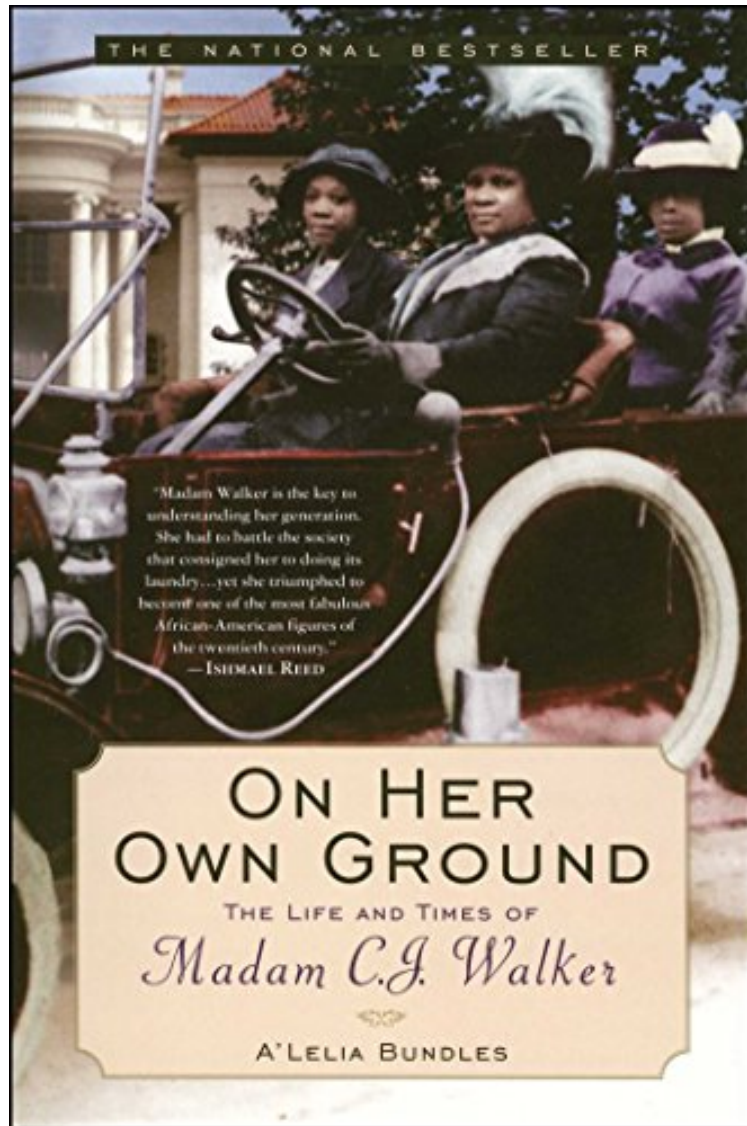


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## On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker (Lisa Drew Books (Paperback))

A'Leia Bundles

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A'Leia Bundles : On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker (Lisa Drew Books (Paperback)) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker (Lisa Drew Books (Paperback)):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Well Presented!By Reynard AllisonI found this to be a literary

masterpiece as well as a riveting depiction of what life was like for almost all middle-aged black women in such a dark moment within the body politic of America. This book spoke to the true character of Madam Walker and her life's work which was in many ways selfless, it appears that she lived her life in an attempt at always trying to make life better for those around her. The author A'Lelia Bundles has taken great care and consideration in translating in vibrant detail, the events of Madam Walker's trials and triumphs and her single-minded drive to accomplish what could have been considered as unthinkable at the turn of the century. Anyone who enjoys reading biography will also appreciate the extensive research that has been ascribed to this work, the noticeable attention to detail that has been applied to support, substantiate and sustain the historical record of events is second to none. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Comprehensive Read By L. S. Worsham I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Having never read anything else about Madam Walker, it dispelled many of the popular myths about her life that I had always heard (her products promoted white standards of beauty, etc.) I agree that it is heavy on detail and thus may be thought to be a bit 'slow'. However, the author frequently states that there are few sources to verify information about Madam's life (she was not the typical turn-of-the-century CEO with personal secretaries documenting her every move) and it seems the author was trying to piece together much of her insights based upon context and circumstances, which are thoroughly researched and detailed. Left me wanting to know more about the race leaders of the period, not bored. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Inspiring life of a woman who overcame her gender, her race, and her lack of formal education in the early 1900s By Diane L. Lybbert Incredible true story of Madam C.J. Walker, the first black female entrepreneur in US history to build a national business and become a millionaire. Her parents were freed slaves working as sharecroppers in 1876 when she was born. Self-educated and highly ambitious, she built an empire in the cosmetic business, developing products to heal unhealthy scalps and promote hair growth in black women. She trained other black women to sell the products and open salons, lifting an entire generation of poor uneducated black women from lifelong toil as washerwomen, sharecroppers, or domestic servants into successful independent businesswomen. The book is written by Madam Walker's great-great granddaughter, using photos, letters, and other personal documents, in addition to magazine and newspaper accounts of her extraordinary life. Once established as a successful businesswoman, she used her influence to champion civil rights, overturn Jim Crow laws, and abolish the hateful practice of lynching. This is an inspiring story of what one woman accomplished in the early 1900s, overcoming her gender, her race, and her lack of education.

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 political 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.

.com She was the daughter of slaves, married at 14, a widow with a baby daughter at 20. But, by the time that she was 40, Madam C.J. Walker (1867-1919) was making as much money as a white corporate executive, thanks to her popular hair-care products for black women and her brilliance at marketing them. She created a workforce of sales agents that gave African American women job options other than being washerwomen or domestics. As her prominence and wealth increased, she became a generous benefactor of black educational institutions, and such a staunch supporter of the antilynching movement that the State Department labeled her a "race agitator" and denied her a passport in 1919. Yet, she had plenty of time for fun, too; she built a lavish mansion (near John D. Rockefeller's) in Irvington-on-Hudson, New York, and her daughter Lelia entertained the Harlem Renaissance elite in a spectacular Manhattan townhouse that was renovated with revenues from the company's New York branch. Author A'Lelia Bundles, a veteran television journalist and Madam Walker's descendant, reminds us that controversy over straightened hair has raged within the black community for a century, and that the businesswoman insisted that her aim never was to "de-kink" her customers' tresses, but instead to "grow" them through proper care, frequent washing,

and improved nutrition. Bundles seamlessly weaves together her great-great-grandmother's remarkable personal odyssey with the broader outlines of African American struggle in the early 20th century, to create a colorful biography that's also a fascinating social history. --Wendy Smith

From Publishers Weekly

Bundles, the great-great-granddaughter of America's first black woman millionaire, evinces great affection for her famous relative, even if she doesn't overcome a major hurdle: Madam Walker kept her intimate life so private that there's not much to say about it. In the first chapters, Bundles uses a lot of awkward "possibly"s and "perhaps"s as she speculates about her subject's motivations and feelings. Once into the swing of Madam Walker's career, however, Bundles sidesteps the problem by turning social historian, leaving questions of love and sex aside. Walker's trajectory from uneducated washerwoman to hair-care industry magnate becomes the organizing element for a larger mosaic of black life in America, from Reconstruction through the founding of the NAACP in 1909. There's solid business history here, too, as Madam Walker figures out how to make her kitchen industry into a national empire by franchising it. Walker's philanthropy and social consciousness (working for the antilynching and the African anticolonial movements, for example) made her an important powerbroker in the black community. With fascinating details on benevolent and fraternal organizations, urban churches, black colleges, political movements and government surveillance of those involved in them, Bundles takes readers on an engrossing tour of a neglected corner of American history. Agent, Gail Ross. (Feb. 1)

Forecast: While this is too densely researched for the average Oprah fan, devotees of social history, women's studies and business narratives will find Bundles's work a treasure. And find it they will as Bundles goes out on a major nine-city tour. This could easily become a staple in college-level African-American studies classes, and a reading group favorite. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

TV journalist Bundles (ABC News) delivers the first comprehensive adult biography of Madame C.J. Walker, her great-great-grandmother, who was born Sarah Breedlove on a Louisiana plantation in 1867 and whose name subsequently became synonymous with hair straightening and black wealth. The author dispels the myth that Walker invented the hair-straightening comb and made her money from hair-straightening products for black women, a highly political issue in Walker's time as well as our own. Bundles instead focuses on Walker's impressive philanthropy, her business savvy, and the personal and political motivations that propelled her from washerwoman to cosmetics industry pioneer and legendary African American businesswoman. Walker employed thousands of black women nationwide, zealously donated to organizations that served the black community, and was actively involved in anti-lynching and racial equality campaigns. The book is a solidly researched and well-written historical account of a rags-to-riches experience that exemplifies the American dream. Recommended for all African American history collections. Sherri L. Barnes, Univ. of California Lib., Santa Barbara

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