

CFP: Dance and the Black Body

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Call for Papers

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Call For Papers:

Tentative Title: Dance and the Black Body

Guest Editors:

Katrina Thompson Moore, Saint Louis University

Kwakiutl Dreher, University of Nebraska at Lincoln

The Journal of American Culture is seeking contributions for a special edition focused on the historical and cultural significance of dance and the ways in which Black women (re)claim their own bodies through rhythmic movement. Multidisciplinary in focus, *The Journal of American Culture* combines studies of American literature, history, and the arts, with studies of the popular, the taken-for-granted, and the ordinary pieces of American life, to produce analysis of American culture with a breath and holism lacking in traditional American studies.

For too long dance has been neglected as a contributor to the freedoms and hardships, the fame and the notoriety, and the power and subjection of Black women. The body of Black women, the way it is interpreted, misinterpreted, and treated, throughout history is always at the center of their dance. From Ballet to Twerking, dance performed by Black bodies is often artistically undervalued.

Professional to amateur, on a stage or #Tik Tok and other social media platforms-Black women's contributions to the history and culture of dance are undeniable. Let's consider, for example, the dance phenomenon of twerking. Twerking defined as "sexually suggestive dancing" caused public outcry over singer Lizzo's twerking performance at the NBA game in 2019 to rapper's Cardi B's and Megan Thee Stallion's controversial video (and song) WAP released in 2020 (to name a few).

Despite the outcry, however, women across lines of race have downloaded “How To” videos on twerking; one beginner’s video led by instructor Kelsey Mobley has 22 million+ views. Singer and performer Lizzo, interestingly, marks out the significance of twerking in Black culture in her 2021 TED Talk entitled “The Black History of Twerking”. After welcoming audiences to her TED Twerk, Lizzo rightly locates the historical root of twerking in West Africa and recognizes the cultural continuity in the United States and globally. She says, “Black people carried the origins of [twerking] through our DNA, through our blood, through our bones. We made twerking the global cultural phenomenon it became today.”

This special edition proposes to address a holistic rendering of Black women using dance as a means of empowerment. Most significantly, we also are interested in how Black women have embraced dance across genres and throughout history to assert a kind of agency that translates as freedom of expression even if it causes controversy. The socio-cultural, political, and historical are foci here as we analyze the significance of dance and, along the way, illustrate how Black women reclaim(ed) their own bodies through dance.

Dates and Deadlines:

Please send your 300-500-word abstract including your name, organization/department affiliation, email address, title of contribution in MS Word in a Times New Roman 12 typeface via an attachment with subject line **Dance and the Black Body** in an email on or before May 16, 2022, to Dr. Katrina Thompson Moore @ Katrina.Moore@slu.edu.

Submissions, generally 15-25 pages in length, are to be original scholarly manuscripts. Authors should submit papers in current MLA style with a works cited page and a minimum of endnotes. Contributors will be notified of acceptance of abstracts on or before June 16, 2022. Full papers are due on November 21, 2022. The *Dance and the Black Body*, special edition will be published in the June, 2023 issue.

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