

## Step Dancing <sup>[1]</sup>

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## Step Dancing

by Cecelia Moore, 2006



Step Show. Image courtesy of Joe Focus, uploaded January 13, 2006.

<sup>[2]</sup>Step dancing, or "soulstepping," is a form of competitive dance exhibition developed by African American <sup>[3]</sup> fraternities and sororities <sup>[4]</sup> in North Carolina and other southern states. The dances feature synchronized movements and percussive beats. Step dancing is a showcase for exhibiting a team's individual style and showing its unity. Its origins can be found in the traditions of competitive drill teams and marching bands and take their movement patterns from African and slave dances such as patting juba and ring shouts.

While the beginning of step dancing dates back to older fraternity rituals, the term "stepping" became popular in the 1980s. Popularized on the campuses of historically black colleges and universities <sup>[5]</sup>, the informal shows evolved to public exhibitions, often used as fund-raisers for charitable causes. One of the most popular step shows, the East Coast Step Show <sup>[6]</sup>, originated on the campus of North Carolina's Fayetteville State University <sup>[7]</sup> in 1998. College step teams come from throughout the East and South to compete, with the prize money designated for the winning team's community projects.

In recent years, step dancing organizations in the United States have established cultural ties to the Gumboot dancers of South Africa through Step Afrika!, an organization that hosts an international festival each year in Soweto, South Africa.

### References:

Elizabeth C. Fine, *Soulstepping: African American Step Shows* (2003).

Susan Eike Spalding and Jane Harris Woodside, eds., *Communities in Motion: Dance, Community and Tradition in America's Southeast and Beyond* (1995).

### Image Credit:

Step Show. Image courtesy of Joe Focus, uploaded January 13, 2006. Available from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/okiboi/86305468/> <sup>[2]</sup> (accessed May 31, 2012).

### Subjects:

African Americans <sup>[8]</sup>

Culture <sup>[9]</sup>

UNC Press <sup>[10]</sup>

### Authors:

Moore, Cecelia <sup>[11]</sup>

### From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press. <sup>[12]</sup>

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## Links

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