

# Katherine Dunham

## Dynamic Museum

***Katherine Dunham –  
dancer, anthropologist,  
humanitarian,  
philanthropist***



Miss Katherine Dunham was born in Joliet, Illinois in 1909. She earned a doctoral degree in anthropology at the University of Chicago, completing **groundbreaking work on Caribbean and Brazilian dance anthropology**. In 1931, Miss Dunham established her first dance school in Chicago. She began one of the most successful dance careers in the American and European theater in 1934, which led to leading roles in musicals, operas and cabarets throughout the world.

In the late 1930s Miss Dunham established the Katherine Dunham Troupe which **won critical acclaim** performing works she choreographed. Throughout her career, Miss Dunham **used her talents, fame and resources to call public attention to social injustices at home and abroad**. In 1967, Miss Dunham joined the faculty of Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, to create a performing arts training center and dance anthropology program.

### ***The Katherine Dunham Dynamic Museum***

This landmark building appears on the Illinois Historic Register, and houses Miss Dunham's superb collection of African, West African, and South American art. It is located within the Pennsylvania Avenue Historic District registered with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The museum houses an outstanding collection of symbolic and functional art, including more than 250 African and Caribbean art objects from more than 50 countries. Tapestries, paintings, sculpture, musical instruments and ceremonial costumes from these and other areas of the world celebrate the human spirit. The museum also displays costumes, photographs, programs, letters, awards and mementos from Miss Dunham's career as a dancer, choreographer, teacher, writer and dance company owner.



In 1969, Miss Dunham created a community-based arts education program in East St. Louis, the Katherine Dunham Centers for the Arts and Humanities so that Metro East residents can witness and participate in all of the fine, performing and cultural arts. Through a growing partnership with ESLARP and the dance programs at regional universities efforts are develop the building and its grounds to better serve the needs of the growing numbers of young people attending the programs. NTAC and ESLARP have been instrumental in leading fund-raising drives and other initiatives to ensure the continuing stability of this fine legacy of art and culture.

