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# RENOWNED PLAYWRIGHT/ACTRESS REGINA TAYLOR BRINGING NEW PLAY TO TRINITY REP AND BROWN UNIVERSITY

*A Seat at the Table explores life of activist Fannie Lou Hamer*

**PROVIDENCE, RI: Trinity Repertory Company** announces the workshop of *A Seat at the Table: The Testimony of Fannie Lou Hamer*, the new play about the civil rights activist who risked her life to register black voters in the segregated South. The work is penned by nationally-celebrated, multiple award-winning playwright and actress Regina Taylor. The workshop is part of a new partnership between the Brown/Trinity MFA program and Rites and Reason Theatre at Brown University, part of the Department of Africana Studies, which develops innovative theatrical forms rooted in Africana cultural traditions and expressions.

The week-long workshop will begin on November 27, culminating in a staged reading at 7:00 pm on Saturday, December 2, 2017. The reading will be held at Rites and Reason Theatre, located at 155 Angell Street, Providence, RI. The staged reading will be free and open to the public. Seating is first come, first served; all are welcome. More info on the workshop is at <https://www.trinityrep.com/a-seat-at-the-table-workshop/>.

Says Professor Elmo Terry-Morgan, Artistic Director of Rites and Reason Theatre: “*Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.*” This declaration by Frederick Douglass [February 14, 1817 – February 20, 1895] echoed through the 1960’s Civil Rights Era and has chilling resonance for our lives today. Regina Taylor’s *A Seat at the Table: The Testimony of Fannie Lou Hamer* illuminates the courage and faith of the Civil Rights icon, and reminds us that progressive social change is not sustained by complacency, but by constant vigilance, demand, and ever readiness to take action. ‘*Rest if you must, but don’t you quit.*” [from *Don’t You Quit*, Inspirational Poem by Edgar A. Guest]

## **A Stage and Screen Powerhouse**

Regina Taylor is best known for her portrayal of housekeeper Lilly Harper in the 1991 TV series *I’ll Fly Away*, which earned her a Golden Globe award for Best Actress, an NAACP Image Award, and two Emmy nominations. As a stage actress she boasts an impressive resume of both classical and contemporary theater, including being the first black woman to play Shakespeare’s Juliet on Broadway in 1986. As playwright, Taylor’s portfolio includes *Oo-Bla-Dee* (American Critics’ Association New Play Award) and *Drowning Crow*, produced on Broadway by Manhattan Theatre Club in its inaugural season. Ms. Taylor is a Distinguished Artistic Associate at Chicago’s Goodman Theatre.

## **The Story of a Civil Rights Giant**

*A Seat at the Table* chronicles the life of Fannie Lou Hamer, the Mississippi native who became a legend of the 1960s Civil Rights movement as she rallied black voter registration on bus trips across the South in the face of intimidation, death threats, and beatings.

Hamer was known for singing African-American spirituals to bolster resolve among her team of volunteers, and her singing voice became her hallmark as an activist. She organized voter registration drives and mock elections, and served as a motherly figure to the volunteers of the Freedom Summer of 1964. She was elected Vice-Chair of the "Freedom Democrats" who challenged Mississippi's mainstream, anti-Civil Rights Democratic Party of the early 60s.

### **Breaking Ground with New Partnership**

The *A Seat at the Table* development workshop marks a new partnership between the Brown/Trinity MFA program and Rites and Reason Theatre, a research and developmental theater within Brown University's Africana Studies department. Rites and Reason is dedicated to giving expression to the diverse cultures and traditions of continental and diasporic Africans and the vast Africana experience. In addition to the playwright, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) co-founder and associate producer of the award-winning documentary *Eyes on the Prize* Judy Richardson will join the development process and be present at a Folk Thought conversation following the reading on Saturday night.

The workshop of *A Seat at the Table* endeavors not just to generate conversation about the past, but to create art to enlighten the world on the continuing legacy of the American Civil Rights movement.

Trinity Rep commissioned *A Seat at the Table* with funding from the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust. Partial funding for this project was provided by the Brown Arts Initiative.

### **TRINITY REPERTORY COMPANY**

Rhode Island's Tony Award-winning theater, Trinity Rep has created unparalleled professional theater for and with its community since its founding in 1963. Trinity Rep strives to facilitate human connection and has been a driving force behind the creativity that fuels and defines the region for more than 50 years.

Trinity Rep is committed to reinventing the public square and inspiring dialogue by creating emotionally-stimulating live productions that range from classical to contemporary and innovative education programs for all ages and abilities. Its annual production of *A Christmas Carol* has brought families together for 40 years and made memories for over a million audience members.

Subscriptions for the 2017-18 season are now on sale. The season includes *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller, *Skeleton Crew* by Dominique Morisseau, *Into the Breeches!* by George Brant, *Othello* by William Shakespeare, *Native Gardens* by Karen Zacarías, and *Ragtime* by Terrence McNally, music by Stephen Flaherty, lyrics by Lynn Ahrens, based on the novel by E.L. Doctorow. **For more information and to purchase tickets, call the box office at (401) 351-4242 or visit Trinity Rep's website at [www.TrinityRep.com](http://www.TrinityRep.com).**