

APRIL 16 - MAY 12, 2019 | QUADRACCI POWERHOUSE

*Play*  
**Guide**

AUGUST WILSON'S

# TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Directed by **Timothy Douglas**

*Executive Producers:* Jackie Herd-Barber  
& Michael Barber

*Associate Producers:*  
Amy & Fred Croen

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# STANIS

The play takes place in Pittsburgh, as do all but one of Wilson's Century Cycle plays. It is 1969 and the setting is Memphis Lee's Diner, a restaurant that sits across the street from West's Funeral Home and Lutz's Meat Market in the Hill District. The self-titled restaurant is owned by Memphis Lee, and is the main gathering place for the characters who inhabit the world of the play.

The Hill District is a mostly black neighborhood of the city, and the city government wants to tear down the entire block to make room for new development. Memphis wants \$25,000 for his property and says that he will not take a penny less for its sale. West, the wealthy owner of the funeral home across the street, offers Memphis \$20,000, but Memphis won't back down on his price. While West is well-off, he is currently dealing with a bit of chaos at his funeral home. Prophet Samuel, a local charismatic preacher, is laid out in the funeral home, and his boisterous followers are unruly and difficult to control.

While these men discuss their problems, we meet Risa, the cafe's lone waitress and a follower of Prophet Samuel. Risa has become so fed up with men pursuing her that she has cut and scarred her legs as a deterrent. Unfortunately for Risa, her defacement has not worked on a young man who enters the cafe, Sterling, who has recently been released from prison. He has grand plans for getting a job, winning the numbers game, and marrying Risa, regardless of the fact that she has never agreed to his plan. Sterling struggles to find work, starts playing the numbers, and gets himself a gun.

Another regular at the cafe is Wolf, the local numbers runner, who uses the cafe's phone to conduct his business, much to Memphis's distaste. The discontent is perhaps most clear in the character of Hambone, who only utters two phrases: "I want my ham," and "He gonna give me my ham," due to an injustice perpetrated upon him by the white meat market owner, Lutz, ten years ago.

It seems that the only regular at Memphis's restaurant that is content is Holloway, a retired house painter. He has visited Aunt Ester, a 322 year-old wise woman who lives down the street. He truly believes in her wisdom and power and dispenses wisdom of his own about the state of the world around him.

As the days pass and the characters come and go in the cafe, we see the shifting world surrounding African-Americans at the end of the 1960s. These characters reflect on that changing world and interact with it in ways that will change all of their lives for better or worse.

# CHARACTERS



**Raymond Anthony Thomas**

**MEMPHIS** - owner of the restaurant that serves as the setting for the play. In his 50s, and he hopes for a sizable payout for the city's purchase of his business for a redevelopment project.



**Chiké Johnson**

**STERLING** - a man recently released from prison, Sterling has many schemes and ideas for bettering his lot in life. He shows an interest in Risa and also in the increased movement towards Black Power bubbling over in Pittsburgh.



**Jefferson A. Russell**

**WOLF** - the community's numbers runner. Wolf is constantly on the move, and knows everyone in the community. He often uses the restaurant as his home base, but hopes for more success than his illegal activities provide.



**Frank Britton**

**HAMBONE** - a man whose mental state has deteriorated based on an act of injustice. His voice has been limited to two phrases that illustrate his obsession with getting what he is due.



**Malkia Stampley**

**RISA** - a waitress at the restaurant who shares strong beliefs in what is possible, but also has doubts about what reality brings her. She has scarred her legs to deter men who may see her as a prize to be won instead of a complete person.



**Doug Brown**

**WEST** - the community's undertaker who is a shrewd businessman. As his life has evolved, he has allowed his love of money and material possessions to overshadow anything else of which he may be capable.

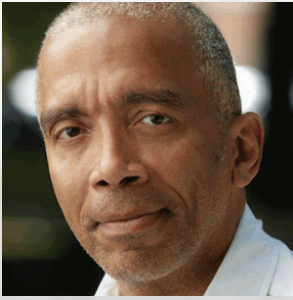


**Michael Anthony Williams**

**HOLLOWAY** - a regular of the restaurant in his 60s, Holloway is full of quips and advice. His belief in the supernatural informs his viewpoint on his life and circumstances.



# CREATIVE TEAM



**Timothy Douglas**  
*Director*



**August Wilson**  
*Playwright*

**Tony Cisek**  
*Scenic Designer*

**Michael Gilliam**  
*Lighting Designer*

**Stephanie Klapper, CSA**  
*New York Casting*

**Kimberly Carolus**  
*Stage Manager*

**Audra Kuchling**  
*Assistant Stage Manager*

**Kara Harmon**  
*Costume Designer*

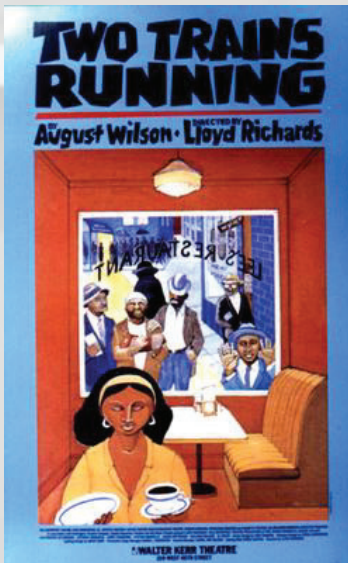
**Matthew M. Nielson**  
*Composer, Sound Designer*

**Frank Honts**  
*Casting Director*

**Jade Bruno**  
*Assistant Stage Manager*

**Josh Hart**  
*Stage Management Resident*

## PRODUCTION HISTORY



*Two Trains Running* opened on March 27, 1990 at Yale Repertory Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut. After productions at Huntington Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and the Old Globe Theatre, the play opened on Broadway at the Walter Kerr Theatre on April 13, 1992. Since its premiere in 1990, *Two Trains Running* has seen regional productions throughout the country. This is the first time Milwaukee Rep will stage this play, although The Rep has staged six other Wilson plays over the last thirty years.

Poster for original Broadway production of *Two Trains Running*, 1992. Photo Credit: Wikipedia.



# AUGUST WILSON

August Wilson was born Frederick August Kittel on April 27, 1945 in the Hill District of Pittsburgh. He was the son of Daisy Wilson, an African-American cleaning woman, and Frederick Kittel, a German immigrant and baker, who was not an active part of Wilson's life. Wilson's mother raised him and his siblings in a two-room flat, and later remarried and moved her children to a predominantly white neighborhood where Wilson and his siblings experienced bullying and racism.

After being accused of cheating on a paper by a teacher, Wilson dropped out of high school and took his education into his own hands. He spent most his time at the Carnegie Library, in his old neighborhood, and was able to expose himself to other great African-American authors. His voracious reading led him to writing poetry, and to listening to the voices and stories of the people of the Hill District, which would later inspire his most famous plays.

In 1965, Wilson's father died, and he changed his name in honor of his mother. That year, he also bought his first typewriter and began his long career. He began to write plays after dabbling in poetry, and in 1969 founded an activist theater company called Black Horizons on the Hill with playwright Rob Penny.

In 1978, Wilson moved from Pittsburgh to Minneapolis, and began to experiment with the voices of the people of "the Hill" that he had observed throughout his life. An early draft of his play, *Jitney*, earned him a fellowship at the Minneapolis Playwrights Center. This fellowship led to his acceptance into the National Playwrights' Conference at the O'Neill Theater Center, where he met his longtime collaborator, director Lloyd Richards. Richards would go on to direct Wilson's first six plays when they premiered on Broadway.

Wilson is a vital figure in the American theatrical canon, and his works are among the most highly produced and highly regarded plays in American theater. Both *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson* won Pulitzer Prizes for Drama. Wilson's plays have won Tony awards, New York Drama Critics Circle Awards, and numerous other honors. Wilson even earned the sole honorary degree given out by his beloved Carnegie Library.

In 2005, shortly after the premiere of *Radio Golf*, the final play in his Pittsburgh Cycle, Wilson was diagnosed with terminal liver cancer. He died on October 2nd of that year. Wilson's legacy continues on in his work, his unique take on the African-American experience, and his stories that have graced so many stages.



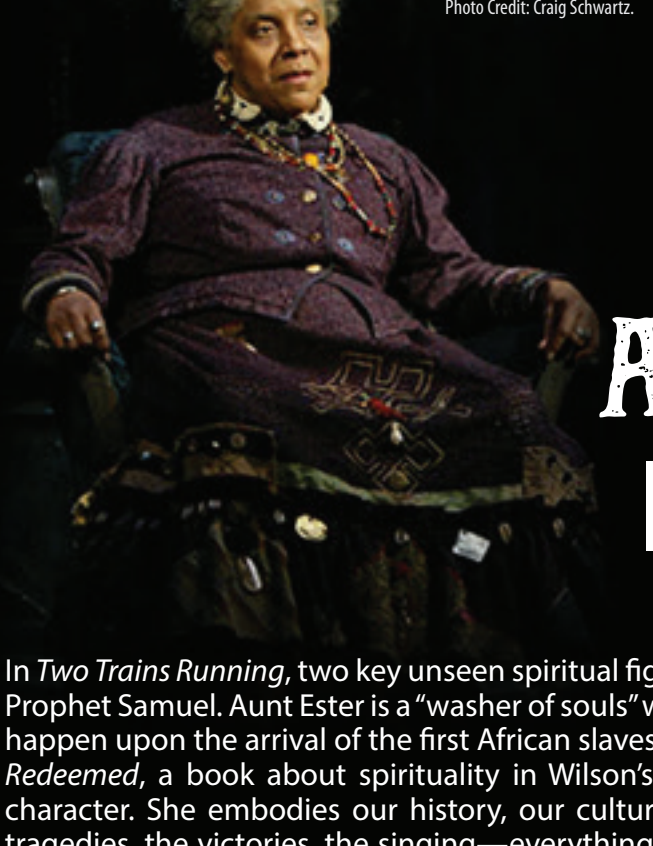
# WILSON'S PITTSBURGH CYCLE

August Wilson is best known for his Pittsburgh Cycle or Century Cycle plays, a series of ten plays that take place in each decade of the 20th century. The plays reflect the African-American experience during the century while also reflecting cultural shifts in America. All of the plays, except *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, take place in Pittsburgh's Hill District. Some characters, such as Aunt Ester, who is an unseen character in *Two Trains Running*, appear in several plays in the cycle.

- *Gem of the Ocean*, 1904.
- *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, 1911.
- *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, 1927.
- *The Piano Lesson*, 1936.
- *Seven Guitars*, 1948.
- *Fences*, 1957 & 1963.
- *Two Trains Running*, 1969.
- *Jitney*, 1977
- *King Hedley II*, 1985.
- *Radio Golf*, 1997.

PHOTO CREDITS, TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT: Ray Anthony Thomas in Milwaukee Repertory Theater's 2006/07 Quadracci Powerhouse production of *Gem of the Ocean*. Photo by Jay Westhauser. Derrick Lee Weeden, Caroline Stefanie Clay, and Helmar Augustus Cooper in Milwaukee Repertory Theater's 1993/94 Powerhouse Theater production of *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. Photo by Mark Avery. Greta Oglesby as Ma Rainey in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, Actors Theatre of Louisville/Milwaukee Repertory Theater, 2011 Photography by Alan Simons. 1936 Yale Repertory Theatre production of *The Piano Lesson*, 1987. Photo by Gerry Goodstein. 1948 World premiere production of *Seven Guitars*, 1995, Goodman Theatre. Photo credit: Goodman Theatre. Milwaukee Repertory Theater presents *Fences* in the Quadracci Powerhouse from April 26 to May 22, 2016. Left to Right: David Alan Anderson as Troy Maxson and Kim Staunton as Rose. Photo by Tim Fuller. Wolf (Jefferson A. Russell) and Sterling (Chiké Johnson) in Milwaukee Repertory Theater's production of August Wilson's *Two Trains Running* April 16 – May 12, 2019. Photo by Mikki Schaffner. Chuck Patterson and Marcuis Harris in Milwaukee Repertory Theater's 2001/02 Quadracci Powerhouse Theater production of *Jitney*. Photo by Jay Westhauser. 1985 Broadway production of *King Hedley II*, 2001. Photo credit: Playbill.com. Doug Brown in Milwaukee Repertory Theater's 2009/10 Stiemke Theater production of *Radio Golf*. Photo by Jay Westhauser.



A photograph of Phylicia Rashad as Aunt Ester, an elderly African American woman with white hair, wearing a purple patterned dress and a large, ornate necklace. She is seated and looking slightly to the right.

Phylicia Rashad as Aunt Ester,  
*Gem of the Ocean* on Broadway, 2004.  
Photo Credit: Craig Schwartz.

# SPIRITUALITY AND MYSTICISM IN WILSON'S PLAYS

In *Two Trains Running*, two key unseen spiritual figures reappear many times throughout the play: Aunt Ester and Prophet Samuel. Aunt Ester is a “washer of souls” who is reported to be 322 years old, which would make her birth happen upon the arrival of the first African slaves to America. Riley Keene Temple, author of *Aunt Ester's Children Redeemed*, a book about spirituality in Wilson's plays, said the following of Aunt Ester: “She's an embodied character. She embodies our history, our culture, our joys, our sorrows, our triumphs, our major losses. The tragedies, the victories, the singing—everything we are, she embodies. She is our ancestral past.” Aunt Ester is said to have the power to make things happen, but there is no explanation how, just that one needs to believe and also throw her fee into the river for it to return to her. Aunt Ester is also referenced in several of the other plays in Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle, adding a sense of mysticism many of his works. Her only onstage appearance is in *Gem of the Ocean*, the first of the plays chronologically. Her death is talked about in *King Hedley II*, although her home and her presence still permeate *Radio Golf*, the last play in the chronology.

Prophet Samuel is more of a charismatic preacher than a mystic. He has many followers who gather around his corpse at West's funeral home, hoping to grab some of his power by rubbing his head or being in his presence one last time. Risa is a true believer, who was a member of his church while he was still alive and saw his preaching as a source of solace in her life. People view Prophet Samuel as either a revered servant of God or as a money grubbing charlatan. He was modeled after Father Divine, a famed African-American preacher with a huge following. Father Divine was a huge advocate for peace and racial justice, but was also said to gather large amounts of wealth from his congregants.

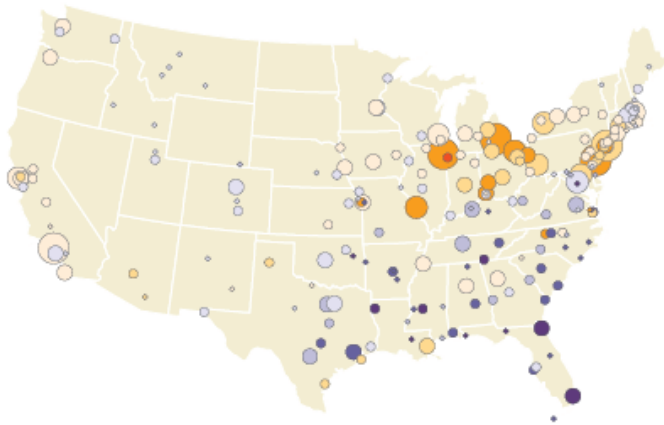
Some scholarly work has focused on the use of spirituality, conjurers, and mysticism in Wilson's plays. Spirituality and conjurers such as Aunt Ester are used by Wilson to connect his characters and stories to an ancestral memory of African-Americans. These characters and stories allow Wilson to connect his audience and his characters with the “double consciousness” of African-Americans, a term coined by W.E.B. DuBois and used extensively over the past hundred years to characterize the social, historical, and psychological dimensions of being an African-American. Not only does Wilson use more traditional mystical spirituality in his plays, but also the Christian traditions of African-American communities. Temple says of Wilson's work: “August specifically asks questions about our relationship with God. In almost every play there is a question about a god. There is some struggle with a theos or a life-and-death struggle . . . I think that although Wilson never really talked about his desire to express spirituality and religion, he clearly addresses it. He addresses it in terms of the tension in Christianity—the God of the enslaved and the God of the enslaver. He talks about Jews celebrating the Passover and that black Americans should celebrate the day of the Emancipation Proclamation the same way the Jews celebrate the Passover. There are all these theological threads going through.”



# The Great Migration

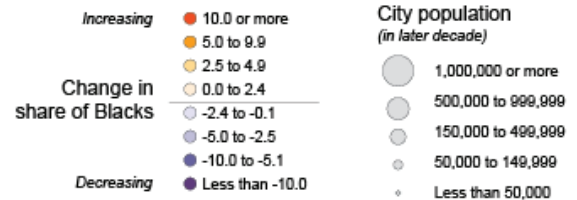
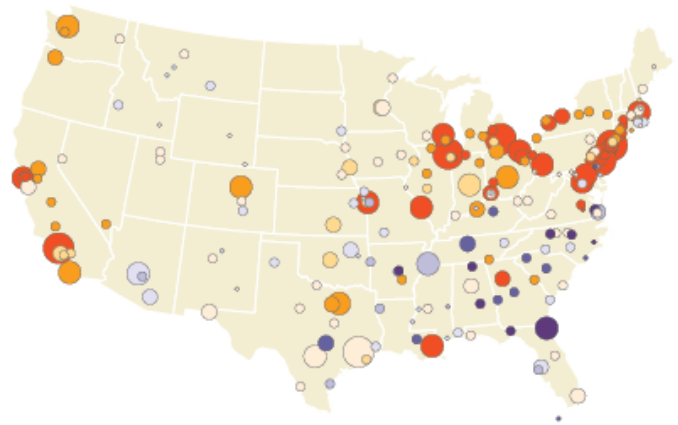
Photo Credit: U.S. Census.

## The First Great Migration: 1910-1940



The change in share of Blacks in cities is based on the percentage point difference in the percent of population that was Black in the later time period compared to the earlier. For example, 18.3 percent of the population in Gary, IN was Black in 1940 but was just 2.3 in 1910, which represented a 16.0 percentage-point change in the share of Blacks in the city. It was the largest change in share during the First Great Migration. By the end of the Second Great Migration, Newark, NJ had realized the largest increase in Black population share, with the Black proportion of the city rising from 10.6 in 1940 to 54.2 in 1970.

## The Second Great Migration: 1940-1970



In the 1920s, Harlem's black population exploded in a community where virtually no African-Americans lived 15 years prior. A Harlem street, 1942. Photo Credit: National Archives.



An African-American family arrives in Chicago, 1919. Photo Credit: BlackPast.org.

The Great Migration generally refers to the internal migration of over six million African-Americans from the South to northern urban communities between the years 1910-1970. During the initial migration wave, the majority of people headed to major cities such as Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and New York City. By World War II, migrants also headed west to places such as Los Angeles and Seattle.

The economic motivations for migration were high, as lingering restrictions in the Jim Crow South made earning a living wage difficult for people of color. Economic opportunity also awaited in the industrial centers of the North, which were experiencing shortages in new labor due to limitations placed on outside immigration and the deployment of millions of Americans in the two World Wars.

Economic factors were not the only reasons African-Americans fled the South in massive numbers. While slavery had ended, people of color suffered oppression on a daily basis. The South was a dangerous place, with lynchings commonplace, the Ku Klux Klan on the rise, and a legal system that provided less safety than injustice. The inequality extended to all aspects of life, from segregated and subpar schools, to disenfranchisement of black voters, to the everyday toll of Jim Crow laws throughout the South. "They left as though they were fleeing some curse," wrote the scholar Emmett J. Scott, an observer of the early years of the migration. "They were willing to make almost any sacrifice to obtain a railroad ticket and they left with the intention of staying."

In Milwaukee, the Great Migration saw the African American population in our community soar. While African-Americans have been part of the community before the city officially existed, this period saw the population boom. Between 1910 and 1930, the African American population soared from 980 to 7,501. During this time, a number of important Milwaukee community institutions were born including the Milwaukee Urban League, the Milwaukee chapter of the NAACP, and a large number of churches. This population continues to grow and contribute in innumerable ways to the cultural and societal fabric of Milwaukee, with almost 40 percent of Milwaukee's population being African-American in the 2010 census.

From Isabel Wilkerson, writing for Smithsonian Magazine: "The refugees could not know what was in store for them and for their descendants at their destinations or what affect their exodus would have on the country. But by their actions, they would reshape the social and political geography of every city they fled to. When the migration began, 90 percent of all African-Americans were living in the South. By the time it was over, in the 1970s, 47 percent of all African-Americans were living in the North and West. A rural people had become urban, and a Southern people had spread themselves all over the nation."

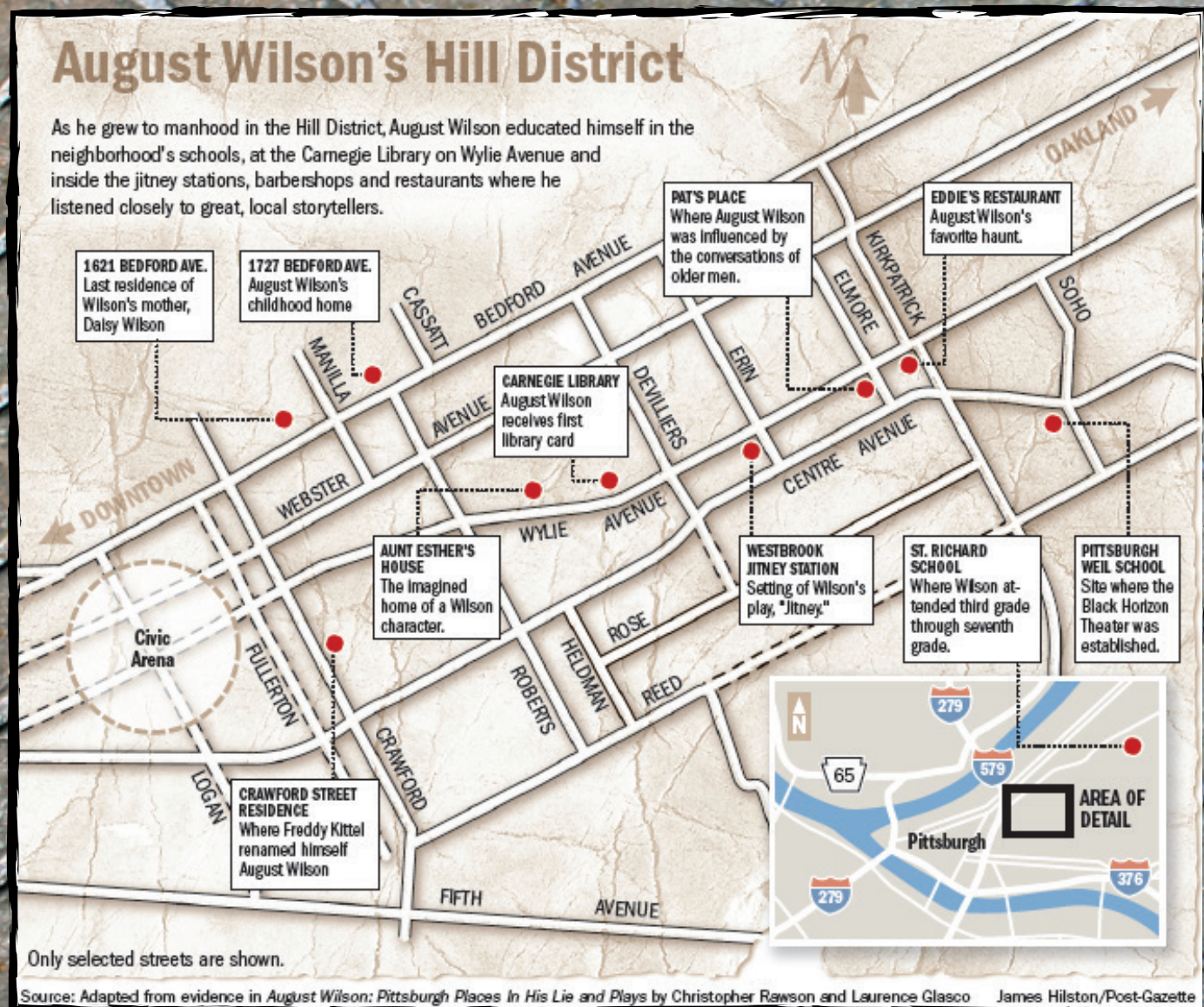
For an excellent article on the lasting impact of The Great Migration, see:  
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/long-lasting-legacy-great-migration-180960118/>



# PITTSBURGH'S

Pittsburgh's Hill District was a thriving African-American neighborhood throughout much of the early 1900s. Concert halls filled the neighborhood, as it was an important stopping point for jazz and blues musicians travelling from New York to Chicago. The Pittsburgh Crawfords Negro League baseball team played in the community in the 1930s, and the Pittsburgh Courier, one of the nation's premiere black newspapers, was based in the neighborhood. Claude McKay, Harlem Renaissance poet, referred to the area as "The Crossroads of the World." Ethnic diversity was a vital part of the community; while predominantly black, Jewish, Italian, and other ethnic groups thrived in the neighborhood as well.

Unfortunately, this renaissance of culture and commerce would stall in the latter half of the century. In the 1950s and 1960s, over 1,300 buildings over 80 blocks were cleared in the Hill District, displacing over 800 residents, to make way for the Pittsburgh Penguins hockey arena and other development. Once the arena opened in 1961, it





# HILL DISTRICT

not only displaced many residents and businesses, but also cut the neighborhood off from many routes to downtown. This, paired with the decline of the steel industry, put the Hill District past recovery. The population in 1950 of the Hill District and neighboring Uptown was 62,500. In 2010, it was only 17,050.

The neighborhood is slowly recovering, as people in the community strive to make the Hill District as vibrant as it once was. Renovations on August Wilson's childhood home are currently underway, and there is a plan for it to become a performance space with a writer-in-residence program. Community organizations are renovating green spaces and parks. The neighborhood is no longer a food desert, with the return of a grocery store in 2013. Visitors to Pittsburgh can purchase a book entitled *August Wilson: Pittsburgh Places in His Life and Plays*, and enjoy a walking tour of the neighborhood through the lens of Wilson's life and work. The neighborhood Wilson so loved is recovering through the love of others who want to see the community rise again.



The street scene in the 1930s. Photo Credit: National Trust for Historic Preservation.



August Wilson in front of the Granada Theatre.  
Photo Credit: Hill Community Development Corporation.



Razing of buildings in the Hill District. Photo credit: National Trust for Historic Preservation.



# CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT TIMELINE

*Two Trains Running* takes place in 1969, after many of the events of the Civil Rights Movement and in the heart of the rise of the Black Power movement. During the course of the play, Sterling becomes interested in attending a racial justice rally and urges Risa to join him. The older characters are less interested and supportive of the rally. In Pittsburgh, and many urban areas after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, riots occurred, damaging areas such as the neighborhood in which the play is set. The riots also escalated tensions between black communities and the police. The skepticism many of the older characters, some of whom were born in the South, have, is reflective of the generational gap that occurred throughout many African-American communities.

## 1954

- The landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision began the desegregation of America's schools.

## 1957

- President Eisenhower signed into the law the Civil Rights Act of 1957.
- Nine African-American students were blocked from integrating a high school in Little Rock, Arkansas by the Arkansas governor and the National Guard.

## 1955

- The kidnapping and murder of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till galvanized support for racial reform in the South.
- The Montgomery Bus Boycott began after Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat and was arrested.

## 1958

- In October, Atlanta's oldest synagogue was bombed.



Martin Luther King, Jr. and crowd at March on Washington. Photo Credit: NPR.



Aftermath of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. Photo Credit: FBI.



Governor George Wallace blocking a door at the University of Alabama. Photo Credit: Wikipedia.



Students prepare signs for the NYC Public Schools Boycott. Photo Credit: WNYC.



Troops deploying into urban areas. Photo Credit: Time.

## 1964

- The 24th Amendment abolished poll taxes that limited enfranchisement of blacks.
- President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law.
- Three civil rights workers (James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Mickey Schwerner), two white and one black, were murdered by the KKK in Mississippi after being released from police custody to the hate group.
- During the Freedom Summer, thousands of Northern college students traveled to the South to help register black voters and encourage participation in activist activities.
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
- Race riots in New York were the first of many that ripped through American cities during 1964-65.
- Hundreds of thousands of parents, students, and activists participated in a boycott of New York City Public Schools in a fight to end de facto segregation across the city.

## 1965

- The SCOPE project took predominantly white college students and placed them in predominantly black communities throughout the South to help with voter registration. Working with other activists and field workers, over 49,000 new black registered voters were added to rolls by the end of the summer of 1965.
- To protest resistance to black voter registration, a large march from Selma to Montgomery was organized and implemented in March. Marchers were met by violence from police and sheriffs, and the day was termed "Bloody Sunday" by news media due to the level of harm perpetrated against the peaceful protesters.
- The Watts Riot was the largest and most costly urban unrest during the Civil Rights Movement.
- On February 21, Civil rights leader Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El Shabazz) was assassinated.



# 1960

- College students and others began sit-ins across the south to integrate lunch counters at restaurants and drug stores, swimming pools, libraries, and other segregated locations.
- President Kennedy issued an executive order prohibiting discrimination in federal hiring and also established The President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.
- The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was founded at Shaw University, allowing black college students more opportunity to participate as activists.

# 1961

- An integrated group of activists began Freedom Rides throughout the South to test integration laws and bring attention to the varying levels of compliance with federal rulings. Riders faced harassment and violence as they worked to fight segregation.

# 1963

- Mississippi's NAACP Field Secretary Medgar Evers was murdered outside his home. Two trials in 1964 resulted in hung juries, and his murderer was not convicted until thirty years later.
- The bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama was one of the most violent acts of the entire Civil Rights Movement and brought greater attention to the need for change.
- In response to the bombing and continued inequality in Birmingham, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his team established Project C to put pressure on businesses and the community to make major changes.
- Governor George Wallace blocks African-American students at the doors to the University of Alabama.
- Over 250,000 Americans gathered in the nation's capital to attend the March on Washington, one of the pivotal actions of the Civil Rights Movement and where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.
- President John F. Kennedy was assassinated.



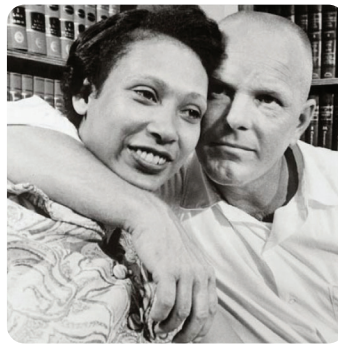
...s of the Watts riots.



Malcolm X speaks. Photo Credit: Getty.



Freedom Riders sitting outside their bus that was firebombed in Alabama, May 1961. Photo Credit: Library of Congress.



Mildred and Richard Loving of the Loving v. Virginia case, 1967. Photo Credit: Getty Images.



Angela Davis. Photo Credit: Youtube.

# 1967

- In *Loving v. Virginia*, laws against interracial marriage were deemed unconstitutional.
- Thurgood Marshall became the first African-American justice on the Supreme Court.

# 1968

- On April 4, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated.
- Riots occurred in major U.S. cities such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, D.C., and Detroit in response to the assassination of Dr. King.
- President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1968, also known as the Fair Housing Act.

## THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT

The Black Power Movement was a revolutionary movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The movement sought to bring about economic empowerment, racial pride, and the creation of cultural and political institutions in black communities. There was an increase in demands for black history and literature courses, a greater embracing of African culture, and an exaltation of black artists who were expressing the realities of the African-American experience.

The origin of the term "Black Power" varies, as it was mentioned in Richard Wright's nonfiction *Black Power* in 1954, and in 1964, a political group in Alabama used the slogan "Black power for black people." Most often, the term is associated with groups such as Nation of Islam, the Black Panther Party, and Deacons for Defense and Justice. Major figures in the movement included Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Angela Davis, Amiri Baraka, Shirley Chisholm, Fred Hampton, and Elaine Brown.

# Gentrification & Urban Renewal



Anti-gentrification protest banner at a real estate summit at Brooklyn Museum. Photo Credit: Hyperallergic.



Construction on the Milwaukee Streetcar line, an urban renewal initiative. Photo Credit: New York Times.

In *Two Trains Running*, the characters see the changes their neighborhood is experiencing in the face of gentrification and urban renewal. These themes are also central to an earlier production in the Rep's 2018-19 season, *In the Heights*. In both of these theatrical pieces, characters see their neighborhoods changing, businesses being bought out, and the diversity of their communities threatened.

Gentrification is defined as: "the process of renovating and improving a house or district so that it conforms to middle-class taste." In *Two Trains Running*, Wilson references the purchasing of Hill District businesses by "the city," but it is unclear what sort of development is going to occur. In the real Pittsburgh, the razing of much of the district was for a now closed hockey arena.

The term "gentrification" is a loaded one, as there is much debate about its impact and whether it is as harmful as it may seem. Much has been written about the sociology of how neighborhoods change and why. In different communities, the ethnic, racial, or socioeconomic makeup of a neighborhood can change for a multitude of reasons from new development, changing immigration patterns, declining industry, changing laws, or a multitude of other things.

The idea of urban renewal is often looked on more favorably than the idea of gentrification. Urban renewal posits the reclaiming of urban communities that are in need of revitalization. At times, this may be created by developers that are debated by the community, but often the movement for renewal comes from the community itself. Many residents and business owners in urban neighborhoods work diligently to renew their communities and bring new life into the streets they call home.



## WHAT IS THE Numbers Game?

The numbers game is a central topic of interest to the characters in *Two Trains Running*. The game is an illegal form of gambling or lottery mostly played in poor or working class neighborhoods. In the numbers game, players choose three numbers to try to match the ones that will be chosen the following day. A numbers runner, like Wolf in the play, keeps track of the betting slips and money, and disperses the winnings. The runner works for the "bank," or the headquarters, of the betting pool. If someone guesses correctly, they are said to "hit the numbers" and receive a portion of the betting pool's funds.



FEATURED  
ARTIST  
INTERVIEW

# TIMOTHY DOUGLAS

DIRECTOR



Timothy Douglas is no stranger to August Wilson. His first experience with the playwright was as the understudy for Sylvester in the original production of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. "It was indeed one of the most extraordinary plays I'd encountered during my then young career," Douglas says of the experience. "Those of us working on that first production of course recognized the brilliance in the writing, but Wilson had not yet been ordained the legend he is known as today, and as a result we were able to immerse ourselves into the brilliance of his play on its own terms." Since then, Douglas has also understudied roles in the original productions of both *Fences* and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. He has also directed nine of the ten August Wilson plays multiple times, including the world premiere of *Radio Golf* at Yale Repertory Theatre, which Douglas calls as an "unimaginable honor."

Douglas would describe directing as "the opportunity to provide the actors – and all of my collaborators – a working environment whereby they can continue to cultivate their processes toward the goal of doing their best work as artists. It remains a privilege to be such an interactive participant within the intimacy that is the collective artistic response." This in particular is the most enjoyable part of his job.

Douglas did not originally intend to be a director. He spent an early portion of his career as an actor, and then he became part of the faculty at the University of Southern California, where he directed a production with students, as was part of the requirements for the tenure-track position. "Someone from Los Angeles's Center Theatre Group's Mark Taper Forum happened to see it and was so taken with the production that they inferred I was a professional director...and as a result I was offered the opportunity to 'further my directing career.'" As a self-described "adventure-junkie," he jumped on the opportunity to pursue something new.

In his career, Douglas has worked nationally and internationally, including here in Milwaukee as both an actor and director. He counts the people here among the highlights of working at Milwaukee Rep, particularly Jim and Rose Pickering. He describes them as "two of the greatest influences on how I measure transformative stage performances. As a young actor, I had the great blessing of working opposite that most gifted of acting couples.... Years later I would also have the great good fortune of directing Jim (as if one could meaningfully influence his genius) in The Rep's production of *Trouble in Mind*, and got to boogie down hard with Rose at that opening night party."

One of Douglas's main goals when directing is to make sure the show feels accessible to all. If an audience is unfamiliar with the world or the story being told on stage, it can feel foreign and make it harder for them to connect to the material and understand the world. "No matter what I'm directing, I strive to make the experience as personal as possible, and specifically in the case of ... *Two Trains Running*, it becomes far easier for the Milwaukee audience to access the world of the entire play when focused on a particular character, who in turn will also serve as their [guide] to the world of the play. I currently find myself particularly focused on Risa, who by far is the most interesting — as well as elusive — character in the play. I'm thoroughly intrigued by her being the only woman in a male-dominated world and how expertly she single-handedly balances them all."

August Wilson's works continue to be prevalent in the canon of American theater, because of "the singular, monumental accomplishment of ... having conceived and composed an organically astounding ten-play cycle, with each of the plays being equally compelling all on their own." Douglas is deft at bringing these captivatingly written stories to life on stage. His "reputation for being a compelling interpreter of [August Wilson]" has been of great value to his directing career. "I've been blessed to ... have been in an ongoing dance with the American Century Cycle for these past 25 years." And we are delighted to have Douglas continuing that dance here on our Quadracci Powerhouse Stage!



## Pittsburgh's Hill District

[https://newsinteractive.post-gazette.com/lower\\_hill/](https://newsinteractive.post-gazette.com/lower_hill/)  
[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/pittsburghs-hill-district-dream\\_b\\_1669867](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/pittsburghs-hill-district-dream_b_1669867)  
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<https://www.wqed.org/augustwilson/hill-district-map>  
<https://savingplaces.org/stories/the-story-of-the-pittsburgh-neighborhood-that-inspired-fences#.XAVbf2hKhPZ>  
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## Spirituality in August Wilson's Plays

<https://www.wqed.org/augustwilson/hill-district-map>  
<https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/blog/interviews/religion-and-redemption-plays-august-wilson-conversation-riley-keene-temple>  
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## The Great Migration

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<https://blackpast.org/aah/great-migration-1915-1960>  
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<http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com/people/stories.cfm#African>  
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/minority-health/population/afriamer-pop.htm>

## The Civil Rights Movement

<http://crdl.usg.edu/events/?Welcome&Welcome>  
<https://www.sitimovement.org/history/america-civil-rights-timeline.asp>  
<https://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement/civil-rights-movement-timeline>  
<https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/black-power>

## August Wilson

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/august-wilson-african-american-culture/8021/>  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/august-wilson-the-ground-on-which-i-stand-full-film/3727/>  
<http://www.august-wilson-theatre.com/index.php>

## Gentrification and Urban Renewal

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/10/business/milwaukee-development-northwestern-mutual.html>  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/this-is-what-happens-after-a-neighborhood-gets-gentrified/432813/>  
<http://archive.pov.org/flagwars/what-is-gentrification/>  
<https://mic.com/articles/102004/these-7-cities-expose-exactly-what-gentrification-is-doing-to-america#.AJJahn9IX>  
<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/01/the-gentrification-myth-its-rare-and-not-as-bad-for-the-poor-as-people-think.html>





## VISITING THE REP

Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Patty and Jay Baker Theater Complex is located in the Milwaukee Center downtown at the corner of Wells and Water Streets. The building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company.

The Ticket Office is visible on the left upon entering the Wells Street doors. The Quadracci Powerhouse is located on the Mezzanine and can be accessed via escalator or elevator.

## THE REP VALUES YOUR SUPPORT

### Financial support enables The Rep to:

- ★ Advance the art of theater with productions that inspire individuals and create community dialogue;
- ★ Provide a richer theater experience by hosting Rep-in-Depth, TalkBacks, and creating PlayGuides to better inform our audiences about our productions;
- ★ Educate over 20,000 students at 200+ schools in the greater Milwaukee area with Rep Immersion Day experiences, student matinees, workshops, tours and by making connections with their school curriculum through classroom programs such as Reading Residencies;
- ★ Maintain our commitment to audiences with special needs through our Access Services that include American Sign Language interpreted productions, captioned theater, infrared listening systems and script synopses to ensure that theater at The Rep is accessible to all;
- ★ Educate the next generation of theater professionals with our EPR Program which gives newly degreed artists a chance to hone their skills at The Rep as they begin to pursue their theatrical careers.

We value our supporters and partnerships and hope that you will help us to expand the ways Milwaukee Rep has a positive impact on theater and on our Milwaukee community.

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