



ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND
FREDERICK DOUGLASS

A WALK TO RESPECT

**A THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE
INSPIRING MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS**

Produced by
The Patterson Foundation

Written by
Beth Duda

Poetry by
Cedric Hameed

Director's Note

History provides powerful examples of ordinary men and women with different opinions and agendas coming together to produce positive change.

In 1863, the height of the Civil War, two men met for the first time. Though both resided in the North, their ideological differences were stark. One, a radical with a fiery spirit, called for immediate change and racial equality. The other was more cautious. While opposed to slavery, he was a patriot intent on preserving the Union.

One man was black, a famous abolitionist, the most photographed man of his time. The other was white, an embattled president who won his election with 38.9% of the vote, the poorest showing by any winning presidential candidate in American history.

Lincoln and Douglass provide inspiration and hope. Their love of country and their willingness to connect with each other to build respect and understanding set the example for us who aspire to a better tomorrow.

Beth Duda,
Playwright and Director



Email bduda@thepattersonfoundation.org to learn more about how you can bring this inspirational play to your community. The performance is 55 minutes, followed by a 30-minute panel discussion that centers on the importance of turning outward to discover shared community aspirations.

A Walk to Respect 2023 Bright Spots

"Phenomenally thoughtful and creative approach to historical theater."

"Could be the source of constructive and meaningful conversations about race, reconciliation, and mutual respect."

"Americans today need more historical stories like this. We can learn so much from the unlikely friendship that developed between Lincoln and Douglass and the example their friendship."



Provided by The Patterson Foundation

- A staged reading of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass: A Walk to Respect (live or virtual)
- Post-show discussion with the actors, playwright, and production team
- Images and collateral that may be adapted and used in your marketing efforts
- A discussion guide that to extend the conversation in your community

Your Contribution

- Minimum audience of 200 for in-person events
Minimum audience of 125 for virtual events
- Each performance is free and open to the public
- The willingness to brainstorm ways to strengthen the impact of the events
- Contact person to help coordinate

Guided by deep mutual respect, Lincoln and Douglass' spirited conversations can model a more productive way to debate, find common ground, and, most importantly, deepen trust between neighbors. Lincoln and Douglass provide inspiration and hope and set an example for all who aspire to a better tomorrow.

Cast and Creative Team



Jeffrey Atherton (Abraham Lincoln) holds a bachelor's degree in music and theatre from Florida State University and a master's in computer education from Nova South Eastern University. He was a choir director in school and church before moving to NYC to pursue a professional acting career. His acting credits include Higgins in *My Fair Lady*, Charlemagne in *Pippin*, El Gallo in *The Fantasticks*, Fagin in *Oliver*, Saunders in *Lend Me A Tenor*, and various television and film appearances as well as several decades as a voice-over artist. Jeffrey also works with physicians as a communications coach, is an acting and vocal coach, and runs a digital marketing studio. When asked where he is from, Jeffrey Atherton answers, "Born in Hanover, NH, raised in Sarasota, FL, matured in NYC, and came to Denver, CO, to raise a family." The family includes his beautiful wife, Natalie, and three adult children, Justin, Raechal, and Serea.



Joel PE King (Frederick Douglass) is a native of East Saint Louis. Graduating from SIU Edwardsville, Joel attained a BA in Studio Arts with a minor in music and theater. King is an entrepreneur, performer, writer, director, and producer. His production company, JPEK CreativeWorks, was established postcollege and has had great success in creating quality, courageous, socially driven stage plays. King has received three city proclamations, two cover stories (*Riverfront Times* and *Zoom Magazine*), and a groundswell of support for his stage works: *Real Life*, *Issues of Love*, and *Stand Your Ground*. King's theatre credits include *Amen Corner*, *The Color Purple*, *The Sam Cooke Story* and *Knock Me a Kiss* at Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, *Spunk*, *Raisin in the Sun*, *Colored Museum*, *Immigrant Project*, *In the Blood*, *Dutchman*, *Big River*, *Damn Yankees*, *Bubblin Brown Sugar*, *Real Life Hip Hopera* (performed at Westcoast Black Theatre and other theatres across the country), and *Complacency of Silence* for which he received a Kevin Kline nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Musical. King has attained leading and supporting roles in independent films and television.



Cedric Hameed (Narrator/Poet) is a fierce arts advocate and believes that local, national, and global change can be accomplished through expression. Evidence of his philosophy can be seen in the students, parents, and community of Southwest Florida and beyond. His philosophy and work helped him win a fellowship with The Nantucket Project in 2017, which followed with him leading workshops at The Yale School of Business in 2018. A native of Schenectady, N.Y., Cedric grew accustomed to using words to escape his harsh realities. He never realized it would be the blueprint for creating a life-changing platform. "Poetry saved my life, literally! I see the world in metaphors and similes. And, when you can see in the abstract, you can create. I can see the world we can all create!"



Beth Duda (Playwright and Director) Before joining The Patterson Foundation as the Director of the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, Beth Duda had more than two decades of experience as an actress, playwright, teaching artist, and director. Ms. Duda developed and taught various classes for children and adults as Director of Education at Florida Studio Theatre, including the VIP Performing Arts Program for Special Needs students. Ms. Duda has written, co-written, and conceived several produced one-act plays. Her full-length play, *Up To Home*, was a semi-final selection at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center and a selected play for the Richard and Betty Burdick Festival of New Plays at Florida Studio Theatre. Her directing credits include *Blackbird*, *Playmakers*, and multiple editions of *UNDER SIX*, the compilation of winning plays written by Elementary School students for Florida Studio Theatre. Beth is a member of the staff of The Patterson Foundation. The Patterson Foundation strengthens the efforts of people, organizations, and communities by focusing on issues that address mutual aspirations, foster wide participation, and encourage learning and sharing.

We hold Michael Krebs in our hearts
as we continue our journey with
Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass:
A Walk to Respect.

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