m.

Where:

University Theater at California State University Dominguez Hills
1000 East Victoria St. Carson, CA 90747

Tickets:

General Admission - \$37.50

VIP Seating - \$40

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ABOUT THE CENTRAL AVENUE DANCE ENSEMBLE:

The History of Black Dance in America (HBDA) is the creation of Chester Whitmore and Ron Parker, borne out of their mutual love and respect for Black dance history.

The Central Avenue Dance Ensemble (CADE) is a vernacular jazz dance company named after the famous "Central Avenue" district of Los Angeles which was the center of Black LA culture and entertainment in the early part of the 20th Century. With its active Rhythm and Blues and Jazz music scenes, Central Avenue was commonly considered the west coast equivalent of Harlem. CADE was founded by Chester and Ron and has performed HBDA for Black History Month in 2011, 2012 and 2014 to sold out audiences. The current company currently consists of the following team members: Ron Parker, Chester Whitmore, Reginald T. Thornton, Beatriz Vasquez, Rosa Harris, Ande Allure, Kiana Stringfield, Paul Thornhill, Linda Simms, Karin Santiago, Harry Bowens Jr., Brian Yip, Sury Misrayim, Rosalind Cook, and Fumi Bankole.

Chester Whitmore is a world-renown choreographer, tap dancer, lindy hop instructor and dance historian who toured the world with the original HBDA for over 15 years

beginning in the late 1980s. Chester is one of the last surviving members of the famed "Hoofers Club" and has studied under and worked with some of the greatest vernacular jazz dancers of the 20th century. He has endeavored his entire career to preserve and promote American vernacular jazz dances and their history.

Ron Parker is a Ballroom dancer and dance historian who came to dance from the world of business and was also swept up by the importance of educating the community on its dance history.

Chester and Ron worked as the directorial team on the Frankie Manning 100 Year celebration show at the Apollo Theater in New York in 2014. It was acclaimed as "the best show at the Apollo in 25 years." Ron and Chester were recently featured as 2015 Black History Month local heroes on KCET TV.

For more information visit www.HistoryOfBlackDance.org

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HISTORY OF BLACK DANCE IN AMERICA MEDIA CONTACT:

For additional information, interviews, special show arrangements, at-event liaison.

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