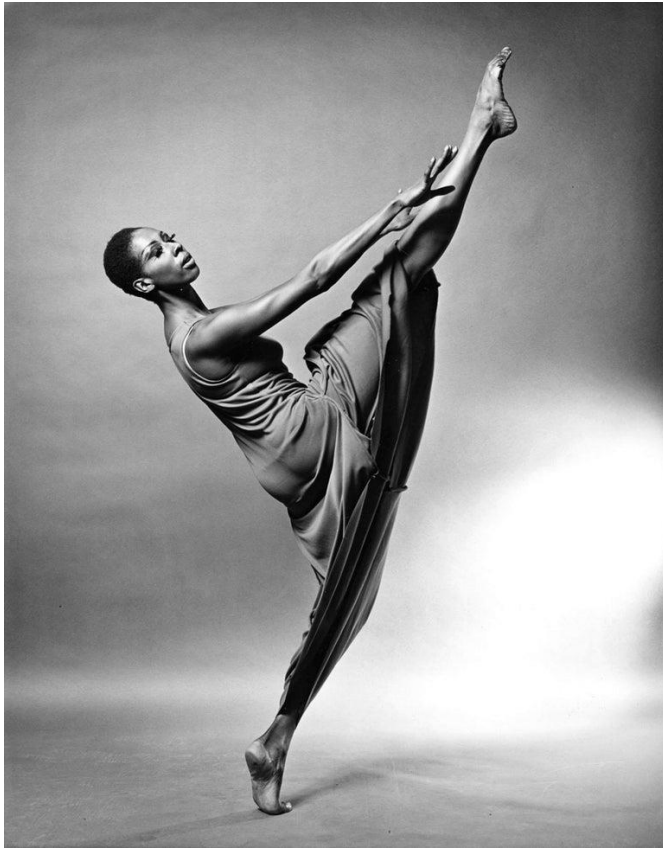


“She looks like an African goddess, moving in a manner almost more elemental than human.”—Clive Barnes



Black History Guardians™ honors Judith Jamison (1943 – 2024) who is best known for her exceptional dance performances with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater which she joined in 1965. She would later become the troupe’s artistic director and most loyal and championne dévouée.

Tall, beautiful, and graceful, Jamison would wow audiences in productions such as “Cry” and “Revelations”. Although she was classically trained in ballet, Jamison knew that everything about her was different from most people in the world of professional dance. In

her autobiography (1993), *Dancing Spirit*, Jamison said of herself, “I was the antithesis of the small-boned, demure dancer with a classically feminine shape.”

Jamison left Ailey’s troupe in 1980 to star in “Sophisticated Ladies”, which opened on Broadway the following year. New York Times’ journalist, Frank Rich’s lauded Jamison’s performance saying she was “a mesmerizing incarnation of 1920s Cotton Club glamour.”

When Jamison’s career on Broadway faltered, she returned to the place that catapulted her to fame, but this time as the choreographer of “Divining”. In 1989, after her mentor and friend died from AIDS, she became its artistic director. Under Jamison’s leadership, her beloved troupe got out of debt and began to thrive both financially, and in popularity.

Jamison will be remembered, not just as a distinguished champion for Black dancers, but for promoting cultural diversity in the arts. Her unparalleled commitment was recognized by numerous organizations

including the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Medal of Arts, and the Handel Medallion, the highest cultural award from New York city.

Born on May 10, 1943, in Philadelphia, Jamison became an ancestor on November 9, 2024, after a short illness. Her indelible contribution to the world of dance will continue through the thousands of people she mentored throughout her long, illustrious career. During an interview in 1976, Jamison revealed that the way she danced was a spiritual expression, “I believe that there’s a special gift God gave me, and I’m using it.”

Learn more: [Judith Jamison, Alvin Ailey Dancer of ‘Power and Radiance,’ Dies at 81 - The New York Times](#)