



“I remember my dad saying the day will come, and when it does, you should be ready.”

May 24, 1961 was the day 19-year-old Jean Thompson’s father had prepared her for her entire life. On that day, she boarded a Trailways bus in Montgomery, Alabama with 11 other young Freedom Riders bound for New Orleans - and history. “My parents always talked about the injustice of segregation, but they were optimistic; they didn’t feel like it was going to last forever,” Thompson recalled. “They raised us to be ready.” Several weeks earlier the original 13 Riders had 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 including Jean Thompson, took up the mantle and followed the path of those first brave few. Mobs brutally assaulted many. Others 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.

***“So people get ready, there’s a train a comin’
You don’t need no baggage, you just get on board
All you need is faith to hear the diesels hummin’
Don’t need no ticket, you just thank the Lord.”
-Curtis Mayfield ’55***

That life-changing day for Jean Thompson is just one of the moments from that decisive spring almost fifty years ago when freedom came rolling through the South that ***THE PARCHMAN HOUR*** dramatizes in a new 90-minute production. Utilizing the race rhetoric and the soulful sounds of the 1960’s, an ensemble of young voices will breath new life into what was perhaps the most tense three months of the American Civil Rights Movement. Conceived and written by acclaimed actor & playwright Mike Wiley with author Timothy B. Tyson, ***THE PARCHMAN HOUR*** is a compelling oral history originally produced by the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University and the LAB! at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. The national touring production features an ensemble of actors who bring to life the voices and conversations from the Freedom Struggle’s most iconic protagonists and antagonists alike. ***THE PARCHMAN HOUR*** is a celebration of bravery and a call to action through remembrance. Staged much like the live radio programs of yesteryear with a touch of modern tenacity, ***THE PARCHMAN HOUR*** leaves every audience asking, ‘Who stood up for me?’ Moreover ‘Whom can I stand up for today?’ ‘Who needs my voice, my words, my song?’

Touring company of 8 actors and musicians, plus 2 technicians. Available in full-length [two-act] production for general audience, plus 50-min. student version recommended for grades 6 & above.

***Mike Wiley Productions ★ Booking Information
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mikewileyproductions.com***