

Reviewed by
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Dr. Joanne Kilgour Dowdy's latest book, *In The Public Eye*, (Commiss University, 155 pgs., 2009), is a glossy, expertly- done, impressive-looking, photograph-filled autobiography of a Trinidadian-born, professional actress, dancer and educator. It is also a fine, nicely-crafted, clear example of a bold, colorful, roller-coaster life that proved that hard work always pays off. Dowdy, a Kent State University (Ohio) professor, is a former Wilmington, North Carolina resident, a New Hanover High School "Teacher of Year," a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has produced a cute, concise, chronological photo chronicle of a focused, extremely-talented , highly-ambitious Caribbean woman who refused to be anything other than what her dreams told her to be, and, according to the author, it is a document whose aim is to leave a legacy for future generations, especially those who are not native Americans, to help them aspire to realize their dreams too.

The book begins with a striking photograph of a sassy, 10-year-old Joanne, dressed in a clean crisp white dress, socks and shoes, in a [national arts festival competition] in Trinidad called "Have You Been a Good Little Good Girl," (1968) and ends with a review of her last book: *Ph.D. Stories: Conversations with My Sisters* (2008). The very last page, however, is a picture of her three first school teachers at The Newtown Girls' Roman Catholic School in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, and is a thank you note to the educators who pushed her into the public eye. She cites one of them, Mrs. Teresa Walker, as being one of the first persons to encourage her to be a performer. After her time at Newtown, she went on to study at The Caribbean School of Dancing, Holy Convent Secondary School, and to perform as an actress with Banyan Television Workshop. She would later be featured on Trinidadian TV shows and commercials, and would become a frequent, well-known character on the stage and television in Trinidad.

Afterwards, she migrated to the United States of America to study at The Boston Conservatory of Music, Dance and Theater and eventually graduated from the famed Julliard School in New York City. It was quite an accomplishment for a little island girl who displayed true grit and determination and who was supported, financially, as well, spiritually, by those who had the utmost confidence in her talent and ability to reach the top.

Dowdy calls this book a "family album" and is quick to acknowledge the people who helped her along the way. This autobiography (which, by the way, is her second one) is her way of giving back to all who made her who she is today: a very confident, firmly-rooted, highly-intelligent African-centered woman. It's a testament to how a cultural warrior survived the rigors, setbacks and triumphs of living, striving and being a true, dedicated artist in a world that constantly and consistently regards black folks and black arts as inferior and insignificant.

Joanne continues to prove the nay sayers wrong and this book is not only an excellent way to do that, but, it is a wonderful, pleasing-to-eye guide for children who want to be in the public eye.

It shows that the way to realize your dreams is to not be afraid to fail and not to be hindered by personal tragedies. Her mother died when she was very young, and her father, older sister and beloved brother have all passed. Her marriage to Attorney Bill Dowdy ended in divorce. She has every right to sing the blues, and she did, for just a short minute. But, once the tears dried up, she rolled up her sleeves and worked overtime to overcome the grief and sorrow. Joanne used her blues to create some good news. She has edited and written five books, become a popular and recognized college professor and has published *In The Public Eye*, to show all

who have eyes to see that her journey can and should be yours and to make sure that all the little bright-eyed, bubbly, young ones who lay awake at night wanting to be more than they are, can one day, reach their goals. We can hardly wait for the next chapter in her life to unfold. What's next? The sky is the limit!