Inside

THE PLAY
Synopsis and Characters • 3

THE AUTHOR
About the Playwright and Form • 7

CULTURAL CONTEXT
Timeline and Locations • 8
General Vocabulary • 10
Glossary/General Information • 12

THE GUTHRIE PRODUCTION
Notes from the Creative Team • 18

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Bringing the Play into the Classroom • 20
For Further Understanding • 22

Play guides are made possible by

Guthrie Theater Study Guide
Copyright 2016

DRAMATURG Jo Holcomb
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Akemi Waldusky
RESEARCH Jo Holcomb

All rights reserved. With the exception of classroom use by teachers and individual personal use, no part of this Play Guide may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying or recording, or by an information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers. Some materials published herein are written especially for our Guide. Others are reprinted by permission of their publishers.

Jo Holcomb: 612.225.6117 | Carla Steen: 612.225.6118

The Guthrie Theater receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts. This activity is made possible in part by the Minnesota State Arts Board, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature. The Minnesota State Arts Board received additional funds to support this activity from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Guthrie Theater, founded in 1963, is an American center for theater performance, production, education and professional training. By presenting both classical literature and new work from diverse cultures, the Guthrie illuminates the common humanity connecting Minnesota to the peoples of the world.
In 1961, thirteen riders – men and women, black and white – boarded a bus in Washington, DC bound for New Orleans via Mississippi and Alabama. Their goal: to assert their legal right to cross state lines as a unified, integrated group. 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. Others were arrested and, instead of posting bail, chose to serve sentences in one of the most brutal prisons in the South, the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman Farm, and bring attention to their activism. The Freedom Riders, and the movement to desegregate interstate travel, would not be deterred.

Presented in the style of the variety shows of yesteryear, the The Parchman Hour explores three of the tensest months of 1961. The play brings to the stage powerful oral histories and conversations from the Freedom Rides’ most iconic protagonists and antagonists.

Did you know that at Parchman, to pass the time and to keep our spirits up, we ‘invented’ a radio program? I don’t recall that we named it, but ‘The Parchman Hour’ would have been a good name. Each cell had to contribute a short “act” (singing a song, telling a joke, reading from the Bible — the only book we were allowed) and in between acts we had ‘commercials’ for the products we lived with every day, like the prison soap, the black-and-white striped skirts, the awful food, etc. We did this every evening, as I recall; it gave us something to do during the day, thinking up our cell’s act for the evening.

— Mimi Real, Freedom Rider, 1961

PHOTO: LAUREN MUELLER
The Characters

JOHN LEWIS
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) leader, Freedom Rider

JAMES LEONARD FARMER, JR.
National Director, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Freedom Rider

JOAN TRUMPAUER MULHOLLAND
19-year-old Duke University student, Freedom Rider

FREDERICK LEONARD
Tennessee State University student, Freedom Rider

MIRIAM FEINGOLD REAL (MIMI)
student, Swarthmore College, Freedom Rider

CAROL RUTH SILVER
22 years old, Freedom Rider

STOKELY CARMICHAEL
19-year-old student, Howard University, Freedom Rider

STEPHENV JOHN GREEN
student, Middlebury College, Freedom Rider

WILLIAM HOOKER SVANOE
graduate student, University of Minnesota, Freedom Rider

LUCRETIA COLLINS
Freedom Rider

HANK THOMAS
Howard University student, Freedom Rider

JEAN THOMPSON
CORE worker, Freedom Rider
PAULINE KNIGHT-OFOSU
Tennessee State University student, Freedom Rider

JIMMY MCDONALD
CORE member, Freedom Rider
(pictured: Freedom Riders Jimmy McDonald (right) and James Peck (center) talk to reporter Bill Cook (left) upon their arrival in New Orleans.

MERYLE JOY REAGON
Tennessee State University student, Freedom Rider

JESSE HARRIS
high school student – Jackson, MS resident
– arrested participating in bus station integration action

BERNARD LAFAYETTE
student, American Baptist Theological Seminary, Freedom Rider

JIM ZWERG
student, Beloit College, Freedom Rider
(Freedom Riders, including Jim Zwerg (far left) and Lucretia Collins (looking at camera), wait to board a bus in Alabama)

DORIS CASTLE
17 years old, Freedom Rider
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
Civil Rights activist and president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (pictured: Martin Luther King, Jr. encourages Freedom Riders as they board a bus for Jackson, Miss., 1961. (Paul SchutzerTime & Life Pictures/Getty Image)

ROBERT FRANCIS KENNEDY (1925-1968)
United States Attorney General

EUGENE “BULL” CONNOR
Birmingham, Alabama public safety commissioner

JOHN PATTERSON
44th Governor of Alabama (1959 - 1963)

DEPUTY TYSON
Officer in charge, Parchman Prison Farm

(pictured: Governor John Patterson confers with Attorney General Robert Kennedy.)
About the Playwright

Actor and playwright Mike Wiley has spent the last decade fulfilling his mission to bring educational theater to young audiences and communities across the country. In the early days of his career, Wiley found few theatrical resources to shine a light on key events and figures in African-American history. To bring these stories to life, he started his own production company.

Through his performances, Wiley has introduced countless students and communities to the legacies of Emmett Till, Henry “Box” Brown and more. His most recent works include a one-man play based on Tim Tyson’s memoir Blood Done Sign My Name and The Parchman Hour.

About the Form

**DOCUMENTARY THEATER**

*The Parchman Hour* is a work of art that can be categorized as docudrama.

Documentary performances often emerge in response to social or political crises; documentary playwrights offer their audiences a theatrical presentation of real events to inspire critical questions about history, memory and justice as well as provoke social action to change the world outside the theater walls.

In the history of American theater there have been several important examples of the form. The first is the work produced under the auspices of the Federal Theater Project (1935-1939). Their “Living Newspapers” used a form borrowed from propaganda of the times and the workers’ theater popular in early twentieth century Europe and the Soviet Union. The second appears during the 1960s, with the social upheaval surrounding the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War. Emerging playwrights and theater used the documentary form as a way to explore new boundaries of theatrical form and space. Happenings and autobiographical solo performances found new life in this era.

Currently, a new form of documentary theater has emerged, characterized by collaborative development of the theater performance among directors, designers, playwrights, actors and their documentary subjects (living and dead). Perhaps the most notable example of the current documentary theater moment is *The Laramie Project* (2000), a play about the murder of college student Matthew Shepard, created by Moisés Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theatre Project. In the first eighteen months following the murder, the company traveled from New York to Laramie, Wyoming to interview members of the community about the event, its aftermath, and their attitudes and beliefs regarding homosexuality. The company’s interview material became the centerpiece of a collaboratively built play that went through an extensive workshop development.
The Freedom Riders set out to challenge the status quo by riding various forms of public transportation in the South to challenge local laws or customs that enforced segregation. The Freedom Rides, and the violent reactions they provoked, bolstered the credibility of the American Civil Rights Movement and called national attention to the violent disregard for the law that was used to enforce segregation in the southern United States. Riders were arrested for trespassing, unlawful assembly and violating state and local Jim Crow laws, along with other alleged offenses.

**THURSDAY, MAY 4, 1961**

**Washington D.C.**

CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) Freedom Ride leaves from Washington D.C. Led by CORE Director James Farmer, 13 riders (seven black, six white) left Washington, D.C. on Greyhound and Trailways buses. Their plan was to ride through Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, ending with a rally in New Orleans, Louisiana.

**MONDAY, MAY 8, 1961**

**Charlotte**

Joseph Perkins is the first Freedom Rider to be arrested after sitting at
a “whites only” shoe-shine stand in Charlotte, NC.

Rock Hill
Later that same day, Freedom Rider John Lewis is assaulted in the Greyhound bus terminal of Rock Hill, SC, after attempting to enter the white waiting room with fellow Freedom Rider Al Bigelow.

Winnsboro
Other riders were arrested in Winnsboro.

FRIDAY, MAY 12, 1961

Atlanta
The CORE Freedom Riders arrive in Atlanta, GA, where Martin Luther King, Jr. warns them of violence ahead.

Amid bomb threats, jeers and other methods of intimidation, CORE Freedom Riders travel to New Orleans by plane.

SUNDAY, MAY 14, 1961

Anniston
CORE Freedom Riders bus #1 burned.
An angry mob of KKK members and their supporters burn a Freedom Riders’ Greyhound bus near Anniston, AL.

Birmingham
CORE Freedom Riders bus #2 attacked.
A riot breaks out at the Trailways Bus Station in Birmingham, AL. A KKK mob savagely beats both Freedom Riders and innocent bystanders alike with iron pipes, chains and clubs.

FRIDAY, MAY 19, 1961

Montgomery
Freedom Riders attacked.
The Freedom Riders arrive in Montgomery, AL where a police escort abandons them to an angry mob. Freedom Rider Jim Zwerg and Federal official John Seigenthaler are badly injured in an ensuing brawl.

TUESDAY, MAY 23, 1961

Jackson
Freedom Riders jailed.
The Riders board buses from Montgomery to Jackson, Miss. under National Guard escort. They are jailed upon arrival under the formal charges of incitement to riot, breach of the peace and failure to obey a police officer.

SUNDAY, JUNE 11, 1961

Parchman State Penitentiary
Freedom Riders are transferred to Mississippi’s notorious Parchman State Prison Farm. Segregationist authorities attempt to break their spirits by removing mattresses from the cells. New Freedom Riders will continue to arrive in Jackson, Miss. and be jailed throughout the summer.
Black Codes
Any of the various state laws that regulated the activities of blacks in the south after the Civil War, used generally to restrict the rights of blacks by circumscribing their right to hold office and vote, forbidding ownership of land or the bearing of arms, and curtailing other civil rights.

Boynton v. Virginia
This case interprets the idea that interstate facilities were for the use of all citizens regardless of race. In 1958, Bruce Boynton, a black student at Howard University Law School, took a Trailways bus from Washington to his home in Montgomery, Alabama. On a 40-minute layover at the Trailways Bus Terminal in Richmond, Virginia, the passengers went inside to eat. Boynton entered the segregated restaurant, sat in the white section and ordered a sandwich and tea. When asked to move to the colored section, he refused and was arrested by local police. He was charged with trespassing, and fined $10.

Brown v. Board of Education
In 1950, the Topeka NAACP, led by McKinley Burnett, set out to organize a legal challenge to an 1879 state law that permitted racially segregated elementary schools in certain cities, based on population. For Kansas this would become the 12th case filed in the state focused on ending segregation in public schools. The local NAACP assembled a group of 13 parents who agreed to be plaintiffs on behalf of their 20 children. Following direction from legal counsel they attempted to enroll their children in segregated white schools and all were denied. Topeka operated eighteen neighborhood schools for white children, while African American children had access to only four schools. In February of 1951 the Topeka NAACP filed a case on their behalf. Although this was a class action, it was named for one of the plaintiffs, Oliver Brown. The case dismantled the legal basis for racial segregation in schools and other public facilities. The laws and policies were products of the human tendencies to prejudice, discriminate against and stereotype other people by their ethnic, religious, physical or cultural characteristics.

Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)
A not-for-profit human rights organization that seeks to bring about equality for all people regardless of race, creed, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or ethnic background. (http://www.coreonline.org/Features/what-is-core.htm, 2010)

Executive Order 9981
July 27, 1948. Violence against African American members of the U.S. Military during and following World War II prompted President Harry S. Truman to investigate the treatment of African Americans and their opportunities for advancement in the United States Armed Forces. Two and one-half years after the end of World War II, President Truman issues Executive Order 9981 to end segregation in the U.S. Military. The President establishes the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services headed by Charles Fahy. The Fahy Committee oversaw the integration of all the branches of the Armed Forces. The Navy had begun integration at the end of the war, and a year after E.O. 9981 was signed, the Air Force was ready to integrate. The other branches were not so willing to accept the idea of integration. The Army continued to have separate African American units in 1950, right before the Korean War. The breakdown of segregation in the Army occurred during the Korean War when the large number of African American recruits could not be accommodated in the African American units. By 1953 the U.S. Army announced that 95% of its African American soldiers were serving in integrated units.

Freedom Summer
A highly publicized campaign in the Deep South in 1964 that helped blacks register to vote.

Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC)
An independent agency created in reference to the Interstate Commerce Act which regulates carriers engaged in transportation in interstate commerce and in foreign commerce within the United States.

Journey of Reconciliation
In 1946, the U.S. Supreme Court banned segregation in interstate...
bus travel. A year later the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation tested the ruling by staging the Journey of Reconciliation, on which an interracial group of activists rode together on a bus through the upper south; they were fearful of journeying to the Deep South.

**Morgan v. Virginia**
This case consisted of Virginia’s law requiring racial segregation in interstate public transportation. On July 16, 1944, twenty-seven-year-old Irene Morgan boarded a Greyhound bus in Gloucester County, bound for Baltimore via Washington, D.C. After standing on the bus for several miles and sitting on the lap of an accommodating young black female passenger, Morgan finally took a seat three rows from the back of the bus, in front of some white passengers. When the bus became crowded as it reached Saluda, Virginia, the bus driver insisted that Morgan yield her seat to a white passenger. After she refused and was forcibly removed from the bus, Morgan was arrested, tried and convicted of violating a state segregation ordinance and fined ten dollars, which she refused to pay. In a seven to one ruling, the Court reversed the Virginia appellate court and struck down the Virginia law and, by extension, all similar laws in other states mandating Jim Crow practices on interstate conveyances. In April 1947, sixteen interracial passengers — eight white, eight black, all members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) — engaged in a “Journey of Reconciliation” to test adherence to the decision and to help educate people about the Court’s decision. The journey was a precursor to the Freedom Rides that would pass through Virginia in May 1961.

**Plessy v. Ferguson**
This case upheld the idea of the constitutionality of an 1890 Louisiana statute requiring white and “colored” persons to be furnished “separate but equal” accommodations on railway passenger cars. Homer Adolph Plessy, who was seven-eighths Caucasian and one-eighth African, paid for a first-class seat on a Louisiana railroad. He took a seat in the coach that was reserved for white passengers, but the conductor told him to leave the “white” car and go to the “colored” coach under threat of being expelled from the train and arrested. When Plessy refused, he was ejected from the train and imprisoned.

**Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company**
In August 1952, Private Sarah Keys was granted a furlough to visit her parents in Washington, North Carolina, and purchased a bus ticket home. Traveling from Ft. Dix, New Jersey, when the bus reached Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, Keys, who was seated at the front of the bus, was asked by the bus driver to exchange seats with a white Marine seated near the back. She refused, and the driver removed all passengers except Keys to another bus. Keys was not allowed to board the second bus, and was arrested by force and charged with disorderly conduct.

**Sovereignty Commission**
A secret state police force that operated to suppress the civil rights movement and maintain segregation. (http://mississippisovereigntycommission.blogspot.com/, 2010)

**Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)**
An organization that was established from the student sit-ins that occurred on February 1, 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina. (http://www.sncc50thanniversary.org/sncc.html, 2010)

**Separate but Equal**
A policy of racial segregation between blacks and whites – in education, employment or transportation – that provided ostensibly equal facilities for all.

**Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)**
An American organization, consisting chiefly of southern churches, formed in 1957 to campaign for civil rights.
1. THE PARCHMAN HOUR, STAGE DIRECTION: 12-year-old Janie Forsyth gallops in playing “Cowboys and Indians.” She’s a tomboy dressed in overalls and a cowboy hat.

Janie Forsyth was the daughter of the owner of a grocery store near Anniston, Alabama where a bus carrying Freedom Riders was firebombed on May 14, 1961. She was moved to assist the injured Freedom Riders, bringing them water. Her action earned her the hostility of her family and her community.

Video – Janie recounts the day and her actions:

2. THE PARCHMAN HOUR, DIALOGUE: We took the sit-in movement that was happening on college campuses out into the populace. We were committed to this idea of the beloved community, the redeemed America.

–John Lewis

“The Beloved Community” is a term that was first coined in the early days of the 20th Century by the philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce, who founded the Fellowship of Reconciliation. However, it was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who popularized the term and invested it with a deeper meaning.

For Dr. King, The Beloved Community was not a lofty utopian goal to be confused with the rapturous image of the Peaceable Kingdom, in which lions and lambs coexist in idyllic harmony. Rather, The Beloved Community was for him a realistic, achievable goal that could be attained by a critical mass of people committed to and trained in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence.

An ardent student of the teachings of Mohandas K. Gandhi, Dr. King was much impressed with the Mahatma’s befriending of his adversaries, most of whom professed profound admiration for Gandhi’s courage and intellect. Dr. King believed that the age-old tradition of hating one’s opponents was not only immoral, but bad strategy which perpetuated the cycle of revenge and retaliation. Only nonviolence, he believed, had the power to break the cycle of retributive violence and create lasting peace through reconciliation.

Dr. King’s Beloved Community was not devoid of interpersonal, group or international conflict. Instead he recognized that conflict was an inevitable part of human experience. But he believed that conflicts could be resolved peacefully and adversaries could be reconciled through a mutual, determined commitment to nonviolence. No conflict, he believed, need erupt in violence. And all conflicts in The Beloved Community should end with reconciliation of adversaries cooperating together in a spirit of friendship and goodwill.

As early as 1956, Dr. King spoke of The Beloved Community as the end goal of nonviolent boycotts. As he said in a speech at a victory rally following the announcement of a favorable U.S. Supreme Court Decision desegregating the seats on Montgomery’s busses, “The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends. It is this type of understanding and goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men.”
(excerpted from “The Beloved Community,” The King Philosophy. The King Center, Atlanta, Georgia, 2016.

3. Organized by C.O.R.E., the Congress of Racial Equality, the rides would carry people on Greyhound buses all over the South and their purpose was to breakdown segregation at bus stations in the major cities.

–James Farmer

CORE was founded in 1942 by a group of students on the Campus of the University of Chicago. Many of the founders of CORE where followers of the Ghandian principles of non-violent civil disobedience and belonged to an organization called F.O.R. (Fellowship of Reconciliation). CORE was first known as the Committee on Racial Equality. Bayard Rustin was one of the original leaders of CORE.
CULTURAL CONTEXT

CORE’s 1st National Director, James Farmer, served as Under-Secretary of Labor for President Richard Nixon. He later ran unsuccessfully for Congress as a Republican in Brooklyn, NY against Shirley Chisolm.

James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, the three young civil rights workers who were murdered by the KKK in 1964 in Philadelphia, Mississippi were members of CORE on assignment to the Freedom Summer Voter Registration project.

4. Mississippi. Cotton Country. Stretched across one vast, dusty plantation of fetid jails, cattle prods, black jacks, and midnight bombings of night riding Klansmen! The Parchman Hour. This is the show that runs from seven until nine, wherever you may live be it central or standard time. I’m your host, blacker than Bob Hope, Prettier than Jack Paar, the sour in Martha White’s Flour. The Kaffir in Kennedy’s coffee. –Stokely Carmichael

Bob Hope
Born in 1903, Bob Hope was a British-born American entertainer and comic actor known for his rapid-fire delivery of jokes and one-liners, as well as his success in virtually all entertainment media and his decades of overseas tours to entertain American troops. In the 1960s, his popularity had a resurgence because of his televised shows and specials. Hope received numerous awards and honors for his work as an entertainer and humanitarian. He died on July 27, 2003.

Jack Paar
Born in Canton, Ohio, on May 1, 1918, Jack Harold Paar dropped out of high school in the 10th grade to take a job as a radio announcer and DJ. Later, as a comedian in a U.S. Army special services unit, Paar entertained troops during World War II. After the war, he landed roles in a handful of early 1950s films. In 1952, he made his first forays into television, hosting game shows as well as variety programs. In 1957, Jack Paar replaced Steve Allen to become the second host of NBC’s The Tonight Show. Not as adept at sketch comedy, Paar more often relied on his monologues and discoveries, including Bill Cosby and Bob Newhart, for laughs. His eccentric guest list, including such varied personalities as Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Schweitzer and actor Peter Ustinov, complemented Paar’s eccentric personality, and his format of variety skits, interviews, witty conversation and monologues created what is now standard in the genre.

Martha White’s Flour
The Martha White brand was established as the premium brand of Nashville, Tennessee-based Royal Flour Mills in 1899. At that time, Nashville businessman Richard Lindsey introduced a fine flour that he named for his daughter, Martha White Lindsey. The Martha White brand is probably most associated with its long-term sponsorship of the Grand Ole Opry, a radio program featuring country music. The relationship began in 1948, and has existed continuously since then, making it one of the longest continually running radio show sponsorships known. A jingle for the flour, written by Nashville songwriter Pat Twitty in 1953, was first performed from the stage of the Grand Ole Opry by bluegrass music artists Flatt and Scruggs.

Kefir
Kefir is a tart-tasting drink originally of the Caucasus, made from cow’s or sometimes goat’s milk to which the bacteria Streptococcus and Lactobacillus have been added. Although probably much too bitter for mixing with coffee, as a milk product it could be. However, in this play on words, Kaffir has a much different meaning. Technically, the word means “heathen”, derived from the Arabic term kafir (meaning “disbeliever”), which originally had the meaning “one without religion”. But that’s not how the word has been used since the beginning of the Apartheid in South Africa. Much like the “N” word, the word began as an overgeneralization and oversimplification of the Black people by the white settlers in South Africa. Like many offensive words, “kafir” got stripped of its true meaning of “non-believer” or “non-follower of god” as years went by, and languages morphed (Dutch, English and some other languages turned into Afrikaans, words changed meanings, etc.) When the white European settlers stripped native South Africans of their rights, homes and dignity, they used the “k-word”, and they used it a lot. They used it to tell people they were worthless, uneducated, undeserving of respect. The k-word was a pernicious tool that provided South African whites a show of power over the natives. It was like a worse version of ... Peasant, boor, churl, degenerate, ignoble.
5. **THE PARCHMAN HOUR, STAGE DIRECTION:** [PARCHMAN PRISON. A WHISTLE SHRIEKS. DEPUTY TYSON, THE HEAD PRISON GUARD ENTERS FOLLOWED BY OTHER GUARDS CARRYING WEAPONS.]

The Freedom Riders were incarcerated in Unit 17, the maximum security building at Parchman Prison. In 1961, Unit 17 was also the site of death row and the gas chamber, which was located in the rooms off the main cell block to the right in the diagram above.

6. **SONG:**

   WALK RIGHT IN
   WALK RIGHT IN,
   SIT RIGHT DOWN
   DADDY, LET YOUR MIND ROLL ON
   [Guitar continues to play]

   "Walk Right In" is the title of a country blues song written by musician Gus Cannon and originally recorded by Cannon’s Jug Stompers in 1929. It was reissued in 1959 as a track on *The Country Blues*. A revised version of the song by The Rooftop Singers, with the writing credits allocated to group members Erik Darling and Bill Svanoe, became an international hit in 1963.

7. **THE PARCHMAN HOUR, DIALOGUE:**

   In Washington news —while attempting to high step his way out of the Bay of Pigs disaster, President Kennedy has plum stuck his foot up to the crack of this Freedom Rider ridiculousness. An anonymous source quoted Kennedy as grumbling.

   HANK THOMAS

On January 1, 1959, a young Cuban nationalist named Fidel Castro (1926-) drove his guerilla army into Havana and overthrew General Fulgencio Batista (1901-1973), the nation’s American-backed president. For the next two years, officials at the U.S. State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) attempted to push Castro from power. Finally, in April 1961, the CIA launched what its leaders believed would be the definitive strike: a full-scale invasion of Cuba by 1,400 American-trained Cubans who had fled their homes when Castro took over. However, the invasion did not go well: The invaders were badly outnumbered by Castro’s troops, and they surrendered after less than 24 hours of fighting.

8. **I sent letters, and I had Simeon Booker, the Jet Magazine reporter, call and remind him of the ride.**

   JAMES FARMER

If journalists are the eyewitnesses to history, then Simeon Booker stands as one of the most significant witnesses to the history of the civil rights struggle in America. He was the first African American reporter for the *Washington Post* and one of the last people to interview Martin Luther King, Jr. on television. What’s most notable in his life, however, is his front-line reporting of the defining moments of the civil rights era. “I had a compelling ambition to fight segregation on the front line,” Booker said upon receiving the Fourth Estate Award in 1982. “I stayed on the road covering civil rights day and night. … We ducked into funeral homes at night to photograph the battered bodies of civil rights victims. … The names, the places and the events became history.”

From covering the trial of the murderers of Emmett Till in Mississippi in 1955 to being the
only journalist to accompany the Freedom Riders in their bold efforts to desegregate bus terminals in the Deep South in 1961, Booker documented these and other events with precision and passion. In 1955, he joined the Johnson Publishing Company, the publishers of Jet and Ebony, and served as their Washington Bureau Chief for more than four decades, initiating and maintaining a prominent position in the corridors of power.

9. Hear ye, hear ye, the Court of Swing is now about ready to do its thing. Don’t want no tears, don’t want no jive, Above all things, don’t want no lies. [BEAT] Our judge is hip, his boots are tall, He’ll judge you jack, big or small. So fall in line, his stuff is sweet, Peace brothers, here’s Judge Pigmeat. STOKELY CARMICHAEL

Here come de Judge, here come de Judge! Here come de Judge, here come de Judge! FREEDOM RIDERS

Dewey “Pigmeat” Markham (April 18, 1904 – December 13, 1981) was an African American entertainer. Though best known as a comedian, Markham was also a singer, dancer and actor. His nickname came from a stage routine, in which he declared himself to be “Sweet Poppa Pigmeat”. Starting in the 1950s, Pigmeat Markham began appearing on television, making multiple appearances on “The Ed Sullivan Show.”

His boisterous, indecorous “heyeah (here) come da judge” routine, which made a mockery of formal courtroom etiquette, became his signature act. Markham would sit at an elevated judge’s bench (often in a black graduation cap-and-gown, to look more impressive) and deal with a series of comic miscreants. He would often deliver his “judgments”, as well as express frustration with the accused, by leaning over the bench and smacking the accused with an inflated bladder-balloon.

10. And for how long? What you gonna do Harvard? When this movement turns from marching to madness, and these southern colored folk stop being all “Jump Jim Crow” and get all “Nat Turner” up in here? Why are you even in Mississippi, Stephen Green? STOKELY CARMICHAEL
A Brief History of Jim Crow

“I can ride in first-class cars on the railroads and in the streets,” wrote journalist T. McCants Stewart. “I can stop in and drink a glass of soda and be more politely waited upon than in some parts of New England.” Perhaps Stewart’s comments don’t seem newsworthy. Consider that he was reporting from South Carolina in 1885 and he was black.

Stewart had decided to tour the South because he feared for freedmen’s liberties. In 1868, with Amendment XIV, the Constitution had finally given black men full citizenship and promised them equal protection under the law. Blacks voted, won elected office and served on juries. However, 10 years later, federal troops withdrew from the South, returning it to local white rule. And the Republican Party, champion of Reconstruction and freedmen’s rights, had fallen from national power. Would black people’s rights survive?

After a few weeks on the road, Stewart decided they would. Stewart was wrong. Over the next 20 years, blacks would lose almost all they had gained. Worse, denial of their rights and freedoms would be made legal by a series of racist statutes, the Jim Crow laws. “Jim Crow” was a derisive slang term for a black man. It came to mean any state law passed in the South that established different rules for blacks and whites. Jim Crow laws were based on the theory of white supremacy and were a reaction to Reconstruction.

In the depression-racked 1890s, racism appealed to whites who feared losing their jobs to blacks. Politicians abused blacks to win the votes of poor white “crackers.” Newspapers fed the bias of white readers by playing up (sometimes even making up) black crimes. In 1890, in spite of its 16 black members, the Louisiana General Assembly passed a law to prevent black and white people from riding together on railroads. Plessy v. Ferguson, a case challenging the law, reached the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896. Upholding the law, the court said that public facilities for blacks and whites could be “separate but equal.” Soon, throughout the South, they had to be separate.

Two years later, the court seemed to seal the fate of black Americans when it upheld a Mississippi law designed to deny black men the vote. Given the green light, Southern states began to limit the voting right to those who owned property or could read well, to those whose grandfathers had been able to vote, to those with “good characters,” to those who paid poll taxes. In 1896, Louisiana had 130,334 registered black voters. Eight years later, only 1,342, 1 percent, could pass the state’s new rules.

Jim Crow laws touched every part of life. In South Carolina, black and white textile workers could not work in the same room, enter through the same door or gaze out of the same window. Many industries wouldn’t hire blacks. Many unions passed rules to exclude them.

In Richmond, one could not live on a street unless most of the residents were people one could marry. (One could not marry someone of a different race.) By 1914, Texas had six entire towns in which blacks could not live. Mobile passed a Jim Crow curfew: Blacks could not leave their homes after 10 p.m. Signs marked “Whites Only” or “Colored” hung over doors, ticket windows, and drinking fountains. Georgia had black and white parks. Oklahoma had black and white phone booths.

Prisons, hospitals, and orphanages were segregated as were schools and colleges. In North Carolina, black and white students had to use separate sets of textbooks. In Florida, the books couldn’t even be stored together. Atlanta courts kept two Bibles: one for black witnesses and one for whites.

Though seemingly rigid and complete, Jim Crow laws did not account for all of the discrimination blacks suffered. Unwritten rules barred blacks from white jobs in New York and kept them out of white stores in Los Angeles. Humiliation was about the best treatment blacks who broke such rules could hope for. Groups like the Ku Klux Klan, which revived in 1915, used venom and violence to keep blacks “in their place.” More than 360,000 black men served in World War I. The country welcomed them home with 25 major race riots, the most serious in Chicago. White mobs lynched veterans in uniform. Black Americans fought back. The National Association for the
Fed up with poor, overcrowded conditions, the NAACP decided to challenge the concept of "separate but equal." The courts took the lead. In 1950, the Eisenhower administration downplayed civil rights, federal courts took the lead. In 1950, the NAACP decided to challenge the concept of "separate but equal.” Fed up with poor, overcrowded schools, black parents in South Carolina and Virginia sued to get their children into white schools. Both times, federal courts upheld segregation. Both times, the parents appealed. Meanwhile, in a similar case, Delaware's Supreme Court ordered a district to admit black students to white schools until adequate classrooms could be provided for blacks. This time, the district appealed.

The Supreme Court agreed to consider these three cases in combination with one other. In Topeka, Kansas, where schools for blacks and whites were equally good, Oliver Brown wanted his 8-year-old daughter, Linda, to attend a school close to home. State law, however, prevented the white school from accepting Linda because she was black.

On May 17, 1954, at the stroke of noon, the nine Supreme Court Justices announced their unanimous decision in the four cases, now grouped as Brown v. Board of Education. They held that racial segregation of children in public schools, even in schools of equal quality, hurt minority children. “Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” The practice violated the Constitution's 14th amendment and must stop. To some, the judgment seemed the fruitful end of a long struggle. Actually, the struggle had just begun.

**Nat Turner**

Nathaniel “Nat” Turner (1800-1831) was a black American slave who led the only effective, sustained slave rebellion (August 1831) in U.S. history. Spreading terror throughout the white South, his actions set off a new wave of oppressive legislation prohibiting the education, movement, and assembly of slaves and stiffened proslavery, anti-abolitionist convictions that persisted in that region until the American Civil War (1861–65).

Turner was born on the Virginia plantation of Benjamin Turner, who allowed him to be instructed in reading, writing and religion. Sold three times in his childhood and hired out to John Travis (1820s), he became a fiery preacher and leader of African-American slaves on Benjamin Turner’s plantation and in his Southampton County neighborhood, claiming that he was chosen by God to lead them from bondage.

Believing in signs and hearing divine voices, Turner was convinced by an eclipse of the Sun (1831) that the time to rise up had come, and he enlisted the help of four other slaves in the area. An insurrection was planned, aborted and rescheduled for August 21, 1831, when he and six other slaves killed the Travis family, managed to secure arms and horses and enlisted about 75 other slaves in a disorganized insurrection that resulted in the murder of 51 white people.

Afterwards, Turner hid nearby successfully for six weeks until his discovery, conviction and hanging at Jerusalem, Virginia, along with 16 of his followers. The incident put fear in the hearts of Southerners, ended the organized emancipation movement in that region, resulted in even harsher laws against slaves and deepened the schism between slave-holders and free-soilers (an anti-slavery political party whose slogan was ‘free soil, free speech, free labor and free men’) that would culminate in the Civil War.
From the Director: Patricia McGregor

(Edited from comments made to the cast and staff on the first day of rehearsal.)

When I began to think about how we stand up against injustice, I started to think about when the first time was that the idea of injustice even hit me. And I thought of my seventh grade social studies classroom. My teacher, Mrs. Samuels, guided us through our very thin chapter on Civil Rights, where we learned about a time two years after the events of The Parchman Hour, in 1963, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”. In the middle of the letter, he says:

You may well ask: “Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn’t negotiation a better path?” You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to so dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word “tension.” I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. The purpose of our direct action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

I’m so interested in Dr. King’s use of “monologue” rather than “dialogue.” I feel we get so caught up in monologues
that just relentlessly look at one direction, rather than having a conversation. As we develop and present *The Parchman Hour*, what will hopefully happen on stage will be an opportunity for dialogue between the performers; between the performers and the audience; between everyone in this institution; and hopefully between the audience and the world.

How do we get up in the morning and fight what sometimes seems to be insurmountable — the injustices, the deeply held beliefs and complicated history? It’s hard to wake up and find the courage to fight, but also, importantly, the courage to commune. To fight and to be brave enough to stand up and say, “I am willing to protest against injustice with my voice, with whatever I have, but I am also willing to remain in dialogue.”

Hopefully this brilliant play by Mike Wiley will give us the opportunity not only to look at those historical trail blazers who fought for our rights, but also to reflect on our own sense of resistance and resilience. *The Parchman Hour* is theatrical gold that will keep people engaged and entertained while also focusing us on the question of how we fight for the community we all wish for.

On hard rehearsal days, I always ask: to whom am I dedicating this opportunity? I dedicate this first rehearsal to the future I hope for my son. And I also dedicate it to my mom and dad. My mom — a white, almost 80-year-old immigrant from England who moved to this country after having experienced a childhood in World War II in London — who wanted the opportunity to be in a country that had, to her mind, more opportunities for freedom, a future and equality. And also to my beautiful, elegant, Caribbean black father, who when we drove through the South for the first time — and he’s almost 90, a regal, wonderful man — he ducked down in the car because, somehow, still in his body, in his young memories lived the danger that was so present for him in that place — a danger that I fear is all too present now. So for the life that my father lived and for the hope he has for his grandson, I dedicate the energy of this play.
Bringing the Play into the Classroom

LETTER HOME
The Freedom Riders left their families, friends and lives behind to board those busses and stand for equality. Ask students to imagine being a Freedom Rider and to imagine the person or people who would come to say goodbye to them as they board the bus. Jumping forward, ask them to imagine being incarcerated at the Parchman State Penitentiary, and explain that prisoners are given one letter to write home. Each student will then write a letter to that person, or group of people, who was there when he or she left. These letters could describe the current situation in Parchman, the reasons for becoming a Freedom Rider and enduring imprisonment, and/or their hopes and dreams for the future.

RECORD THAT INCIDENT
Ducudramas provide the audience with multiple perspectives of the same event or issue, creating a rich tapestry of viewpoints to tell the story. Using a video that depicts a real-life event, assign each student in the class a different role as a specific on-looker of this event (i.e. child, police officer, parent, shop owner, etc.) As they watch the video, they can imagine themselves as their assigned role, and after the video, instruct them to write down the answers to these questions from their character’s perspective:

• What happened or what did you see?
• How do you feel after watching the video?
• What would you do in the same situation?

Ask the group to share their answers, noting the similarities and differences in these observations of the same event.

DRAwing THE ANALogy
The Freedom Riders were activists who peacefully stood up for what they believed. They are part of a rich history of protest, where individuals or groups protest hatred, prejudice and violence through peaceful and non-violent tactics. In pairs, ask student to identify and research a historical incident of non-violent protest. From that research, instruct the pairs to create and rehearse a performance where one person plays the role of a news reporter and the other plays the role of one of the activists from their research. During this mock interview, the pair should be sure to describe what happened during that episode in history, outline some of the rationale for the protest and to include the other side’s perspective.

WHAT DO YOU SEE?
Prior to the activity set up the room’s chairs or desks side-by-side to mimic the interior of a bus. Explain that the bus will be making a few stops, and at each stop prepare a slide or picture of different locations from the 1960s that was, or might have been, visited by the Freedom Riders. Ask the students to “take a seat” on the bus, ask them to imagine themselves as the Freedom Riders, and as the bus progresses southward, ask the students to imagine what they see looking out the window. At each stop, ask the group to discuss what they think is happening at this “stop,” using the picture as a reference. The final stop could be Parchman State Penitentiary.
PARCHMAN SOUNDTRACK
The use of music in *The Parchman Hour* provides a wonderful and informative backdrop for historical context, as well as insight into the thoughts and feelings of the characters and their different perspectives. Following their viewing of the performance, ask each student to think of different moments in the play where music was used or where music could have been used. Ask them to generate a list of five of these moments and to identify a song that could be used to make that moment more powerful.

DESIGNING THE SET
The set design by Clint Ramos for the Guthrie’s production of *The Parchman Hour* uses both realistic and symbolic elements (i.e. the beam of light) to provide a backdrop and context for the story being told in the play. Ask students to recall what they remember or noticed about the set, asking them to also discuss why they believe the set designer chose to include those elements. Then, in small groups, ask the students to imagine where they would set the play. Providing art materials, ask the students to represent their imagined setting. When the groups have completed their designs, ask each to present their design to the class and discuss their artistic choices.

OUTSIDE/INSIDE
According to *The Parchman Hour* director Patricia McGregor, the appearance and dress of the characters symbolize internal aspects of the characters and how the world is impacting them at specific moments of the play. Divide the class into small groups, and assign each group a character from the play. Provide them with contextual pictures of the time period and a brief description of their character’s journey throughout the play, highlighting three points where the character changes appearance. Passing out several blank costume design templates, ask each group to create a rough design for each of these three moments. Displaying these designs, ask each group to present their artistic choices and encourage the class to ask questions of the design teams.
For Further Reading and Understanding

**BOOKS**


**FILM & VIDEO**

*Eyes on the Prize*, Parts 1 and 2, by Blackside. Outstanding 14 hour documentary on the Freedom Movement, broadcast as part of PBS “American Experience.”


*The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*, 4-part series offering a comprehensive look at race relations in America between the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement.

**WEBSITES**

Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive. [http://digilib.usm.edu/crmda.php](http://digilib.usm.edu/crmda.php)

Civil Rights Movement Veterans. [www.crmvet.org](http://www.crmvet.org)

Congress of Racial Equality. [www.core-online.org](http://www.core-online.org)


1961 Freedom Riders 40th Anniversary. [www.freedomridersfoundation.org](http://www.freedomridersfoundation.org)