

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SOUTHERN REP ANNOUNCES
THE RUBY PRIZE
A NATIONAL CONTEST AWARDING \$10,000 TO A WOMAN OF COLOR PLAYWRIGHT**

New Orleans – **Southern Rep** is thrilled to introduce **The Ruby Prize, a new play contest which will award \$10,000 to a woman of color playwright. The Ruby Prize is named in honor of civil rights advocate Ruby Bridges, representing perseverance in the face of formidable obstacles. As a first-grader at the William Frantz Elementary School in the fall of 1960, Ms Bridges became one of the first African Americans to attend an integrated public school in New Orleans.** This November marks the **50th anniversary** of her legendary walk up the school steps, memorialized in photos that depict a little girl surrounded by protesters, state officials, cameras and a sea of frightened faces. We were touched by the notion that there continue to be people, of all ages, braving a walk that is still harder than it should be.

The arts have always had incredible power to transform public opinion on important social issues, such as the way Norman Rockwell's painting of me influenced how many felt about race relations. I am honored that this award, which will help provide access to talented women of color, will carry my name. We must remember that racism is a grown-up disease, and we must stop using children to spread it.

– Ruby Bridges

As theatre arts professionals struggle with an ongoing disparity when it comes to the number of annual productions of plays written by female playwrights, and the financial compensation they receive when compared to their male counterparts, this national playwriting contest has been conceived as part of ongoing efforts made by Southern Rep to develop new American plays, support a diverse community of artists, and incite a stimulating dialogue within our community.

We feel it's important to recognize the enduring struggle of female playwrights of color. This prize will highlight the best playwrights in the field and introduce a new opportunity for them.

– Artistic Director, Aimée Hayes

In addition to an award of \$10,000, the winner will receive:

- A week long development workshop with collaboration of full artistic team at the Southern Rep New Play Bacchanal, held in New Orleans, January 18 - 23, 2011
- A sponsored trip to New York to continue development of the play and introduce the new work to a larger audience
(All travel includes roundtrip air and accommodations.)

Two finalists will be selected to have their new works read at the Southern Rep New Play

Bacchanal in January 2010. (Includes roundtrip air and accommodations. There is no cash award associated with the selection of finalists.)

Full Description and guidelines appear at the end of this release. Guidelines may also be found online at www.SouthernRep.com. Submissions will be accepted between September 15 and November 1, 2010. The winner will be announced on December 1, 2010.

Ruby Bridges – Please read below for more information about Ruby Bridges.

Southern Rep enters its 24th season as the region's premiere professional theatre, continuing to produce bold world and regional premieres under the leadership of Artistic Director, Aimée Hayes and Managing Director, Marieke Gaboury. In addition to an exciting Mainstage season that takes us on a journey from the dining room table to a 19th Century doctor's examining table to a magical realm inhabited by mythical creatures, Southern Rep at Le Chat Noir offers a second stage season of eclectic, smart, silly and audacious theatrical fare. Southern Rep continues to offer educational programs such as free student matinees, \$10 student rush tickets and Academy SRT; as well as providing an artistic home to new works in development in the annual *New Play Bacchanal*.

Southern Rep continues to show that it is staging the most important, challenging, and downright mesmerizing pieces of theater New Orleans audiences are graced to experience. - Theodore P. Mahne, The Times-Picayune Lagniappe

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An annual new play award of \$10,000 to a woman of color playwright.
In honor of Ruby Bridges, representing perseverance in the face of formidable obstacles.

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THE PRIZE

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GUIDELINES

The contest will be open to US citizens who self-identify as women of color, and may be either emerging or established playwrights.

Southern Rep's in-house readers will review and evaluate scripts, selecting finalists that will move into the next round of judging. The final panel consists of national and local theatre artists with Southern Rep's Artistic Director, Aimée Hayes.

Plays may be of any genre: drama, comedy, musical, etcetera. We will not accept collaborative scripts, translations, one-acts, or any play previously submitted to Southern Rep. In the case of musical submissions, only the playwright will be eligible for the prize.

Plays that have had a professional production may not be submitted. Plays that have received a

workshop, reading, or non-professional production are eligible. (“Professional production” shall be defined as a production with paid actors and an official press opening.)

Only one submission per playwright is allowed.

SUBMISSIONS

Each submission shall include a letter of introduction which should contain a brief play synopsis, a character breakdown, playwright bio, and brief history of the play’s development. The manuscript should have a title page containing the playwright’s name, address and contact information. This information may ONLY appear on the title page.

Submissions must be sent by email, as an attached document, in PDF (preferred) or Word doc format.

Submit all of the required elements in ONE email to TheRuby@SouthernRep.com
Please no Phone or Email inquiries regarding submissions.

If the play is a musical, CDs of original music may be sent to: attn: The Ruby Prize; Southern Rep; 333 Canal ST, Box 34; New Orleans, LA 70130. CDs will not be returned.

Due to anticipated number of submissions, we regret that feedback will not be available to submitting playwrights.

DEADLINES

Submissions are accepted between September 15 and November 1, 2010.

The winner will be announced on December 1, 2010.

Ruby Bridges, A Child of Courage, a Woman of Determination

On November 14, 1960, surrounded by armed US marshals, six-year-old Ruby Bridges integrated William Frantz Elementary in New Orleans. Many already know Ruby and her story. Norman Rockwell's painting, "The Problem We All Live With" remains a quintessential image of the Civil Rights Movement. John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley* also includes a description of Ruby walking past angry mobs to enter school. Robert Coles penned a 1995 book, *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, and soon after Walt Disney Home Entertainment produced a television movie based on her life. The movie received the honor of being screened in the White House, and on January 8, 2001 President Bill Clinton presented Ruby Bridges Hall with the Presidential Citizens Medal. In 1999, Ruby published her own award-winning memoir, *Through My Eyes*.



In addition, one of the world's largest children's museums, the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, has focused on the importance of Ruby Bridge's story and created a permanent exhibition entitled "The Power of Children," which has become an icon of the museum. The exhibition takes visitors on a journey through the lives of three children who faced profound trials and emerged as heroes of the 20th century—Ruby Bridges, Anne Frank, and Ryan White. All three of these children's stories exemplify Ruby's belief that every individual can make a difference.

As a lecturer, Ruby brings her message to children and adults nationwide. She also established the Ruby Bridges Foundation to promote the values of tolerance, respect and appreciation of all differences through educational programs. A major focus of the foundation has been a program called Ruby's Bridges, which connects students, parents, and educators from different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. The goal of the program is to build lasting relationships, which will allow individuals to transcend their differences and achieve racial reconciliation. One of the strategies of Ruby's Bridges is to involve students in service learning projects that foster a sense of community responsibility. From planting trees and caring for the environment at state parks to working with others in need, the program has provided students with the skills to collaborate on meaningful causes. The ultimate goal of the foundation is to move first our children and then our society as a whole toward the elimination of racism and prejudice.

Ruby's Story

Ruby Nell Bridges was born in Tylertown, Mississippi in 1954, the same year as the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Her grandparents were sharecroppers, but like many people in rural areas, Ruby's family moved to New Orleans in search of better opportunities. Her father worked as a service station attendant and her mother took night jobs to help support the family. They lived in the front part of a large rooming house on France Street in the Florida neighborhood. Like the rest of the Ninth Ward, the Florida area was predominantly working class. While both whites and blacks lived in the neighborhood, residents were segregated by block. Of course the schools were segregated as well; though Ruby lived only five blocks from William Frantz Elementary, she had to walk much further to attend Johnson Lockett, the school reserved for African American students.

Ruby went on to finish grammar school at Frantz and to attend an integrated high school. After her parents divorced, Ruby's mother was forced to move the family out of the house on Frantz Street and into the nearby Florida housing project. After graduating from high school, Ruby wanted to attend college, but she did not have anyone to guide her through the process. She

later became a travel agent, married, and raised four sons. In the early 1990s, Ruby's youngest brother, Milton, was killed in a drug-related shooting.

Though the incident was traumatic, it awakened in Ruby a social consciousness about the issues facing children and adults in urban areas. In particular, she began to put her past experiences into perspective. The fight for school integration was hard fought, and it represented an extremely significant milestone in the Civil Rights Movement. Sadly here in New Orleans, as in other cities across the nation, the victory was short-lived. By the time Ruby began to volunteer at her alma mater, William Frantz, it had long since become segregated again. The neighborhood around the school had also deteriorated with increasing poverty and crime rates.

Inspired by her desire to help children achieve their hopes and dreams, the Ruby Bridges Foundation was established. The foundation began taking small steps to achieve a grand vision—to provide children with an equal opportunity to succeed. Appropriately the work began at Frantz, where the foundation started an after-school program featuring multicultural arts classes. Later, a program called Ruby's Bridges was developed to promote cultural understanding through community service.