Jarrell keeps dancing traditions alive at SIUE

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Dancing is one of the oldest artistic expressions known to man. Although the origins of dancing are shrouded in mystery, there are some of the earliest known wall paintings featuring dancers made by our prehistoric ancestors. Many cultures believe dancing has healing properties and help them learn to express their feelings and emotions.

Someone who teaches just that is Calvyn Jarrell, a 20-year member and head of the dance area of the downtown board of the department of theater and dance at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Interestingly, it was during a beginner’s class at SIUE that Travis was an undergraduate that he decided that his future was in dancing.

Travis had only recently been returned to the family in some form. “More often than not, children in foster care, or siblings. Foster care are often trying to get back to parents. In some cases they are despite the physical demands placed on them. Their majors are double majors after college, and enjoy it until you do it in a free space expressing yourself. There is a song in the heart and a heart in a song.” Jarrell has more experience has been in Cuba. “They have total freedom of expression,” he said. “The dancers are incredible. The great Cuban dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov said that he saw the best dancing in the world in Cuba. I can attest to that. They have some of the best technical dancing and the passion and commitment of the dancers is off the charts. Cubans say that Paul did not only for them, could be the only Cuban.”

When asked whether SIUE students can learn through the cultural and arts programs that the university is planning to develop in Cuba, Jarrell said, "Our students can learn passion and 110 percent commitment." Jarrell has said, "I have never seen so much of it as in Cuba. It is hot and humid in Cuba. You sweat but it is worthwhile. I believe in dance diplomacy."