



CHICAGO PREMIERE

TOO HEAVY FOR YOUR POCKET

BY JIRÉH BREON HOLDER DIRECTED BY RON OJ PARSON

Timeline
Theatre Company

BACKSTORY YOUR GUIDE TO TIMELINE PRODUCTIONS



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Chicago premiere of *Too Heavy for Your Pocket* by Jiréh Breon Holder, directed by TimeLine Company Member Ron OJ Parson.

A 2016 graduate of Yale's acclaimed playwriting program, Jiréh has quickly earned acclaim, writing with a poignant, contemporary voice, while also garnering comparisons to some of the greats that preceded him.

Set in Tennessee, 1961, *Too Heavy for Your Pocket* is a story with tremendous heart, moments of great joy, luminous musicality, and infectious laughter, despite a backdrop of a country in turmoil.

We're introduced to two young couples striving to build their future against considerable, systemic odds. When the character Bowzie has the opportunity to realize his full potential with a college scholarship, it seems as if a tide is turning in his life and his community, opening a door for a new generation of leadership and hope.

But despite the Supreme Court outlawing segregation in restaurants, restrooms, public areas, and on buses, those long overdue advances commonly go unenforced, and in many areas of the South they are boldly and hostilely defied.

Enter the Freedom Riders, a group of civil rights activists who catch the attention of the nation and inspire Bowzie to question whether a crusade for equality is more urgent than his personal pursuit of a higher education.

Comprised of Black and white people intermixed, the Freedom Riders joined together on buses traveling across state lines into deeply segregated states where national desegregation laws were being violated not only by emboldened groups of citizens, but even by renegade local officers working in tandem with violent obstructionists.

The cost to the Freedom Riders was immense—they faced imprisonment, vicious brutality, and even firebombing.

There are countless stories to tell about those who put their lives on the line, and the pages of this *Backstory* provide further exploration of the costs paid.

Jiréh's eloquent play is not only an homage to activism in 1961 but also a stark reminder of all that has and hasn't changed in 2019.

Today, as activism, for many, is exhibited predominantly online, one can't help but see the contrasts between what might be perceived as risky today, compared with the peril faced by a crusader like Bowzie and his fellow Freedom Riders.

When I first mentioned this play to my ever-inspiring colleague, Ron OJ Parson, I was blown away by his immediate enthusiasm. He said, "That is the story of my cousin! He sacrificed finishing his college degree so he could be on those buses." Ron's passion and investment in this story was clear from day one, and the interview on page 9 explores that. We couldn't be happier to have him at the helm of this production.

We're delighted to introduce Jiréh's immense talent to Chicago and to share this story about taking a stand. Getting off the sidelines. Acknowledging your privileges. And being an active ally for change.

Through Bowzie, Jiréh poses the question—"What are you willing to risk to fight for what you believe?"

I thank you for joining us to examine that question and to experience *Too Heavy for Your Pocket*.

Best,

THE PLAYWRIGHT

JIRÉH BREON HOLDER AND *TOO HEAVY FOR YOUR POCKET*

Jiréh Breon Holder is an award-winning playwright who grew up in Memphis, Tennessee. As an only child, he occupied himself with his imagination and the family dog. He'd sneak Toni Morrison and Alice Walker books off his mother's bookshelf. It was through these texts that Holder was inspired to write his own.



Jiréh Breon Holder.

He attended Morehouse College, a historically black college in Atlanta, where he received his BA degree in Theatre. From 2012 to 2013, Holder served as the Kenny Leon Fellow at Atlanta's Alliance Theatre, a Tony Award-winning institution. In 2016, he received his MFA degree in Playwriting from the Yale School of Drama.

There, Holder developed his play, *Too Heavy for Your Pocket*. He was inspired by the resurgence in Civil Rights Movement-era films like *The Butler* and *Selma*. But he took issue with some of the portrayals of legacy, and engaged his grandmother on her personal recollections, as she had grown up in Nashville around the Freedom Rides. She recalled a friend who had thrown away his education to "hop on a bus," and Holder was immediately taken with a topic that history remembers differently. During his research, Holder went on a Freedom Ride tour and spent weeks immersed in 1961 Nashville.

In 2017, *Too Heavy for Your Pocket* was the recipient of the Laurents/Hatcher Foundation Award and winner of the Alliance/Kendeda National Graduate Playwriting Competition. The play premiered at the Alliance Theatre and had an extended Off-Broadway run at Roundabout Theatre. Its West Coast premiere took place in February and March 2019 at Sacred Fools Theatre Company in Los Angeles.

Holder is currently under commission with the Old Globe Theatre, Roundabout Theatre, and the Manhattan Theatre Club. His other plays include *The Rules*, *The Dancing Granny*, and *Some Bodies Travel*.

THE TIMELINE: THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT 1954-1965

1954 Brown v. Board of Education is decided by the U.S. Supreme Court, officially ending segregation in public schools as enforced by law. In the decision, the Court rules that "separate but equal" cannot be upheld if the other services are not equal, overturning the Plessy v. Ferguson verdict of 1896. Yet many schools remain segregated.

August 27, 1955 At just 14 years old, while visiting family in Mississippi, Chicago-born Emmett Till is accused of whistling at a white woman, Carolyn Bryant Donham. As a result, relatives of Ms. Donham kidnap Till from his uncle's house and torture him extensively, then shoot and kill him before throwing his body in the Tallahatchie River tied to a cotton gin fan. Mamie Till, Emmett's mother, bravely decides to have an open casket funeral to show the world what has been done to her son. This case will galvanize the Civil Rights movement, with widespread coverage in Black outlets such as *Jet* magazine.

December 1, 1955 In Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks sits in the front of a segregated bus and refuses to give up her seat to a white passenger, beginning the Montgomery bus boycott that will last a year.

February 14, 1957 The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) is founded by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (who becomes the organization's first president), Charles K. Steele, and Fred L. Shuttlesworth. The SCLC will prove to be an essential leader in the style of nonviolent protest for which Dr. King becomes renowned.

Although the 1946 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Morgan v. Virginia* ruled segregated bus seating unconstitutional, most public spaces and facilities continued to be divided by race. Though the federal law favored integration, racism and deep biases held more weight in a society built on the backs of Black folks and other people of color.

The Journey of Reconciliation, viewed as an early inspiration of the Freedom Rides, was assembled by the organization Congress of Racial Equality (CORE, founded at the University of Chicago) in 1947. This nonviolent direct action challenged state segregation laws. Sixteen men, eight white, eight Black, rode public transportation in Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky, keeping to the upper South where risk of violence was slightly less. Riders suffered arrests, and most served jail time, but they made it out with their lives.

Decades later in 1961, CORE revitalized their direct action with the Freedom Rides. They sought to test the new 1960 Supreme Court case *Boynton v. Virginia*, which ruled that the segregation of interstate transportation facilities was also unconstitutional. In this second round of rides, women were included.

Along the Freedom Rides, participants attempted to use whites-only spaces and facilities, including restrooms, waiting rooms, and lunch counters. Though the original group of Freedom Riders was made up of 13 members, they inspired others across the country to take up the journey when they no longer could due to unprecedented violence.



Students led the Nashville Freedom Riders, specifically C.T. Vivian (left) and Diane Nash (center). (Tennessean)

In May of 1961, seven Black and six white people traveled on a Greyhound bus from Washington, D.C., with the hope of reaching New Orleans, Louisiana, in time for the seventh anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*. They traveled mostly undisturbed through Virginia and North Carolina, but violence struck in the way of vicious attacks in Rock Hill, South Carolina. The Freedom Riders split up, with one group continuing on the Greyhound and the other in a Trailways vehicle.

Mere days later, the Freedom Riders in the Greyhound arrived in Anniston, Alabama, but the bus driver was unable to enter the station as a mob of almost 200 white people surrounded the bus. The mob then followed the bus in cars, unrelenting in their hate and seeking to do harm. When the Greyhound tires blew out, someone threw a bomb into the bus. Freedom Riders were able to evacuate as the bus burst into flames but were met with brutal beatings by the surrounding mob.

Their Freedom Rider counterparts traveling in the Trailways vehicle met a similar fate when they reached Birmingham, Alabama. This mob brandished metal pipes, and even though the Birmingham Public Safety Commissioner knew violence awaited the Freedom Riders, he invoked no protection, since it was Mother's Day.

Following this widespread violence, CORE struggled to enlist bus drivers willing to transport integrated groups. Though this organization abandoned their Freedom Rides, activist groups and students from Nashville, Tennessee, carried on the legacy with rides of their own.

Oppression of Black people has taken many forms in America, but one of the most effective societal manipulations has been the education system.

Enslaved people were forcibly prevented from learning how to read, but often did so in secret. In the beginning, the Church of England and Quakers would build schools for the purpose of religious conversion specifically for enslaved people. Around the 1800s, education for enslaved people was severely restricted in many states because slave owners were growing anxious that those they had enslaved might get ideas about freedom, especially following the Gabriel Conspiracy of 1800 and Nat Turner's Rebellion in 1831.

Nat Turner was a literate enslaved preacher who led a rebellion during which 55–65 white people were murdered. As a result, laws governing the education and freedoms of enslaved people became incredibly strict up until the Civil War.

A common misconception of American Slavery is that every Black person was enslaved until Emancipation in 1865, when in reality there were many free people before slavery ended, and many people who remained enslaved well after the end of slavery into the turn of the century.

Due to segregation, freed slaves were left to find their own means of education, as they tried to create opportunity at a time when almost

Discovery of Nat Turner, wood engraving by Benjamin Phillips 1831.



1957 Nine Black students attempt to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, and are forcibly prevented from doing so. President Dwight D. Eisenhower sends in Federal troops to assist the students—who will become known as the “Little Rock Nine”—though the assistance does not end their harassment.

September 9, 1957 President Eisenhower signs the Civil Rights Act of 1957, designed to help protect voter rights. It establishes a Civil Rights Section of the U.S. Justice Department and gives legal grounds to file an injunction if anyone tries to interfere with people's right to vote.

1958 The Nashville Christian Leadership Conference, an affiliate of Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, is established in Nashville, Tennessee. Led by Reverend Kelly Miller Smith, they begin holding workshops for non-violent protest training. These trainings are intended to prepare protestors—predominantly students and church groups—for the abuses they will face from racists as they attempted to desegregate the South. Starting in 1959, they will begin their efforts to desegregate downtown Nashville.

February 1, 1960 One of the most iconic sit-ins in American history occurs when four North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College students sit at a lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, and demand to be served.

Racial violence reaches a pinnacle in Nashville in response to the sit-ins, leading to the bombing of Z. Alexander Loobey's house, an attorney for the demonstrators. In response, protestors march to Nashville City Hall where Fisk University leader Diane Nash

90 percent of enslaved people were illiterate. Luckily, they found a network of free Black people who had been establishing institutions and other means of education that could take the lead.

The Freedmen's Bureau was formed in 1865 to support formerly enslaved African Americans, and the nation's first high school for free Black people in Washington, D.C., Paul Laurence Dunbar High, was founded in 1870. According to a report by journalist Alison Stewart on National Public Radio, some notable alumni of this school include "the architect of school desegregation, Charles Hamilton Houston ... the first Black general in the Army, the first Black presidential Cabinet member."

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) began to be founded as early as 1837, with the Cheyney University of Pennsylvania. Two other institutions would be formed before the end of slavery: Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1854, and Wilberforce University in 1856, which was a collaboration between the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Ohio and the predominantly white Methodist Episcopal Church. The first university formed after the dissolution of slavery was Shaw University in

The pursuit of African American education in America and its direct correlation to freedom and breaking the sometimes literal chains of oppression cannot be overstated.

Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1865, and it is also the first HBCU in to be established in the South.

In addition to HBCUs, African American intellectuals pursued and achieved educations at some of America's finest schools. John Hope, political activist and first Black president of Morehouse College (another HBCU), graduated from the preparatory academy Worcester Academy in 1890, and enrolled at Brown University in 1890. W.E.B. DuBois enrolled at Harvard in 1888 and would receive BA, MA, and PhD degrees from the institution by 1895. Richard Theodore Greener, the first Black graduate of Harvard College and later dean of the Howard University School of Law (also an HBCU), graduated from Phillips Academy in 1865 and earned his bachelor's degree from Harvard in 1870.

The pursuit of African American education in America and its direct correlation to freedom and breaking the sometimes literal chains of oppression cannot be overstated. The erasure of achievements in early African American education is common, with most assuming that education began with Brown v. Board of Education and integration. We would be living in a very different world if those like DuBois, Frederick Douglass, John Hope, and so many more did not take the plunge to begin closing the education gap between white former slave owners and Black people of enslaved heritage.

Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. (State Archives of North Carolina)



THE MOVEMENT

STUDENT AND FAITH LEADERSHIP, NONVIOLENT PROTEST, AND THE PURSUIT OF CITIZENSHIP

Too Heavy for your Pocket follows the story of Bowzie Brandon in Nashville, Tennessee, as he decides whether to fight for civil rights or to invest in his own education. This is a question many students of the late 1950s and early '60s were required to ask themselves, and the majority of civil rights movements were run by student groups. These groups often collaborated with the leaders of the movements, who were almost exclusively faith leaders. The presence of faith in the Civil Rights Movement cannot be overstated, with groups such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference leading both the philosophy of the protests and on-the-ground organizing.

The Civil Rights Movement can be summed up in a sentence as the pursuit of full citizenship as promised by law.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955, which lasted a year, was mostly accomplished by the organization led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Montgomery Improvement Association. Shortly after the boycott's success in 1956, Dr. King's speechwriter and fellow organizer Bayard Rustin wrote a series of working papers. Among many things, he theorized about the next best steps for the Civil Rights Movement and asked whether or not further organization to implement them would be a crucial piece of the fight.

In response, King invited the Black ministers of the South to what was initially called the Southern Negro Leaders Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration. Although a wordy title, it is helpful to understand the intention of why these religious leaders met over the issues of civil liberty, and reveals their early inclinations toward nonviolent protest.

convinces Mayor Ben West that lunch counters in Nashville should be desegregated.

May 10, 1960 Nashville becomes the first major city to begin the desegregation of its public facilities.

1961 Student volunteers begin taking Freedom Rides through the South. These trips, sponsored by the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), are meant to test new laws that have desegregated interstate travel facilities. Freedom Riders are attacked by angry mobs along the way and sometimes jailed for their participation.

May 14, 1961 On Mother's Day, one of the Freedom Ride buses is badly bombed outside Birmingham, Alabama.

1962 The first Black student enrolls at the University of Mississippi and violence and riots ensue, causing President John F. Kennedy to send 5,000 troops to the campus to enforce order. The student—James Meredith—will become viewed as one of the pioneers of the Civil Rights Movement, later leading the March Against Fear from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi, in 1966.

April 16, 1963 Dr. King writes his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail," after being arrested during anti-segregation protests in Alabama. Most notably, in it he argues that "individuals have the moral duty to disobey unjust laws," and that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

This letter will become often cited as the thing that motivates President Kennedy to finally speak on civil rights in June of this year.

This conference adopted its name, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), at their first meeting in 1957 in Montgomery, Alabama, where more than 100 religious and civic leaders gathered to create policy.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference was particularly effective because they were not necessarily leading the movement themselves, they were an overarching umbrella organization for several smaller civil rights organizations. Most importantly, the conference helped to represent the moral center of the entire movement. Their staff often went into communities to preach the philosophies of nonviolence from the Christian perspective, and to offer training programs.

When enslaved Black people were officially freed, the 14th Amendment was supposed to confer the rights of citizenship to all citizens in 1868 (note this affected only Black men; women would not be included until the next century). The 15th Amendment in 1870 was expected

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in front of SCLC Headquarters in Atlanta.



to correct the discriminatory practices that prevented African Americans from voting, but the onslaught continued in the form of poll taxes, literacy tests, fraud, and something called a “grandfather clause,” which dictated that you could only vote if your grandfather had voted. The Civil Rights Movement can be summed up in a sentence as the pursuit of full citizenship as promised by law.

These injustices explain the inspiration for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s first major campaign: Crusade for Citizenship. The goal of the campaign was to correct the historical injustices that restricted the voting rights of African Americans and to register thousands of voters for elections in 1958 and 1960.

On November 5, 1957, Southern Christian Leadership Conference members had a one-day retreat to set plans for this Crusade. At the press conference following this meeting, Dr. King stated: “As I pointed out at the Prayer Pilgrimage to Washington, there cannot be citizenship without the right to vote. A voteless citizen is no citizen. Men and women who can not vote are forcibly exiled from their national heritage. That the Negro remains a patriotic American while deprived of this sacred right is a tribute to his deep allegiance to his nation, its ideals, and its promise of Democracy.”

In addition to voter registration and nonviolent policies on a macro level, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference affiliate organizations were creating change on a local level. A representative from Nashville was present at the Atlanta meeting, leading to the establishment of the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference, which is one of the civil rights groups active in the world of *Too Heavy for Your Pocket*. They led the way when it came to desegregation of public spaces, voter registration, and sit-in protests. The nonviolent trainings they sponsored changed the entire landscape of protesting, equipping hundreds of well-dressed, well-intentioned, and disciplined students with the tools they needed to earn their rights.

THE INTERVIEW

DIRECTOR RON OJ PARSON



Ron OJ Parson.

During rehearsals for *Too Heavy for Your Pocket*, assistant director Am’Ber D. Montgomery (AM) spoke with director and Time-Line Company Member Ron OJ Parson (ROJ) about his family connection to this play, the importance of rekindling the spirit of youth in the movement, and more.

(AM) What attracted you to this play, and why does this story need to be told now?



Jerry Moore (1941-2015), cousin of Ron OJ Parson, civil rights activist, Freedom Rider, musician, and preacher.

(ROJ) What attracted me to the play is the subject matter. I’ve always said that I had a Freedom Rider (Jerry Moore) in my family—who was a very big influence on my life. So when I found out that this is what *Too Heavy for your Pocket* is about, I immediately was drawn to it. Unfortunately,

he passed away and I didn’t get a chance to see him or talk to him. But his younger brother, my cousin Donald Moore, is hopefully going to be involved, so when I thought about all the possibilities of that happening I thought: let’s do it.

(AM) And what makes it relevant, do you think?

(ROJ) Well, I think any play about our activism and the movement, so to speak, is important. It’s gonna always be relevant because we are still in a struggle to get respect. “It’s a protracted struggle.” I learned that from Harold Cruse, one of my professors in college, that it’s a constant battle, a constant struggle to maintain.

June 11, 1963 Alabama Governor George Wallace blocks two Black students from registering at the University of Alabama. President Kennedy must send the National Guard to campus to dissipate the standoff.

August 28, 1963 In response to the violence in Birmingham, A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin plan The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, which occurs on this day. Dr. King gives his famous “I Have a Dream” speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial to the 250,000 people gathered.

September 15, 1963 Prior to Sunday services, four members of the Ku Klux Klan plant a bomb that detonates and kills four young Black girls and injures others at 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. A pinnacle of the racial terrorism plaguing the city, this event will contribute to the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

July 2, 1964 The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson. It prevents employment discrimination due to race, color, sex, religion, or national origin, and establishes the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), tasked with prevention of workplace discrimination.

February 21, 1965 Prominent civil rights figure Malcolm X is assassinated.

1965 The Selma to Montgomery march is planned in partial response to the February 18 murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson by an Alabama state trooper during a peaceful protest in Marion, Alabama. Six hundred people try to cross the Edmund Pettis Bridge in protest on Sunday, March 7. The day will become known as Bloody Sunday because of the savage attacks by the Alabama State troopers who prevent their crossing.

“Theatre is revolutionary, and it can change things.”

I saw a video today about a young man, Black man, who was picking up garbage on his own property and the police were harassing him. You know, wanting him to show I.D. and this and that. So, things haven't changed—matter of fact, they've gotten worse. So I think you know, it's an important play because again it rekindles the spirit of youth in the movement. It's the young people who are going to change the world and they're changing it now. And I think this [*Too Heavy for Your Pocket*] kind of rekindles that whole drive of what we have to do to beat the odds.

(AM) What do you like about making plays at TimeLine Theatre?

(ROJ) Well, at TimeLine we believe in the information around the play, you know, the lobby display and the history of what we're trying to do. So, we're invested in the story and I think that's an important part of it.

It's an intimate theatre and I love doing intimate theatre productions because the people are right there and my thing is making audiences feel the play and at TimeLine it's not hard.

(AM) Is your approach different depending on if it's a new play versus a second or third production or a classic?

(ROJ) A play like this that hasn't been done a lot you can approach it with a

totally open mind. Whereas—I mean you can do that with any play, really—but with a new play you can kind of explore, experiment a little bit. And this play is kind of a non-linear structure so you can really have fun so to speak, really create. So since it's early in the success of this play, we're able to do that, and if you have actors who are willing to go with you, that's a good thing.

(AM) Who are some of your biggest influences as an artist?

(ROJ) Egbert Williams. I always say that without hesitation. He was the first African American Equity member, for one thing. He was a tortured soul, classically trained actor who had to do minstrels, and he's just someone I always looked up to. Even though I was never able to see much of him but just reading about who he was, influenced me early on to continue my career.

From the contemporary aspect it's Steven McKinley Henderson, who is a prominent director and actor today. Paul Carter Harrison, who was a theatre scholar back with the Negro Ensemble Company. Von Washington, who's a friend and mentor of mine early in my career. Marion McClinton, who is a director who really helped me when I got to Chicago. That's a good number. Martha Lavey was very helpful to me, too, and Lou Bellamy, who gave me my first professional gig on the road directing. So all of those people influenced me.

(AM) *Too Heavy for Your Pocket* is all about freedom and what it costs to get it. What advice do you have for young people today trying to achieve freedom at any cost?

(ROJ) You have to have stick-to-itiveness. You got to fight, you got to persevere. You've got to battle the odds. That's what we've had to do and what we continue to do. As I said before, young people are changing the world and that's what we need.

You have to be a revolutionary, and I got that from Charles “OyamO” Gordon. Theatre is revolutionary, and it can change things. That's what I would say, that's the advice—you have to stick to it, and the fight always goes on.

Director Ron OJ Parson at first rehearsal of TimeLine's *Too Heavy for Your Pocket*.



BACKSTAGE

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: BILL AND PENNY OBENSHAIN



Penny and Bill Obenshain.

We're thrilled to recognize two of our most ardent supporters—Bill and Penny Obenshain.

Bill has served as a TimeLine Board Member since 2016, but he and Penny began attending and supporting the theatre in 2008 when they experienced a performance of *Weekend*, soon followed by *Not Enough Air* and *The History Boys*.

“That's all it took to convince us that TimeLine was special and a theater we wanted to support,” they recall. “The connection to events past and current stimulates discussion and encourages us to do further reading on topics and themes explored in the excellently staged productions. We love the *Backstory* magazines and the lobby displays. They add immeasurably to our understanding of the historical context underlying the story.”

As leadership supporters, and through Bill's work on the Board, Bill and Penny have played a critical role in enabling TimeLine to purchase a new home. And they're just as excited about it as the rest of us: “The members of the company deserve this opportunity to stage their work in a facility that is worthy of the reputation they have established nationally as well as among Chicago theatergoers,” they said.

“We support many types of organizations in Chicago. The theater we have chosen to focus on is TimeLine

“We believe that Chicago is a great theater town and that TimeLine is a standout among a range of worthy choices.”

because of our high regard for the quality execution of its mission and because we feel we can make a difference. We have lived in London and New York as well as Chicago, so we do have some familiarity with the wonderful theater opportunities that exist in all three cities. We believe that Chicago is a great theater town and that TimeLine is a standout among a range of worthy choices. We will continue to be avid supporters as they prepare for a new home that will properly showcase a Chicago jewel.”

BACKSTORY: THE CREDITS

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Our Mission:

TimeLine Theatre presents stories inspired by history that connect with today's social and political issues.

Our collaborative artistic team produces provocative theatre and educational programs that engage, entertain and enlighten.

OUR 2019-20 SEASON

EXPLORING TODAY'S ISSUES THROUGH THE LENS OF THE PAST

CHICAGO PREMIERE

OSLO



BY J.T. ROGERS

DIRECTED BY NICK BOWLING

SEPTEMBER 10 – OCTOBER 20, 2019

The 2017 Tony Award winner for Best Play, this political thriller goes behind-the-scenes of the negotiations that brought about the 1993 peace agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Broadway In Chicago's Broadway Playhouse, 175 E. Chestnut

CHICAGO PREMIERE

RUTHERFORD AND SON



BY GITHA SOWERBY

DIRECTED BY MECHELLE MOE

NOVEMBER 6, 2019 – JANUARY 12, 2020

Written in 1912 and ahead of its time in its depiction of class, gender, and generational warfare, this family drama tells a smart and absorbing story about a woman's "place" in a male-dominated society.

TimeLine Theatre, 615 W. Wellington

CHICAGO PREMIERE

KILL MOVE PARADISE



BY JAMES IJAMES

DIRECTED BY WARDELL JULIUS CLARK

FEBRUARY 12 – APRIL 5, 2020

Inspired by the ever-growing list of slain unarmed black men and women, this is a powerful, provocative reflection on recent events and the possibilities of collective transformation and radical acts of joy.

TimeLine Theatre, 615 W. Wellington

WORLD PREMIERE

RELENTLESS



BY TYLA ABERCRUMBIE

DIRECTED BY RON OJ PARSON

MAY 6 – JUNE 27, 2020

Developed through TimeLine's Playwrights Collective, this startling and vibrant world premiere weaves a mother's past with her daughters' present in a complicated tale of family, legacy, and progress.

TimeLine Theatre, 615 W. Wellington

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