



# The History of Black Dance in America

Vernacular Jazz Dance Since 2003



## CADE

### Milestones

CADE created **2003**

"Lackawanna Blues" **2004**

"Swinging in the Hood" **2005**

Tribute to Norma Miller **2007**

Tribute to Katherine Dunham **2008**

"HBDA", Inglewood, CA **2011**

"HBDA", Santa Monica, CA **2012**



## "The History of Black Dance in America"

### (HBDA)

- *The History of Black Dance in America is a multimedia feast of music, dance and video.*
- *HBDA traces our steps from the African Diaspora through decade after decade to the present day.*

## About The Show

**The History of Black Dance in America** (HBDA) takes its audience on a 200 year journey through dances from the African Diaspora that developed in America. It is a multimedia feast of costumes, song and video, celebrating America's rich and diverse history and the exciting dances that are an integral part of it.

The journey begins in Africa and makes its way to the New World. Along the way it highlights dances that were so pervasive in their time that they leapt from community to community, usually becoming internationally-



**Chester Whitmore: Dance Instructor, Choreographer, Band Leader, Cinematographer and Historian Extraordinaire.**

known and performed around the world in Society. These dances became worldwide crazes from post-slavery to the present day. Yet, they grew out of the community of scattered Africans who ultimately made America their home, making them truly North American indigenous dances. They have left a legacy we cannot disregard.

HBDA was born out of the theatrical and dance expertise of Chester Whitmore. Chester, who has been named a United States' Cultural Ambassador by the Smithsonian Institute, created and toured the original version of *The History of Black Dance In America* with his company in the 1980s.

Managing Director Ron Parker joined Chester in 2003 to form the Central Avenue Dance Ensemble. They decided to revive HBDA, and it is their combined vision and passion that have led to this entertaining and historically-significant production.



## About CADE



Based in Los Angeles, the Central Avenue Dance Ensemble (CADE) is a non-profit organization named after a culturally-rich part of the city whose impact has been too little-known. This 12-member, multi-aged, company is dedicated to preserving and promoting the contributions of African Americans to the ballroom and social dances of American popular culture. CADE's performances show

the connections between dance forms from generation to generation, and their connection to the music of those generations. They also show how American vernacular dances were shaped by spirituality and slavery.

CADE's goal is to express the infectious healing qualities of movement, to educate audiences and to spread the joy of dance.



## Mission Statement

Many popular dances of the western hemisphere owe their birth to creative and talented people of African origin.

As early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, dances such as the Pigeon Walk, Buck, Tap, Frog, Ring Shout, Cake Walk, Charleston, Black Bottom and others, up to and including Swing Dance/Lindy Hop, have been a part of the African American lexicon. These dances are collectively known as **vernacular dance**.

Due to many social, economic, and political influences over the last four decades, the African

American cultural connection to these art forms has been virtually lost or forgotten.

The goal of this dance company is to reintroduce people—most especially the African American community—to vernacular dance. To build awareness and appreciation of this art form by presenting an experience through dance that relates the birth of this country's dance culture that emerged from plantation spirituals to Le Jazz Hot, Charleston and the Swing years of Jitterbug, which covers the historical period from slavery through the Swing era.



**Central Avenue Dance Ensemble**  
**"Tango on the Streets", Santa Monica, CA**

This show celebrates America's rich and diverse history and the exciting dances that are an integral part of it. Each of these dances grew out of the African Diaspora making them truly North American indigenous dances. These dances were so pervasive in their time that they leapt from community to community making them internationally known and danced in the world's societies. They have left a legacy we cannot disregard.

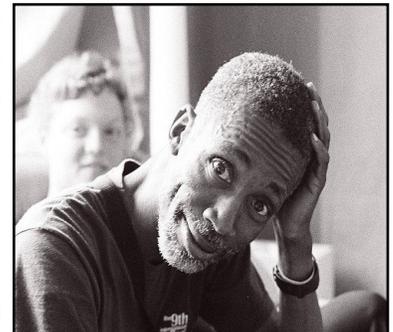
*"...Making this production truly American in a way no other has been."*



## A Note About Chester Whitmore

In addition to being a Cultural Ambassador, Chester Whitmore was named a Living Treasure in 2005 by the International Association of Blacks in Dance. He is an internationally-known dance instructor, choreographer and historian, as well as a cinematographer and swing dance/history archivist.

He is also an accomplished musician and bandleader, having played with the Count Basie Orchestra and with Lionel Hampton. He leads his own Big Band called Opus One, which is known for its unstoppable flavor reminiscent of Cab Calloway.



Our Man Chester



## CADE's History

CADE was originally founded in 2003 by a group of volunteer dancers led by Chester Whitmore.

Ron Parker, a founding member and dance historian, soon took over as Director of the Ensemble. He began preparations for this new **"History of Black Dance in America"**, expanding its repertoire beyond Vernacular Jazz to include the more traditional Ballroom and American Rhythm dances – such as Salsa and Disco – that derived from African roots.

Chester and Ron's combined goal was to educate the community on the Black roots of vernacular jazz dances (Cake Walk, Black Bottom, Lindy Hop), as well as other more well-known dances (Charleston, Salsa, Disco, and even Waltz) by holding social dances, workshops and performances.

Since its inception, CADE has performed at local community events, given monthly live Big Band dances (entitled "Swinging in the Hood,") and performed "HBDA" 2 years straight, in 2012 to sold-out audiences. CADE also produced "A Tribute to Norma Miller" in 2007, and helped choreograph and perform "A Tribute to Katherine Dunham" in 2008.

CADE has a rich history of lectures and/or demonstrations as part of its international community outreach. We are available worldwide for residencies and performances at schools, clubs, theatres and colleges .



Original CADE members with Fayard Nicholas.



*"The ability to combine the history with the wonderful visual is why my 90-yr. old mom said it was 'the best dance program she's seen in her life'."*

*-Laura Thornhill*



Ron Parker

### Ron Parker

Ron Parker is the current Director of the Ensemble.

He is a ballroom dance instructor, performer, choreographer and historian. A member of the Beverly Hills Cotillion Dance Ensemble - a vintage, ballroom-performing group - as well as former vice-president of the LA Chapter of USA Dance, his effort has been to spotlight the African influences on the traditional Ballroom and social dances, including the Foxtrot, Samba, Cha-Cha and the Argentine Tango.

He successfully produced the 2011 HBDA show, and both produced and directed the 2012 shows.



Central Avenue  
Dance Ensemble

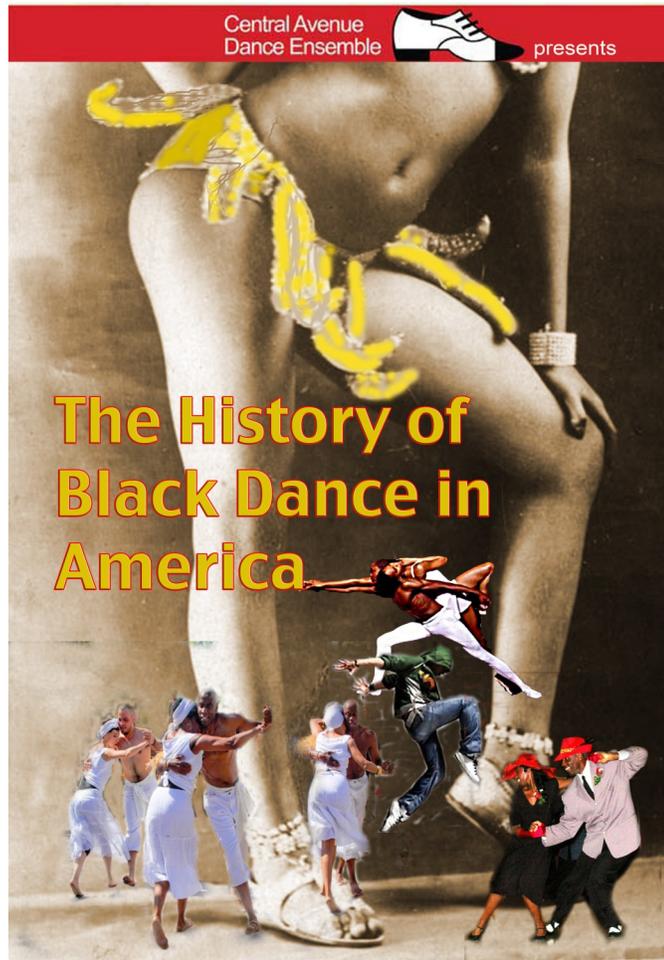
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Central Avenue  
Dance Ensemble



What you learn you take  
with you, and for the  
rest of your life.



## The History of Black Dance in America

*"I want to congratulate you on a fantastic show. I enjoyed every aspect of it, from the costumes to the video clips and history, and needless to say the incredible dancing. The energy level was contagious." —Sheri Klein*



Highlights from Central Avenue  
Dance Ensemble's 2012 History  
of Black Dance in America



[www.BlackDanceHistory.org](http://www.BlackDanceHistory.org)

The Central Avenue Dance Ensemble is a non-profit organization.  
[www.CentralAveDance.com](http://www.CentralAveDance.com) or [www.BlackDanceHistory.org](http://www.BlackDanceHistory.org)  
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