



Mike Wiley Bio, 2025 (extended version)

“A marvel to watch...” Robert McDowell, Triangle Theatre Reviews
“More than mere versatility... It’s virtuosity.” American Theatre Magazine

“Mike Wiley’s utterly astounding work most often splits my heart open. Then it heals it – but requests to leave little scars. And it’s the scars that enable a bit more stretch, a bit more understanding, a bit more light. I’ve never seen an artist who more effectively reaches across rage, fear, or darkness and discomfort, to find an open hand across that divide waiting to be grasped and held. Thank you, Mike Wiley. You make me a better me.”
Stephen Barefoot, goingbarefoot• inc.

Mike Wiley, a native of Roanoke, VA is the NC-based playwright and actor whose distinctive original works in documentary theatre, film, educational residencies and performances for student and adult audiences have been acclaimed across America and abroad. His dramas relay the stories of fugitive slaves, civil rights game changers, sports heroes and freedom fighters. Dynamic multi-character portrayals offer penetrating views into parallel lives whose roles within African American history have shaped a richer total American experience.

Wiley’s impressive one-man “casts” sometimes introduce dozens of characters during the performance of a single play. Morphing between characters of multiple races, young to old, man to woman, his gripping stories inspire audiences of every age to apply history’s lessons to gripping issues of today.

An M.F.A. graduate of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, Wiley’s catalog as playwright now includes more than a dozen original theatrical works, including eight docu-drama one-person plays that Wiley tours throughout the US, along with a growing number of full-cast ensemble plays available for professional licensing and production. His ensemble-cast works have been mounted by such notable producing companies as Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, Hatiloo Theatre in Memphis, Virginia Stage in Norfolk, Playmakers Repertory Company in Chapel Hill, and others.

Commissioned works in 2025 birthed two new plays, co-written with frequent writing partner Howard Craft. These newest plays are the solo-actor, 25-character drama **CHANGING SAME: THE COLD-BLOODED MURDER OF BOOKER T. SPICELY** and the full ensemble cast production **THE CHRISTMAS CASE OF HESEKIAH JONES**.

Premiered in 2022, **REBELLIOUS** is the story of the Bennett College Belles' enormous contribution to the Greensboro sit-in movement.

2021 welcomed his new work, **PEACE OF CLAY**, co-written with playwright Howard Craft. Commissioned by professional regional theatres Theatre Raleigh and North Carolina Theatre, the play looks at a young teen growing up in the South in the 1980s coming to grips with his big dreams and the obstacles that continually block his aspirations.

In 2018, Wiley's play **LEAVING EDEN**, with music composed by Laurelyn Dossett, was the largest inception-to-production project ever undertaken by the 100-year-old Carolina Playmakers/Playmakers Repertory Company in Chapel Hill, NC and enjoyed a record-breaking run in its premiere multi-week run.

Earlier full-cast original documentary dramas by Mike Wiley include **DOWN RANGE: VOICES FROM THE HOME FRONT**, drawn from experiences of military spouses and families left at home when their family members are deployed, commissioned by Cape Fear Regional Theatre near Fort Liberty in Fayetteville, NC. **THE PARCHMAN HOUR: SONGS AND STORIES OF THE 1961 FREEDOM RIDERS**, was premiered by Playmakers Repertory Company in Chapel Hill in 2011. The original production of this play, featuring students from both Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was selected as the official finale event of the 50th Anniversary Freedom Riders Reunion in Jackson, MS, only a few miles from the notorious Parchman Farm Penitentiary.

In 2018, the ensemble adaptation of his own one-man theatrical presentation of Timothy Tyson's **BLOOD DONE SIGN MY NAME** was premiered by Raleigh Little Theatre in Raleigh, NC in a multi-week, sold-out run.

Wiley himself tours a total of eight original one-man performances throughout the US and Canada. These works include **ONE NOBLE JOURNEY: A BOX MARKED FREEDOM**, the true story of Henry "Box" Brown, a slave who crated and mailed himself to freedom, and **BREACH OF PEACE**, recounting personal stories of members of the Freedom Riders of 1961.

DAR HE: THE STORY OF EMMETT TILL chronicles the murder, trial and confession of the men accused of the Chicago youth's lynching in Mississippi in 1955. **DAR HE** was adapted into a feature film version, with Wiley playing all roles in the film and garnering more than 40 film festival and acting awards around the globe. Till's family members attended the play's premiere near Chicago in Skokie, IL. Wiley also performed the play as part of the Bridge Crossing Jubilee in Selma, AL and in MS near where Emmett Till's murder occurred.

BLOOD DONE SIGN MY NAME is Wiley's riveting dramatization of Tim Tyson's best-selling memoir of race and religion, and Wiley has performed the one-man version of **BLOOD DONE SIGN MY NAME** in Oxford, NC in the actual courthouse where the drama's infamous murder trial took place. In 2017, the play was hosted in Atlanta as keynote of the international board meeting of Methodist Global Ministries.

Wiley's additional plays include **JACKIE ROBINSON: A GAME APART** about African American athletes who pushed the color barrier to its breaking point,

and **TIRED SOULS: THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT**, documenting men and women who stood up to Jim Crow segregation. Wiley also offers a personal inspirational address entitled **WE CAN BE HEROES** supporting the role of arts education for youth.

Mike Wiley was presented the “Distinguished Alumni Award” by the University of North Carolina in 2017 and has been featured as News and Observer’s “Tar Heel of the Week,” profiled in Our State magazine, spotlighted on UNC-TV’s “North Carolina Now” and North Carolina Public Radio’s “The State of Things” and was named the Indie Artist of the Year by the Independent Weekly.

Wiley is a former Lehman-Brady Visiting Joint Chair Professor at Duke University’s Center for Documentary Studies and currently serves as Artist in Residence for the Kenan Institute for Ethics and as the Stephen and Janet Bear Assistant Research Professor of Arts, Ethics, and Education in the Program in Education at Duke University. He is recipient of the UNC-Chapel Hill Distinguished Alumni Award and has conducted numerous teaching/educational residencies funded through grant programs of the North Carolina Arts Council. His plays have been jury-selected for showcasing by arts industry conferences including Arts Midwest, Arts Northwest, OAPN, Performing Arts Exchange, ArtsMarket, IPAY, plus Contact East & Contact Ontario in Canada.

Early in the Covid crisis, filmed versions of all eight of Mike's solo-actor touring performances were prepared in collaboration with The Clayton Center in Clayton, NC to provide streaming options for Wiley’s powerful work by educators nationwide. Additionally, the five-day teaching artist residency "From the Page to the Stage" with Mike and fellow NC playwright Howard Craft was adapted into a virtual episode format for secondary school systems.

In 2020, Mike Wiley received the Ann Atwater Award presented by Manbites Dog Theater Fund to recognize Triangle theater artists and companies whose body of work reflects and honors Durham activist Ann Atwater’s lifelong commitment to social justice. He was also recipient of the NC Theatre Conference Constance Welsh Award for Theatre for Youth. He received the 2020 Andre DeShields Best Actor Award from the National Black Theater Alliance for his performance in **DAR HE: THE STORY OF EMMETT TILL**. Wiley founded the online series "Higher Ground Conversations" addressing current issues with national civil rights and social justice leaders.

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For inquiries regarding licensing/producing ensemble cast works by Mike Wiley, inquire at www.MikeWileyProductions.com

Mike Wiley Bio (abbreviated version)

Virginia-born Mike Wiley is a North Carolina-based actor, playwright and director of multiple works in documentary theatre, including THE PARCHEMAN HOUR, DOWNRANGE: STORIES FROM THE HOMEFRONT, DAR HE: THE STORY OF EMMETT TILL, the theatrical adaptation of BLOOD DONE SIGN MY NAME, THE FIRE OF FREEDOM and more. Wiley has more than twenty years of credits in documentary theatre for young audiences plus film, television and regional theatre. An Upward Bound alum and Trio Achiever Award recipient, he is an M.F.A. graduate of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, former Lehman-Brady Visiting Joint Chair Professor at Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies, and current Artist in Residence for the Kenan Institute for Ethics and The Stephen and Janet Bear Assistant Research Professor of Arts, Ethics, and Education in the Program in Education at Duke University. He is recipient of the UNC- Chapel Hill Distinguished Alumni Award and has conducted numerous teaching/ educational residencies funded through grant programs of the North Carolina Arts Council. His plays have been jury-selected for showcasing by arts industry conferences including Arts Midwest, Arts Northwest, OAPN, Performing Arts Exchange, ArtsMarket, IPAY, plus Contact East & Contact Ontario in Canada. His ensemble-cast productions have been produced by major regional theatres including Guthrie Theatre, Playmakers Repertory Company, Cape Fear Regional Theatre, Hattiloo Theatre, Virginia Stage & others.

A gifted and visionary artist and communicator, Wiley's overriding goal is expanding cultural awareness for audiences of all ages through dynamic portrayals based on pivotal moments in African-American history. On every stage or screen in whatever form, this remarkably gifted playwright/actor continues to peel away distrust and misinformation to dramatically and powerfully share true stories giving honor and tribute to heroic, iconic legends and change-making unsung heroes from the African- American history book of the United States of America. Black History Matters.

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