

**NEW BOOK BY ACCLAIMED DANCE SCHOLAR BRENDA DIXON GOTTSCHILD TRACES THE HISTORY AND STRUGGLES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN DANCERS THROUGH THE LIFE AND WORK OF JOAN MYERS BROWN, THE LEGENDARY FOUNDER OF PHILADANCO**

*Joan Myers Brown & the Audacious Hope of the Black Ballerina—A Biohistory of American Performance* (Palgrave MacMillan) Hits Shelves January 3, 2012

**For Immediate Release:** December 7, 2011

*'Joan Myers Brown is a legend in the world of artistic dance. We now have her fascinating story for the world in Brenda Dixon Gottschild's brilliant book!'*  
– Cornel West, Princeton University and author of *Race Matters*

A new book by renowned dance historian Brenda Dixon Gottschild, explores the history of African American Dance in the United States through the story of Joan Myers Brown, the legendary and determined founder of the Philadelphia School of Dance Arts and PHILADANCO, Philadelphia's historic dance school and performance company.

*Joan Myers Brown & the Audacious Hope of the Black Ballerina—A Biohistory of American Performance* explores how Brown's personal and professional history reflects the hardships and the accomplishments of African Americans in the artistic and social developments through the 20th Century and into the new millennium. Published by Palgrave MacMillan, the book is available in bookstores, on [Amazon](#), and as an e-reader after January 3, 2012. (Gotschild and Brown will participate in book events throughout Philadelphia, see list below.)

Since opening the Philadelphia School of Dance Arts in 1960 and the company (PHILADANCO) in 1970, Brown (known affectionately to students and alumni as "Aunt Joan") has opened dance worlds for black dancers at a time when they were marginalized and access to dance schools and careers was extremely limited. Gottschild uses Brown's career to leverage an exploration of the connection between performance, society, and race, exploring a concert dance tradition that has had no voice to tell its story.

A preeminent authority on African American dance, Gottschild's other publications include, *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool* (Palgrave Macmillan), *Waltzing in the Dark: African American Vaudeville and Race Politics in the Swing Era* (Palgrave Macmillan), and *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* (Praeger). She lectures nationally and internationally on African American dance and politics onstage and in life.

Early praise for her newest book comes from scholars, poets, and dancers. Says Jennifer Dunning, former dance critic of *The New York Times* "Brenda Dixon

Gottschild brings a bracing mix of scholarship and unsentimental compassion to bear on the story of Joan Myers Brown, a classy, feisty, eminently pragmatic visionary whose life and dance company occupy a vivid and important place in the largely unexamined history of dance in Philadelphia, an early and important center for the art as well as Myers Brown's home. "Audacious Hope" is an indispensable good-read about an individual and her epic fight to make a place for herself in a world that did not accept black-skinned dancers like her, and then to build and maintain a major American dance company. But the book is much more. In the detail of the day-to-day work of being a dancer and developing dancers against the odds, so vividly evoked, too, in Myers Brown's pithy and unexpectedly poignant observations, Dixon Gottschild has captured the struggle of black Americans to help shape the culture of their country." (Read more: [us.macmillan.com/joanmyersbrowntheaudacioushopeoftheblackballerina/BrendaDixonGottschild](http://us.macmillan.com/joanmyersbrowntheaudacioushopeoftheblackballerina/BrendaDixonGottschild))

BRENDA DIXON GOTTSCHILD is a cultural historian, performer, and choreographer who uses dance as a way to measure the pulse of society and the barometer of culture. She considers her work social artistry, having dance at the center of her life and practice. Brenda has used her academic background as a professor of dance and culture to create artistic mediums for the community in which racism, gender, and society are questioned and brought to the forefront of discussions. To demonstrate, she uses her own dancing body and audience volunteers as crucial components in her presentations. Brenda's work has moved increasingly toward airing the dilemmas and celebrating the aspirations of black performers, while also engaging all people in a conversation, a 'teaching moment,' on race.

**PRESS QUERIES:** For more information about the book, Gottschild, and Brown, please visit [bit.ly/dixongottschild](http://bit.ly/dixongottschild). For review copies or to speak with the author, please contact Sacha Adorno [sacha@sachaadorno.com](mailto:sacha@sachaadorno.com) or Laura Henrich at [lahenrich@gmail.com](mailto:lahenrich@gmail.com).

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