

Among the Legends
By
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As a child I did not have walls full of posters of the most popular R& B stars. My walls were not heavily decorated with those whom my peers would consider “superstars.” I did have decorated walls, but the images that greeted my visitors were of Dance Theater of Harlem and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. You know those huge performance posters that you can buy at concert. My walls were decorated with, as I would tell my friends, “real artists.” As a child, I aspired to be in the company of these legendary dancers, in what capacity I was not sure. To ensure that took place, today my walls are decorated with images of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, and numerous other dance companies that I have had the privilege to be exposed to. On June 10, 2004, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, I found myself not admiring flat images of legendary dancers, but literally sitting among the legends. This was the date and place for the executive board meeting of the International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD). The meeting was held within the DANCEUSA conference.

During the meeting, I served as the recorder of the minutes. Sitting off to the side to ensure that the laptop was close to the out let, I looked around the room. To my right was Mr. Ronald K. Brown (Evidence/ A Dance Company) and Ms. Lula Washington (Lula Washington Dance Theater). To my left Dr. Sherrill Berryman-Johnson (Chairperson, IABD and Images Of Cultural Artistry), Ms. Debbie Blunden- Diggs (Dayton Contemporary Dance Company), Ms. Ann Williams (Dallas Black Dance Theater) and Ms. Joan Myers Brown (Philadanco) sat at the head of the table. After I blinked and

hoped no one caught me stalling, I began to type the comments of this cultural think tank. They spoke of reaching out to the dance community they serve through helping them understand the mission of IABD. They discussed the need to commit and recommit to the longevity of IABD through dues and meeting attendance as well as evaluate the need for membership its dues and its commitment level. As I thought of all the experiences this room of dance legends had created for themselves as well as for others, it was not the thoughts of choreographic styles or the struggle and splendor of dancing and directing companies that impressed me, it was the fact they found time to convene and discuss the perpetuity of this unique organization. From this opportunity I find the need to ask today's developing legends, have you committed to the promotion of the preservation of dance more specifically the black dance experience? So often we feel comfortable believing that some one else will pick up the torch, but this is our chance to ensure that the torch is not only lit but that we fuel the flame.