

More public attention has fallen on Dove's career than on that of any other contemporary African-American poet. Recognized for her virtuoso technical ability, Dove represents a generation of poets trained in university writers' workshops who are sometimes chastised for their formal competence at the expense of emotional depth. Dove has distinguished herself in her capacity to filter complex historical and personal information through precise selections of poetic form. In this, she is most closely allied to black poets such as Gwendolyn Brooks, Michael S. Harper, and Robert Hayden. Her unusual range of subject matter, thematically and geographically, has earned her a reputation as a black writer unafraid to set African-American culture within a global context. Dove's gifts as a poet were most fully acknowledged in 1993 when she was appointed Poet Laureate of the United States, the first black writer and the youngest poet ever to have been so honored.

Dove has continued reaping honors, including the 1996 National Humanities Medal, the 2001 Duke Ellington Lifetime Achievement Award, and the 2003 Emily Couric Leadership Award. She has also been awarded honorary doctorates from more than twenty colleges and universities across the United States. From 2000 to 2002, she wrote a weekly poetry column in the *Washington Post*. In 2004 Dove published *American Smooth*, a collection of poetry.

**See also** Literature of the United States; Poetry, U.S.

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GINA DENT (1996)

Updated by publisher 2005

## DOVE, ULYSSES

JANUARY 17, 1947?

JUNE 11, 1996

Modern dancer and choreographer Ulysses Dove was born in Columbia, South Carolina, the eldest of three children. He began dance study with Carolyn Tate while a premedical student at Howard University. He transferred to the

University of Wisconsin to study with Xenia Chlistowa of the Kirov Ballet, and in 1970 he graduated from Bennington College with a degree in dance. Upon moving to New York, Dove joined the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and also performed with Mary Anthony, Pearl Lang, and Anna Sokolow. In 1973 he joined the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, where he quickly rose to the rank of principal dancer acclaimed for his commanding presence, bright clarity of movement, and truthful dramatic intensity.

Dove turned to choreography at Ailey's urging and created the 1980 solo "Inside" for Judith Jamison. He left the Ailey company that year to begin a significant freelance career choreographing dances for the Basel Ballet, Swedish Cullberg Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, London Festival Ballet, American Ballet Theater, New York City Ballet, and Groupe de Recherche Choreographique de l'Opéra de Paris, where he spent three years as assistant director. Several Dove ballets have found their definitive, punchy interpretations in performances by the Ailey company, including "Night Shade" (1982), "Bad Blood" (1984), "Vespers" (1986), "Episodes" (1987), and "Vespers" (1994). His final projects included "Red Angels," which was premiered by the New York City Ballet in 1994, and "Twilight," made for that company and premiered May 23, 1996. His choreography was marked by its relentless speed, violent force, and daring eroticism.

**See also** Ailey, Alvin; Ballet

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THOMAS F. DEFRANTZ (1996)

## DOZENS, THE

The dozens—also referred to as "playing the dozens," "sounding," "joning," or "woofing"—is a verbal game of insult and boasting involving at least two participants and an audience. The dozens are played by males and females across all age groups. Insults can be rhymed or unrhymed, although adult versions rely less on rhyme and more on improvisation. Audience participation is integral, since observers issue the verbal praise that regulates the contest to either a peaceful or violent resolution.

The dozens can be "clean" or "dirty." Performers of the clean or ordinary dozens insult intelligence, achieve-