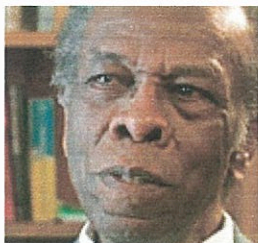


Listen to the language

A 137-year-old revolutionary poet lives among those in the UD community. He is Paul Laurence Dunbar, as enacted by Herbert Woodward Martin, UD professor emeritus, poet and performance artist.



Martin, who often mentions retiring his Dunbar character, is the focus of a new documentary, *Jump Back, Honey*, to premier 7 p.m. *Friday* in Boll Theatre. "My own feeling is I lived it once and I had no intention of doing it a second time," Martin said of the film. "But in another sense, it's very complimentary."

Martin was first introduced to Dunbar's poetry in a segregated primary school while growing up in the South. He and his classmates dreaded memorizing the poems of Dunbar, with whom Martin shares a resemblance. Some of Martin's classmates even asked if he could tell his "family member" to give them a break.

Then, "When I moved to Ohio, all the black writers disappeared from the textbooks," he said.

The appreciation for Dunbar's works came back to Martin through textbooks in an American literature class at the University of Toledo. "I liked literature, I liked reading and all those things came together," he said.

Working as an English professor allowed Martin to develop his own outstanding body of poetry. One, "Poor Old Martin," explained to his students of the '70s why he chose not to experiment with drugs to spark poetic influence. "I thought that I was already gifted creatively," Martin said, "maybe unbalanced anyways ..."

When reciting his own works or those of Dunbar, he keys in on the power of words. "You have to listen to the way that people use language," he said.

by Johnnie Kling '09 1-15-09