

## **INNER CIRCLE INVESTMENT CONTEST**

**Submitted by Ruth Fennessy Moss**

### **DOUGLASS The Musical**

**Book and Lyrics by Ruth Fennessy Moss / Music by Shelton Becton**

Before Martin, before Malcolm... there was Frederick.

For the past several years, I've been writing a musical about one of the most stirring figures in American history. **Frederick Douglass**. Escaped slave, abolitionist powerhouse, literary giant... the most photographed man of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A man who gave voice to the ravages of inequality and the hope for human dignity more than a century before Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.

When I first decided to write **DOUGLASS The Musical**, my guiding principle was "build it and they will come." Surely, with our team's passion and skill, producers would appear from the cornstalks and flock to this riveting, timely project. But alas, we were not in a field of dreams. We soon discovered in the field of musical production, "having an uncle in the business" was a more useful maxim. Ken Davenport is that magnanimous uncle... that mentor. And the Inner Circle a super-charged family of support.

Either with the entire group or one-on-one... Ken's unstoppable spirit, deep love of theatre and vast Broadway experience combine in the most generous way to propel each project forward. When Ken met DOUGLASS, things started to happen. We built a striking website, hired gritty General Managers and found a great director. Ken's detailed action plans with follow-up accountability got us in gear.

Through the Inner Circle, we've also met numerous producers and theatre specialists — directors, writers, choreographers, casting directors, publicists, fundraisers — all there to advise, listen and help. Beyond that, an unexpected bonus of the IC has been the vital connection with other creative people experiencing the same issues and challenges we were facing... people with similar passions who share their wisdom, their angst, and a lot of laughs. Writing swiftly became a little less solitary.

**DOUGLASS The Musical** is the story of how one boy, born into slavery, emerged to become the unparalleled voice of American freedom. We're thrilled director Jerry Dixon has embraced the work and is digging deep to create a structural framework that's compelling for contemporary audiences. The creative team has been yearning for a powerful director's touch for some time. We now have it and look forward to creating an even more dynamic show under Jerry's leadership.

Accomplishing this will require a three-dimensional approach — reworking and refining the words and music as we watch the show come alive with actors in a studio setting. This mini-development process will culminate in a 2020 industry reading to attract producers and investors. It will necessitate the hiring of actors, singers, an arranger and rental studios — as well as the recording of new tracks. Ten thousand dollars will help make this happen. **DOUGLASS The Musical** deserves the Inner Circle Investment Award because of its thrilling music, yes... stunning lyrics, yes... but mostly because all Americans need to know, like Frederick Douglass, they can rise from a culture of oppression, find a voice, and change the world. This is not just a big, audacious goal. It's the core of this work.

The **DOUGLASS** team is committed to moving this remarkable project from script to stage. Until the resounding voice of Frederick Douglass is heard up and down Broadway, we'll never say 'uncle.' Except of course, to Ken Davenport.

**DOUGLASS**  
THE MUSICAL