

NEWS RELEASE

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PHOTOS: The online press kit for PIPELINE can be found [here](#). For access to ASF's full digital media kit, visit ASF.net/media-kit.

ASF opens 48th season with Dominique Morisseau's *PIPELINE* A profoundly moving story of a mother's fight to give her son a future Produced in partnership with Equal Justice Initiative

MONTGOMERY, Ala., (October 8, 2019) — Alabama Shakespeare Festival, in partnership with Equal Justice Initiative, presents *Pipeline* by **Dominique Morisseau**, on stage October 17 - 27, 2019. Directed by renowned theatre artist **Ron OJ Parson**, this insightful play explores how fraught yet crucial the minefield of getting an education is in an increasingly policed school system.

With profound compassion and lyricism, *Pipeline* propels an urgent conversation to the fore. Dominique Morisseau, hailed as the August Wilson of this generation, pens a profoundly moving story of a mother's fight to give her son a future without turning her back on the community that made him who he is. Every parent, every educator — everyone who is invested in the life of a child and their community — needs to see this production that highlights the school-to-prison pipeline.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the school-to-prison pipeline is “a disturbing national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.” Additionally, the Southern Poverty Law Center's *Teaching Tolerance* magazine suggests that “the school-to-prison pipeline starts (or is best avoided) in the classroom. When combined with zero-tolerance policies, a teacher's decision to refer students for punishment can mean they are pushed out of the classroom — and much more likely to be introduced to into the criminal justice system.” Finally, the Alabama Department of Mental Health notes that “while it's easy to think the pipeline only impacts certain students and their respective families, our whole society feels the consequences.”

In *Pipeline*, a child's life hangs in the balance. His mother, Nya, knows the pitfalls of growing up in her neighborhood — there are too many chances for her son, Omari, to become another one of many statistics. But the path to safety and opportunity she's chosen for him presents a different set of dangers. How will mother and son find their way out of crisis?

“[Nya]'s asking us to think different, have another answer than just throwing kids in jail,” Morisseau recently told Minneapolis's *Star Tribune*. “The answer can't always be throw away, toss out, and try again.”

Alabama Shakespeare Festival is partnering with Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) to bring *Pipeline* to Montgomery. EJI challenges poverty and racial injustice, advocates for equal treatment in the criminal justice system, and creates hope for marginalized communities. In its first 18 months, EJI's National Memorial for Peace and Justice and its Legacy Museum have welcomed more than 600,000 visitors to the city. EJI has started a global dialogue about truth and justice in America. Its mission has resonated because, as EJI founder Bryan Stevenson has said, we must acknowledge the truth before we can have justice.

"It's important that we develop partnerships and tell stories that resonate with Alabamians," said ASF Artistic Director Rick Dildine. The idea to partner with EJI on *Pipeline* grew from a conversation that Dildine had with Stevenson about the intersections of the arts and justice in our community. "This play will spark conversations that everybody in our community should be having regarding the safety and security of our children and the sustainability of our society," Dildine said.

"Dominique has written a piece that speaks to us all about what it means to be a young man thrust into an environment that sometimes can be overwhelming, and how very important the family unit is in society," said director Ron OJ Parson. "I hope that with *Pipeline* we can begin to see what is needed in society to help us end this cycle — this pipeline to destruction and hopelessness in so many young people."

Eunice Woods portrays Nya, a public school teacher and mother to Omari (played by **Jay Wade**). **Torée Alexandre**, **Barbara Figgins**, **Ethan Henry**, and **Brian Nelson** round out the cast.

The *Pipeline* creative team includes Scenic Designer **Shaun Motley**, Lighting Designer **Kathy A. Perkins**, Sound Designer **Christopher Kriz**, Costumer Designer **Dana Rebecca Woods**, Stage Manager **Victoria Broyles**, and Production Assistant **Madison Rutledge**.

Pipeline is a limited engagement presented on the Octagon Stage. Tickets start at \$29. To purchase, call 334.271.5353, visit the ASF Box Office (open Monday – Saturday, 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.), or go online: [ASF.net/pipeline](https://www.asf.net/pipeline). Evening performances begin at 7:00 p.m.; matinees start at 2:00 p.m.

About Alabama Shakespeare Festival

Alabama Shakespeare Festival is a not-for-profit organization under the direction of Artistic Director Rick Dildine and Executive Director Todd Schmidt. As a beloved Alabama arts institution, ASF broadens the cultural identity of the South by producing the classics, Shakespeare, contemporary plays, musicals, theatre for young audiences, and exciting new works. A leader in education and outreach, ASF serves more than 40,000 students annually with artistic programming. ASF is supported by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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