



Sandra Jones as Sojourner Truth.

Jones to portray Truth

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Actress, singer and teacher Sandra Jones is bringing to the stage the life of a legendary abolitionist and women's rights advocate.

She will star in the NC Black Repertory Company's "Sojourner Truth, A Legacy" at The Arts Council Theatre, 610 Coliseum Drive, later this month.

Jones, who also wrote the play, bridges the dimensions of time to bring Truth to life. Truth was born a slave in 1797 but escaped to freedom with her daughter in 1826. She won a landmark court case against a white man for the freedom of her son.

She is perhaps best known for her "Ain't I a Woman" speech, a fiery condemnation of gender inequality that was delivered at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in 1851.

"Sojourner Truth, A Legacy," directed by Mabel Robinson, will be staged on Friday, Oct. 24 at 8 p.m.; Saturday, Oct. 25 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.; and Sunday, Oct. 26 at 3 p.m.

Tickets are \$21 for adults, \$19 for students and senior citizens and \$16 for children.

Purchase tickets at www.ncblackrep.org or by calling 336-723-2266.



Sojourner Truth

Amendment

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which defendants may choose to have a bench trial," she said.

Last week, Simmons was named the director of Wake Law's new Criminal Justice Program, which, according to the school, will "facilitate critical thinking and scholarly engagement surrounding criminal justice systems in the United States."

Simmons said defendants in cases with dense information and facts or with unique circumstances may prefer a judge to a jury.

"Sometimes, in cases involving inflammatory or bizarre facts, a defendant might feel more comfortable that a judge can sort those facts and apply the law," she said.

Yet, Simmons said that even if the amendment does pass, she doesn't see too many defendants taking the option.

"I suspect, however, that most defendants will continue to request jury trials, and this is a right that accused persons (will) continue to have. It is important to note that a judge would still have to approve the request to waive a jury trial," said Simmons. "Jury trials, primarily because of the jury selection process, require a great deal of time and resources that may not be necessary in bench trials."

Local lawyer Frederick Adams, former president of the Winston-Salem Bar Association, agrees with Simmons and has heard both sides of

the argument.

"The reason people say it is a good idea is because of resources; the expense of jury trials and sometimes the time it takes to pick a jury. The flip side to that argument is that if we're actually going to convict someone, take away their freedom and potentially incarcerate them, I don't know if resources and time is what our focus should be on," Adams said. "I think that, as we've always said, we would rather see a 1,000 guilty men go free than one innocent person be convicted."

Adams, who runs his own criminal defense firm, said there are also major concerns with making sure defendants, even though they have attorneys, truly know what they are giving up by waiving their right to a jury trial.

"Defendants waive things all the time. They waive the right to remain silent and to have an attorney represent them. Even when these things are adequately and sufficiently explained, some defendants still don't fully understand what they're giving up."

He said that the topic is one voters should take seriously.

"It's a right that is important enough to be included in the constitution: the right to have a trial by a jury of your peers. We are talking about twelve people who bring their own individual experiences and perspectives. That can be a great part of the system," he said.



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