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On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker (Lisa Drew Books (Paperback))

A'Lelia Bundles

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On Her Own Ground is the first full-scale, definitive biography of Madam C. J. Walker—the legendary African American entrepreneur and philanthropist—by her great-great-granddaughter, A'Lelia Bundles.

The daughter of slaves, Madam C. J. Walker was orphaned at seven, married at fourteen and widowed at twenty. She spent the better part of the next two decades laboring as a washerwoman for $1.50 a week. Then—with the discovery of a revolutionary hair care formula for black women—everything changed. By her death in 1919, Walker managed to overcome astonishing odds: building a storied beauty empire from the ground up, amassing wealth unprecedented among black women and devoting her life to philanthropy and social activism. Along the way, she formed friendships with great early-twentieth-century politi-cal figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington.

On Her Own Ground is not only the first comprehensive biography of one of recent history's most amazing entrepreneurs and philanthropists, it is about a woman who is truly an African American icon. Drawn from more than two decades of exhaustive research, the book is enriched by the author's exclusive access to personal letters, records and never-before-seen photographs from the family collection. Bundles also showcases Walker's complex relationship with her daughter, A'Lelia Walker, a celebrated hostess of the Harlem Renaissance and renowned friend to both Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. In chapters such as “Freedom Baby,” “Motherless Child,” “Bold Moves” and “Black Metropolis,” Bundles traces her ancestor's improbable rise to the top of an international hair care empire that would be run by four generations of Walker women until its sale in 1985. Along the way, *On Her Own Ground* reveals surprising insights, tells fascinating stories and dispels many misconceptions.

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