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Music of the African Diaspora

Political Aspects of Lindy Hop on the Past and Present

Lindy hop is an African American dance form originated in New York in the late 1920's. The Swing Jazz based dance was popularized in the 1930's after being featured in the movie *Hellzapoppin'* becoming a popular form of social dance among African Americans. Lindy hop dominated the dance saloons of New York until the dominance of modern jazz which made big band swing and lindy hop old fashion.

During the 50's and 60's lindy hop went through a resurgence under a new name Boogie-woogie. Based on the musical genre popularized at the same time as swing jazz, boogie-woogie becomes an alternative name for the 1920's African American dance. However, unlike lindy hop, boogie-woogie is being danced in Europe, by white dancers. The boogie-woogie dance then spreads to the west coast of the United States where white Americans now dance a repackaged form of lindy hop, appropriating African American culture without giving credit to the creators of the artform.

In 1993 lindy hop makes another significant appearance on the big screen in the movie *Swing Kids*, however unlike *Hellzapoppin'* the new movie has an almost entirely white cast. After the release of the movie, lindy hop had a resurgence in the American social dance scene which grows increasingly popular among college students until today. Though the dance is now recognized under its original name the dancers are predominantly white. Though the market for jazz based social dancing is small compared to modern dances the white majority of instructors may create financial element to the potential issues of the new lindy hop audience. The mysterious new interest by white Americans in this dance form can be seen as a healthy way to engage with the past honoring African American culture, however it has also been portrayed as a form of cultural appropriation which blindly ignores the history of oppression caused to African Americans during the dance's early years.