

A compelling theatrical repertoire built on cultural milestones of a human history

Mike Wiley Productions



**"This is more than mere versatility –
it's virtuosity."** American Theatre Magazine

"It is to Wiley's great credit that he focuses his formidable talents on the story, allowing the audience to clearly understand each character's strengths and foibles... A tour-de-force ... a riveting evening of theater, one of the year's ten best." – (Raleigh) News & Observer

"In my thirty-one years in education, I cannot remember any performance that matches his wonderful blend of humor, history, reflection, student involvement and lasting impact. Mesmerizing... truly a gift. In a matter of minutes, he won undivided attention and taught more history than could be taught in a week. He is doing very important work." Dr. Barry Redmond, Superintendent, Newton-Conover City Schools, NC

THE PARCHMAN HOUR

Mike Wiley Productions' newest acclaimed work commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Riders. In 1961, the original 13 Riders boarded a bus in Washington, DC bound for New Orleans via Mississippi and Alabama. They barely made it out of Alabama alive. Over the course of the next three months, approximately 300 other Riders took up the mantle and followed the path of those first brave few. Mobs brutally assaulted many. Riders were arrested and, instead of posting bail, chose to serve sentences in one of the most brutal prisons in the South, Parchman Farm, proving the Freedom Riders and the movement to desegregate interstate travel would not be deterred. Utilizing the race rhetoric and the soulful freedom songs of the 1960's, a 10-member ensemble casts new perspective into what became possibly the most tense three months of the American Civil Rights Movement. **The Parchman Hour** is a celebration of bravery. It is a call to action through remembrance, leaving the audience asking "Who stood up for me? Moreover, who can I stand up for today?"

• *Two-act/90 min. for mixed audiences; 50-min. student version for grades 5+.*

BLOOD DONE SIGN MY NAME

"Daddy and Roger and 'em shot 'em a nigger." Those incendiary words, spoken by ten-year-old Gerald Teel in the spring of 1970 were merely a harbinger of the turmoil smoldering on Oxford, North Carolina's dark horizon. Henry "Dickie" Marrow, a 23-year-old U.S. Army veteran whose wife was pregnant with their third daughter, had been beaten and shot to death by Robert Teel, his son Larry, and Roger Oakley, Teel's stepson, for allegedly making a remark to Larry Teel's wife. The men were acquitted of the crime by an all-white jury, despite testimony by two black eyewitnesses. Roger Oakley, Teel's stepson, actually confessed to shooting the gun but was never indicted. But it was the Teels' acquittal for their hot-headed hate crime that launched Oxford into a season of violent reprisals. Based on Tim Tyson's award winning memoir, *Blood Done Sign My Name* is meant to acknowledge America's painful racial history, "that our freedom and dignity, if we still have any, has been paid for in blood, that we have a contract with our ancestors not to let their sacrifices be in vain." Features special guest musical artist in full-length version. • *Two-act/90 min. for mixed audiences plus 50-min. student version, grades 7+.*

DAR HE: THE STORY OF EMMETT TILL

In 1955, a 14-year-old black Chicago youth traveled to the Mississippi Delta with country kinfolk and southern cooking on his mind. He walked off the train and into a world he could never understand -- a world of thick color lines, of hard-held class systems and unspeakable taboos. Young Emmett crossed that line and stepped into his gruesome fate by whistling at a white woman. This riveting play chronicles the murder, trial and unbelievable confession of the men accused of Till's lynching.

• *Two-act/ 90 min. for mixed audiences plus 50-min. student version, gr. 7+.*

ONE NOBLE JOURNEY: A BOX MARKED FREEDOM

A true story of three slaves who overcome seemingly insurmountable odds to gain a life of freedom. Wiley becomes Henry "Box" Brown, a black slave who sees no alternative but to mail himself to freedom in a small crate. Brown's life unfolds like a Mark Twain adventure, perilous and somber at times while humorous and heroic throughout. Audience members join Wiley on stage, quickly and quietly becoming characters helping propel the historic action. • *Two-act/90 min. for mixed audiences plus 50-min. student version for gr. 3+.*

BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION: OVER FIFTY YEARS LATER

In 1952, the Supreme Court heard a number of school-segregation cases, including Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. It ruled unanimously in 1954 that segregation was unconstitutional, overthrowing Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) that had set the "separate but equal" precedent. A tour de force that encapsulates the high impact ruling for desegregating schools.

• *50 min.; grades 7+, plus general audiences.*

JACKIE ROBINSON: A GAME APART

A play that can intrigue, educate and set one's thirst for success on fire; a powerful lesson of courage through dedication and leadership, of African-American athletes who pushed the color barrier to its break point. Meet role models from the outfield, the backcourt, the track, the ring, the blacktop, the mud rising from the blood, sweat and tears of a bygone era of separate unequal locker rooms, whites-only hotels and restaurants with only a back door through which colored athletes could enter.

• *50 min.; grades 2+, plus general audiences.*

TIRED SOULS: THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT

Over fifty years ago, a petite black woman, tired from a day's work, rested her weary bones on a segregated Alabama city bus. Rosa Parks' refusal to relinquish her seat to a white man sparked a movement among Montgomery's black citizens that would carry cries for equality around the world and subsequently resound in the halls of the Supreme Court. This play documents the tales of Martin Luther King Jr. and nearly a dozen others of the hundreds of men and women who stood up to Jim Crow's segregation, held tight to their bus money and walked for freedom for 381 days. • *50 min.; grades 3+, plus general audiences.*

All productions include post-show discussion Q&A; study guides available.