

The Don Difference Series
Curtis Crisler

0:00-0:22 Poetry can't be politically correct. I think poetry is truth telling. And I say, I have... My saying is, I think poets are the most truthful of liars. The poems that come from us reflect us. In that reflection we see ourselves and usually poetry is good at doing that.

0:23-0:50 My research and creative endeavor lies in what I call Urban Midwestern Sensibility—I made this up. But basically what it addresses is me looking at the southern migrations—the two southern migrations—moving up north. And I look, my work tends to be about the people who've done that and addressing their lives, their deaths, how they live and move.

0:51-1:29 My first book which is actually my thesis for grad school, my MFA, is called *Tough Boy Sonatas*, and it kind of blurs everything because it's nonfiction, it's poetry, it's in the young adult genre. I teach fiction, I teach forms of poetry. So we're addressing how to perform poetry as well as how to find poetry. And the last class is Intro to Poetry class. I get them to do a lot of creative writing, a lot of reading, and try to get them to see contemporary poets, to see more poets of color, that type of thing.

1:30-2:16 Going back to Performance Poetry class, they have to write a paper. And the paper is on interdisciplinary aspects of performance poetry and how does that play into other fields. That's what they're discovering—how even if I'm in computers, or electronics, or engineering, at the end of that engineering degree you have to do an assignment, and then the assignment you have to write a proposal. And they have your teachers, your peers, and people from the community come and see you. And so you have to do an oral report and you have to represent all your research. That's one aspect that you can address that performance helps you out in, you know, stage presence and things of that nature.

2:17-2:59 The first thing when they're in the freshmen and sophomore classes, I try to get them to get their voice. They have to have a voice. The reason that you like whoever it is that you like and read, it's because of their voice. When they connect with their voices, they begin to see how to address that in any writing that they do because all you're doing from that point on is manipulating and adapting it to a persuasive paper, to a CV, if you're writing for the president ... and you're, you know, you get to understand persuasive speech, logos and all

that kind of thing. Once they get that, they're like, 'Ah, I didn't know,' you know. Because they don't know they have a voice a lot of the time, they're just writing, and it's like no you have to write from your voice.

3:00-3:30 I always have people coming to me from math and biology telling me how the techniques that I use in poetry helped them in their other genres of learning. I say we have the skills box just like we have a toolbox and we have skills in there. If there's a skill we don't have, we go out and get it and then we add it to the skills box just like if there's a tool we don't have, we do the same thing. So now you're just acquiring this knowledge and stuff that you can use and manipulate and adapt to whatever situation you're going to use it for.

3:31-3:35 (Music)