10-12-1972

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Recommended Citation
"Special Centennial Celebration Honors Paul Lawrence Dunbar" (1972). News Releases. 4108.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/4108
DAYTON, Ohio, October 12, 1972 --- The Department of English and the Center for Afro-American Studies of the University of Dayton announce plans for a special Centennial Celebration in honor of Paul Laurence Dunbar (June 28, 1872 - February 9, 1906), distinguished black poet and native Daytonian. The celebration was made possible through a generous grant from the University's Institute for Christian Renewal.

The program will take place on October 19, 20, and 21 at the University of Dayton. Nineteen prominent black artists are coming from various sections of the country to read Dunbar's poetry and their own. The writers coming are Alvin Aubert, Hoyt W. Fuller, Nikki Giovanni (Wilberforce University awarded her an honorary doctorate), Michael S. Harper, John Oliver Killens, Etheridge Knight, Audre Lorde, Paule Marshall, Paulene Myers, Gloria C. Oden, Raymond B. Patterson, Dudley Randall, Saunders Redding, Sonia Sanchez, Lorenzo Thomas, Alice Walker, and Margaret Walker. Two local participants are Ron Jackson, Director of Creative Writing at the Living Arts Center and Herbert Woodward Martin, poet-in-residence at the University of Dayton.

The three day celebration will take several forms. On Thursday the Centennial will begin at 8:00 P.M. in O'Leary Auditorium with an official welcome to the guests. This will be followed by a marathon reading of Dunbar's poetry by the visiting artists. Friday will be dedicated to the visiting artists performing their own works in honor of Dunbar. The readings will begin at 10:00 A.M. in the Lecture Room of the Kennedy Union and continue, with a break for lunch, until 6:00 P.M. Friday evening there will be additional readings at 7:30 P.M. followed by a special performance at 8:30 P.M. in the Boll Theatre of Kennedy Union by Paulene Myers. This actress recently won a Drama Critics special award for her powerful one-woman show THE WORLD OF MY AMERICA. She will perform the Dunbar portion of this show.

The program will conclude on Saturday morning with panel discussions. These will begin at 10:30 A.M. in the Boll Theatre. There is no admission fee and all events are open to the public.

Herbert Woodward Martin, Assistant Professor of English and Director of the program indicates that the artists are coming for expenses only because of their desire to honor Dunbar. "They feel they have been influenced by Dunbar, that he got them interested in writing creatively. They feel this is the chance to pay him back for something he did for them many years ago," Martin says.

"A renewed appreciation of Dunbar and a re-evaluation of Dunbar's importance for everybody" are Martin's hopes for the event. "I hope people find his poetry delightful and interesting to read."