



#PrettyPeriod

#PRETTY365 :: CAMILLE A. BROWN



Photo Credit: Ra-Re Valverde

What is your name?

Camille A. Brown

www.camilleabrown.org

What do you do?

Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher, and Cultural Activist

** Experience Camille A. Brown & Dancers and the world premiere of BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play at The Joyce Theater September 22-27, 2015.

<http://www.camilleabrown.org/blackgirllinguisticplay/>

Why do you do what you do?

I have always been a quiet child. My voice was small, so I got teased a lot, and it made me more self-conscious about speaking. I remember watching Michael Jackson and Janet Jackson videos as well as musicals (which my mom is a lover of and introduced me to). I would spend hours learning all the routines from videos and musical numbers. I borrowed one of my mom's hats to make my outfit for The Chorus Line's closing number complete! My mom saw me doing this, and put me into dance class. I found that moving my body was the easiest way for me to communicate my feelings. It became a safe space. I loved doing all the styles of dance, and when I performed on stage, there was nothing like it. I experienced the joy of dance, but as I got older I also realized that there was a certain image of the "ideal" dancer that I was told I didn't fit into.

Fast forward to my college years...

As a young dance student, I wasn't considered to have the "ideal" body for a career in dance and because of that, I had a hard time my 1st yr in college. Sometimes, I wasn't even asked to audition for Choreographer's because I wouldn't fit the costumes or wasn't technically capable. I called my mom and told her I wanted to transfer. This was not what I was expecting! She told me to give it time and to find something I could focus on. "Everything will work out", she said. I decided to focus on my composition/improvisation classes. This is where they teach you how to make your own dances.

I realized that I didn't have to wait for anyone to tell me when I could dance. I found my joy and my mother and I never spoke about transferring again. My Junior and Senior years I started getting casted in works, which was a great feeling, but I had also found a new love. After rehearsals, I would stay at the dance studios to return to my safe space. I thought choreographing was just a way for me to get through college. I graduated in June, and in Sept joined Ronald K. Brown's Evidence Dance Company. One year into dancing with The Company, a friend from college sent me a flyer for the Hubbard Street II competition. I decided to enter and won! Working with that company re-ignited the flame for choreography. I continued performing Ron's work and other choreographers, but becoming a choreographer became part of my career goals.

All of my experiences have made me the person I today. I am thankful for both my successes and obstacles, because both have given me the courage to create the narratives I want the world to see- which are both political and personal. I have the freedom to be me, and live gloriously in my safe space.

What advice would you give to Black women interested in doing what you do?

Keep moving forward and be brave about it!

Surround yourself with people who will encourage you, but challenge you with healthy criticism.

Listen to your body, and know when to rest.

YOUR WORK is what matters most. Care for it!

Choose dancers who believe in your work and want your vision to come to fruition as much as you do. Show gratitude to everyone who contributes to helping your career. It's the little things that people will remember.

Challenge yourself! It may not always feel good, but it will give you that healthy balance of humility and growth.

The product isn't the only thing that matters. Process is just as important!!!

Shift your career in the way you want it to go. Don't wait for people to do it. The strongest champion for you is YOU!

What do you do to take care of yourself/rejuvenate/recharge (self-care practices)?

Sometimes, I have a hard time finding the balance between working and resting, but my body ALWAYS let's me know when it's time to rest.

I do yoga/pilates 5-6 days a week, and make a valiant effort to schedule personal and social time.

I do things that bring me joy! Dance is what I love, but it's also a business. The latter has a tendency to drag my spirit down a bit, but I have to remind myself why I started dancing in the first place. It came from joy. I work to surround myself with it constantly.

What are your top five must have beauty products?

1. Hair dye from Revlon is my go to product! Pick a color- any color! I love changing my hair. Different colors, hairstyles, etc. It's fun! I've found a tremendous amount of empowerment by simply playing with my hair. It's kind of taken on another life and has become part of my brand LOL People always ask me what I'm going to do with my hair next.
2. The makeup brush set by EcoTools. A couple weeks ago, I needed something quick and bought them at Duane Read. SOLD! So smooth.
3. Mascara in Extreme Dimension 3D by Mac shimmer
4. Skinfinish Natural and Highlighter by Mac
5. Hask Placenta Leave-in Conditioning Treatment Super and Cantu for Natural hair- great combo!

Pretty IS as Pretty DOES and we SALUTE you Camille! You ARE #Pretty365!