

JOHN O'NEAL BIOGRAPHY

Starting in 1963, John O'Neal advocated the view that politics and art are complementary not opposing terms. His work as a writer, performer and director was acclaimed by audiences in the US and worldwide. He was founder and artistic director of Junebug Productions, the organizational successor to the Free Southern Theater, of which O'Neal was also a co-founder and director. He was a field secretary of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and worked as National Field Program Director with the Committee for Racial Justice.

O'Neal wrote eighteen plays, a musical comedy, and a substantial body of poetry and essays. He earned numerous credits as an actor and toured widely in the character of Junebug Jabbo Jones, a mythic figure who symbolizes the wisdom of common people, which was created by people involved in SNCC. O'Neal was a leader in the field of artists working in community and for social justice. His ColorLine Project, a multi-year story collecting and performance event about the Civil Rights Movement, received the prestigious Ford Foundation's Leadership for a Changing World Award. His initiative, the Free Southern Theatre Institute, an educational program and artists' laboratory focused on theatre for social change, opened in 2010.

In May 2012, John O'Neal received the Otto René Castillo Award for Political Theatre. The Ottos were established to recognize and support theatre companies and artists engaged in creating political theatre. He won numerous other honors, including the Award of Merit from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, and the United States Artists Award.

O'Neal presented the Acting Together media tools with Cindy Cohen at the renown Alternate ROOTS Conference in 2012.

[O'Neal obituary in the NYT](#)