



- **Presenters, Teachers & Students Speak** •
Recent survey responses to performances
by actor/playwright Mike Wiley

From presenters & teachers...

I just wanted to thank you all for putting together such a spectacular performance for our students yesterday. Mike, as you know, the work you are doing is so profoundly important. The way in which you engage with your audiences, articulate our nation's troubled history, and give voice to the voiceless, is truly remarkable. The children were in awe of you, I was in awe, and we all shared in so much laughter, and hopefully, a newfound or better understanding of our nation's past through the eyes of Henry "Box" Brown. We are so excited to have you back again next year. What a privilege it is to get to bring your work here. I'm personally so excited for more.

I have been getting thank you's from the faculty since the show yesterday. The performance was exceptional. The kids and the faculty were all equally engaged, entertained and educated. Bravo! Mr. Wiley was terrific with my students in a session afterwards as well. Everyone wants to know if he can come back next year. I have never seen a theatrical performance at UPHS captivate an audience the way this one did.

It's always a tough call for me to give up an entire period of instruction in AP Bio (especially when the snow has already put us behind schedule), but Mr. Wiley's performance was phenomenal! I am so glad I brought my class. Before we walked down to the auditorium, I asked my class (of mostly sophomores) how many of them knew the significance of Brown v. Board. Only one student raised her hand! What an entertaining and engaging opportunity for them to connect with this important piece of American history!

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Mike Wiley Productions
info@mikewileyproductions.com

A tremendous thank-you to Mike Wiley, and the Moore County Arts Council for such a dynamic play. The students were engaged and actively involved with the play, which was wonderful. Actor Mike Wiley did a spectacular job of being lively and teaching our students important information about history and events. What a gift it was to each of them to view such a lively, comedic, informative performance. A thousand thank-you's.

I didn't see a single student pull out his phone during the entire performance. That, believe me, is a miracle.

I work closely with youth, families, law enforcement, the judicial system. As a mother of a teenage young man -- thinking back over the recent social injustices -- in my heart I fear that history could slowly become our present. Mike Wiley, I thank you for the talent God has blessed you with. You are using it mightily!

Mike Wiley's work addresses the desperate need to understand our past through artistic expression. Discomfort is necessary for understanding and compassion. I'm grateful for his work and talent.

And from students...

Dar He tells the story of 14 year-old Emmett Till. I honestly wasn't very happy at the first of it -I already know the story of Emmett Till and didn't want to know more. If I wanted to see a black kid brutally murdered due to his race, I could watch the news. As a black man, it has always been hard for me personally to talk about race in a public setting, making me more fearful of seeing the performance. This one-man play tells us of his life and the circumstances surrounding his murder. Mike Wiley is spectacular to watch as he, in a moment's notice, changes character. This being my first one-man show. I had no idea what to expect. I honestly expected a man sitting on the stool and sometimes slightly changing his voice every five minutes of dull dialogue, making the heavy subject matter all the worse for my anxiety. But I was wrong. He not only changes his voice, but he completely alters his personhood with his voice and body. He is completely able to turn in an empty stage into a beautiful yet haunting assembly of tragedy. The audience participation that I had at first feared sent shivers down my spine once the time came. Multiple times throughout the performance I'd forget I was watching one man and not a full ensemble of actors. I left the theatre believing that anyone, from any background, should see Mike Wiley's amazing performance on stage. Mike Wiley's performance was nothing short of eye-opening and transforming.

*I've never been in a theater, so this was a great experience. I liked Mike Wiley's play *Breach of Peace* because the way he performed and the rawness of it all. There weren't 20 actors running around the stage; it was just him, saying what he needed to say - connecting to us as though we were in a room alone with him.*

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His words were powerful and authentic. The man was truly inspirational and shares a powerful message, which was “regular people can do amazing things.” It would be an honor to visit one of his shows again someday.

This provided me with an opportunity to learn about someone and something that I have never been taught. It was a great learning experience, and I hope many in the future will be provided with this experience.

There was one moment in particular when Mike Wiley brought people from the audience onstage to portray the violence that took place during the retaliation of white supremacists. That scene moved me to tears; the body language he had all of you express was overwhelming with power. There were moments during the performance where all I could think was “How can people let this happen? How is this real?” And more importantly, “How is this still happening?” I am not just referring to slavery or the undeniable inequality in America, but I also am referring to the oppression of large groups of people in general, the ethnic cleansing of Myanmar’s Rohingya or in Palestine, American bombings of Yemeni civilians, countries closing their borders on Syrian refugees, the abuse of Catalonian citizens by government police because they chose to protest for independence, police brutality, mass shootings due to weak gun regulations.... How can people let this happen?

My interaction with Mike Wiley, the artist, was brief, but I found him to be an incredibly humble and intelligent man and I am grateful for the opportunity I had to meet him. He is a five-star human. His performance was powerful & emotional.

I feel like I got to grasp how dangerous the black civil rights movement really was. They were not protected by police force and faced mobs of people -- not only black activists but white activists, too.

I learned that equality is a tough thing to acquire, but it is a worthy cause.

Getting taken out of my comfort zone and being brought up on stage was very meaningful. I like how the voices, vibes, and pictures made you feel as if you were experiencing it for yourself. It showed a side of history that no one else has shown me before.

I learned about the Freedom Riders, people who went to fight for something they believed in. It’s an inspiration to me because I want to have an impact on something I believe in.

My favorite part was when Mr. Wiley pulled multiple people on stage to freeze in one pose. Playing that powerful and moving music and seeing each of them on stage, not moving, spoke more meaning than anything. I really like how he incorporates the audience into the performance and gives them an idea of what it might be like to be “other.” By using reversed roles/ switching races, Wiley allows these issues to be viewed from a different perspective and offers a more “human” representation. It was all very powerful!

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Seeing the people all frozen in different shapes made it all seem much more real. It helped me realize how difficult and brutal this was for these people. Thank you for taking us to see this!

One of the things Wiley said about everyone having humanity in them is something I truly believe in as well. Everyone has feelings, and there is no doubt this performance touched everyone. With the current events going on, it's important to look back at history and ask ourselves "Are we doing anything to stop this?" The play brings to attention the racism that went on during the 50's and 60's. When you see what was happening, then you start to notice trends today as well. I think this is what Wiley tried to communicate to the audience.

I was truly inspired by my ancestors' courage, perseverance, and sacrifice to achieve freedom from the white man's oppression for the next generation. It was surprising to me that some Freedom Riders and fighters were also white people. Mainly the greatest lesson I learned from this play is that to take what was shown in the play and spread to those who are ignorant about the black civil rights movement. The other lesson that I took from Wiley's performance is to live out Martin Luther King's dream to the fullest, which includes peace and harmony between blacks and whites who work to come together.

I felt moved during Mike Wiley's performance. The use of real film from events during that time was jarring and turned it into something more than just a stage show. The characters he played were real and the voices and body language used to portray them was something I hadn't seen before. He is so talented! He set a tone of seriousness because these are real issues of importance, but he also threw in some lighthearted humor when he brought people on stage. My favorite part was when he pulled about five or six people onto the stage and put them into a pose that depicted different people in a riot. It was insanely moving, and the video that he played in the background showed what people had to go through. It was so beautifully done, and I would see it again if I could. I would recommend this show to anyone who is interested in being a better American and human.



Mike Wiley Productions
info@mikewileyproductions.com