>> Lauren Appelbaum: Welcome, everyone. I'm waiting right now a moment as I'm seeing the participants number go up. So I'm giving a moment for people to enter the virtual Zoom Room. We were live at Sundance, we would all be enjoying talking to the person sitting next to us. My name is Lauren Applebaum, and I'm the vice president of communications of RespectAbility, a nonprofit fighting stigma and advancing opportunities so people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of community. I am a white woman with long brown hair and glasses, wearing a navy blue shirt standing in front of a black banner with the RespectAbility logo in white and yellow. My pronouns are she and her. As an individual with an inquired non-visible physical disability, I've had the privilege of conducting trainings on the why and how to be more inclusive and accessible, and producing events such as our series at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival. This is our fifth and final panel at Sundance this year, although all the others are available still on our virtual main street page. Thank you for taking the time today to join us for this really great conversation. We have live captioning being done by a real live person that is available in this Zoom app by clicking on the CC button as well as via your web browser. We have posted that link in the chat box. We also have two ASL interpreters who will be alternating throughout the panel. As mentioned, this panel is live. We'll be taking questions from you during the second half of the panel. Please add your questions to the Q&A box to do so. If you're watching us on Facebook during the live airing, we will be monitoring for questions there as well. This panel is being recorded and will be available on RespectAbility's Facebook page and website after the event concludes. A higher resolution recording with open captions and as well as our ASL interpreters will be posted and sent to everyone who registered later this week. If you want to stay connected to RespectAbility, I invite you to sign up for our weekly newsletter on disability, inclusion and equity in the entertainment industry. You can see that link in the chat box now. This panel I'm so excited about is in partnership with Women of Color Unite, a social action organization focusing on fair access, fair treatment, and fair pay for women of color in all aspects of the entertainment and media industries. During this session, you'll get to learn about a new mentorship program by Women of Color Unite, called Startwith8Hollywood, which is enabling women of color opportunities to break through the gates, learn from women of color with disabilities who have taken part in this program, and why mentorships are truly key for individuals from multiple marginalized backgrounds to succeed. I'd now like to introduce my fearless work partner, Tatiana Lee, who is an award-winning actress, international model and Hollywood influencer. She serves with me as our Hollywood inclusion associate. Growing up, she always talks about feeling unseen in popular media and people laughing at her ambitions to do what she does today. She moved to LA to pursue her acting career and learned how to harness social media's power to speak boldly about accessibility and inclusion in mass media, due to the lack of access and opportunities for herself and others with disabilities. She quickly has become a sought-after speaker for brands like Apple, Bank of America, Human Rights Watch, and the LA Film Festival, to name a few. Currently at RespectAbility, she consults on a variety of television and film projects, and conduct trainings for studios and production companies including NBC Universal, Netflix, and the Walt Disney company and Sony Pictures Entertainment. And assist with RespectAbility's lab for entertainment professionals with disabilities. In her spare time, Lee continues to train and grow momentum in her acting and modeling endeavors. Tatiana, I'm gonna pass it off to you.

>> Tatiana Lee: Thank you so much, Lauren. Thank you for joining us here today. As Lauren said, my name is Tatiana Lee, and I'm the Hollywood inclusion associate here at RespectAbility, a nonprofit fighting stigmas and advancing opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in all aspects of community. As an individual with non-visible and visible disabilities, I've had the honor, like Lauren said, of conducting trainings and consulting on the how and why to be more inclusive and accessible in the entertainment industry. I also have the honor to be the disability advocate for Women of Color Unite, where I met Cheryl, who is just a force who you will be meeting with the rest of her team in a minute. Thank you for taking the time to join us on this panel discussion. Again, we have live caption. In this panel, we will talk about the importance of mentorships for women of color with disabilities and hear about some new initiatives that are supporting women from multiple marginalized groups within the disability community. We have amazing panelists joining us today, women that are doing this work. And before I go into that, I will describe myself. I am a black woman with curly long dark hair. I am wearing glasses. I have on a green dress, a green necklace, with lip gloss and wearing clear colored glasses. And I have a great backdrop behind me. So, I am gonna introduce our panelists and talk with them, but I am going to start out with Cheryl. Cheryl, you are NAACP image award nominated producer and the founder of Women of Color Unite. And you have helped so many women make their next move in this industry, including myself. Why is it important for you to make sure women of color succeed in this industry, especially when it comes to supporting women of color with disabilities?

>> Cheryl Bedford: Hi everybody. My name is Cheryl L. Bedford. I am a black dark skin woman with glasses and curly hair pulled back in a curly ponytail with a lavender iridescent scrunchie, I love scrunchie. Shout out to my friends, Kwangji and Ronald Dillard, for my special Sundance scrunchie. I have on a black t-shirt and in white letters it says, "My black is beautiful." I have a virtual background of the golden gate bridge. And my pronouns are she and her. Wow, why is it important? First, let me give a shout out to my uncle Thomas. He is a retired judge in Baltimore, Maryland, and he helped to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act. His youngest son is disabled, my cousin. I grew up in a family of activists. And so my mother marched on Washington, sit ins. I always tell the story. My first march, I was two years old. She had me on her hip during the Baltimore riots in 1968. That is how I grew up. And my mother taught me that I only had one job as a human being on this planet, and that was to make the world a better place for the next generation, and by doing so, we make it a better place now. As far as working specifically for women of color, I realized that our statistics within the industry or either rolled into women or people of color. And so I proceeded to take those statistics out for women of color, because I felt like we were getting lost. Either we were women or people of color, when in actuality we were women of color. And so back in February of 2018, I just decided to get together all the women of color that I knew with one caveat, they could bring women of color that they knew. 50 grew into 75, 150 showed up. And one of my close friend, Kelly Perine, has beautiful house in Los Angeles, he lent it to me. I paid for it with my credit cards and my tax return. And so we all just got together and on the spot, and I knew that we were going to do this. I wanted to start to create a database, specifically of women of color. And that database is called the JTC list, it is named after my mother Joan Theresa Curtis. That day, 93 women signed up. By the end of the year, we were a 501(c)(3), a nonprofit. The very first invitation that I sent out said, women of color... unite, in all caps. And I was like, "Ah, I know what I'm going to call us." And so from there, a moment became a movement. We are at about 3000 members in four years. It has been amazing growth. And the first thing that we did, so we don't charge women of color. I don't believe in it. I think it is one of the way that there's been a lot of gatekeeping at white-led groups, white female led groups. We make so much less money. And so I am, the one thing you have to do when you join is fill out a form. Those forms give us the largest study of women of color in entertainment. From those statistics, we are able to help push this, push the needle forward when it came to specifically women of color. So one of our statistics has proven that only 10% of women of color working in the industry belong to either a guild, a union or a trade organization. Which means if we're not getting paid the amount of money that most people get paid through unions, we don't have our healthcare through unions. And a lot of the networking that happens through trade organizations and guild is not happening. So what we realized is that women of color basically, were not getting in the room. So during the pandemic and during the rebellion, a friend of mine who runs Bitch Pack, Thuc, started this thing #Startwith8Hollywood, and she tagged me. She got her very first mentor, Cassie, he will always be our first one. And she tagged me, she's like, "I think we're onto something." And I woke up, and I'm a former chair of diversity development, and I've turned this into a program. Now I could not have done it without Manon De Reeper, who's also on this panel. I call her-

>> Tatiana Lee: We'll hear from her in a minute.

>> Cheryl Bedford: I call it her secret sauce forms. So she came up with these forms for mentors and mentees, and then women of color just match them. And I know that it sounds really, really easy. Like, it sounds like, well, was it just that easy? Obviously a lot of time went into it. But yes, to a very large extent it was. So there were no hoops to jump through. There were no, all you had to do with sign up, because it's something that we call, Women of Color Unite, we call it exclusion by familiar arity. Which basically means that people who have these jobs tend to hire people who look like them, people they're familiar with, and people who are in their circles. And when I talk to people about exclusion by familiarity, this is what I am saying. You are not inherently racist, sexist, ableist, colorist, sizest, homophobic or ageist. But, that exclusion of familiarity has led to the problems. Like I'm not letting you off the hook, 'cause you, not letting you off the hook. But it has enforced this systemic isms as we call it. That exclusion by familiarity has led to the upholding of all the isms. And I have found, when you explain it to somebody like that, that they realize that they have a choice, they can either be part of the solution or part of the problem.

>> Tatiana Lee: Part of the problem. I hear you very well said. Thank you so much. Next, we're gonna go to who you mentioned, Manon De Reeper, who is the founder the Indie Film Magazine Film Inquiry, and a filmmaker, and the co-creator of Startwith8Hollywood mentorship program. Manon, I heard you play a huge part, like Cheryl said, in making the day-to-day operations of this program happen. How do you decide who is matched with who? And how open have veterans within the industry been when it comes to taking on being a mentor to the women in this program?

>> Manon De Reeper: So thank you so much for having me. I'm Manon De Reeper. And to describe myself, I am a light-skinned biracial woman. I have a dark brown hair, and that's currently pulled up in a bun. I have blue glasses, I'm wearing a silver hoops in my ears, and on my background, there's a couple of wooden cabinets. So to answer your question, thank you for that. So let's see, where should I start? Like I'm trying to get into where Cheryl left off. So she was mentioning some of that secret sauce. So when we started doing-

>> Tatiana Lee: Don't give too much away. Don't give too much away.

>> Manon De Reeper: I won't give away the actual recipe. (panelists laughing) But we kind of started Startwith8Hollywood on a whim. And I, because of the sheer ambition of the program, I realized pretty quickly that we needed some structure. And I have a background in tech and also I have degrees in psychology and criminology, so I kind of knew how to organize this kind of stuff and how to organize a lot of people especially using technology. And so, we're actually now sponsored by Airtable, they granted us licenses to their software. So I have basically, with the knowledge from the first cycle which was getting us up and running but wasn't quite as optimized as I wanted it to be, I created a complete Airtable system where people now submit a form where, the mentee submit a form as well as the mentor. So both parties fill out a form that is pretty extensive, but we don't require anyone to fill out any what we call, trauma porn essays, which is basically asking women of color but any marginalized person, like, what is your background? How did you come to this point? And how are you going to put your background into your writing? Because usually they are looking for a woe is me, I'm a poor person or something like that into this story. And they will select people based on that, that's what a lot of other programs do. And for us, rather than going that route and expecting people to submit resumes or even recorded videos, we wanted to make sure that everyone has the same chance of filling this out. So the form takes only five to 10 minutes to fill out. And specifically, we look for certain parameters like what kind of position are you pursuing? Like what kind of role? Or what kind of activity do you want to, career do you want to pursue in the film industry? And so we take their specific interests. Like, "I want to be a horror director." And based on those parameters, as well as like their experience thus far, we then have the mentors fill out a very similar survey, and then we use all of those parameters to match these people. And so I want to also give Shelby Kovant, who is my deputy program director, a huge shout out, because she has been so thorough and considerate in all of the matches, along with me. She has an eye for detail that I don't even have. So she has been very helpful in also making these matches work really, really well. As we've started sending out the matches for cycle two, we are doing our cycle two at the moment.

>> Tatiana Lee: Congrats.

>> Manon De Reeper: And we started sending them out this morning, I already got responses from a couple of mentors that they are actually already like they know the person that we matched them to. Each mentor, by the way, meets with eight people. That's one of the main requirements for this mentorship program. And so some of them already knew them or have worked with them in the past. So we were like, that is only an indication of how good our matches are, because we are actually matching these people from a group of 600 people. So what are the chances that they would actually already be friends or already know each other? So we really know what we're doing. And to answer your other question about veterans within the industry, whether or not they've been open to joining this program. Some, like we had, for cycle two we had over 150 mentors join in. So that is an enormous number, we're very excited about that. Of course there's also been people. We've done so much outreach. Of course there are people who are not interested or who don't have the time, but there have been people that have really taken the personal initiative to be a part of this program specifically, and are really embracing it. Like Sheryl Anderson, who's here with us today, and they are really going above and beyond. So we're really excited about this collaboration and really like introducing almost 1000 women of color to the industry in only our first year. So, yeah.

>> Tatiana Lee: Awesome, thank you so much. That is so amazing. It is definitely needed. So next we are going to the person that started it all, Thuc. Thuc is a screenwriter with a feature that was in the round two of Sundance Film Institute Lab, 2020. She worked for numerous studios and production companies, and she's currently a contributing writer to "The Daily Beast". First question for you. You, Cheryl and Manon started the Startwith8Hollywood program via Twitter with no budget. There are so many programs that studios host. Why was it important for you to start your own program? And I know Cheryl touched on this a little bit but could you expand on it like from your personal perspective of why you wanted to make this happen?

>> Thuc Nguyen: I think so many women of color fall through the cracks. Studio programs that only helped 20, 25 people a year under diverse conclusion leaves so many people out who are so deserving and so qualified, who are ready to learn that this was a way. I'm the lead out of the group without Manon and Shelby and Cheryl and the whole team. It couldn't have been scaled to the magnitude that it is, with just this skeleton crew. So, I feel like I fall through the cracks, so I don't want other people to have that feeling. I think it's important for as many of us, all of us to be seen and heard as possible. And I think that the studio programs only serve so many and still even the ones they serve are often already familiar to them in one way or another through the various connections.

>> Tatiana Lee: I love that, I love that. I feel like you and I can definitely relate to that because that was where my activism started. It was like I was falling through the cracks, but not only me, I saw other people fall through the cracks. And you're like, "I gotta do something. "I gotta do something to make something happen "for me and for my community." And it's so important. So thank you so much for that. And then for the viewers that are blind and low vision, could you please describe yourself briefly?

>> Thuc Nguyen: Of course. I'm an Asian woman with short black hair, I'm wearing a blue t-shirt. It says anti-racism about the deep south, and a brown sweater, and I am in front of gray curtains today.

>> Tatiana Lee: Thank you, thank you so much. So, next we are going to Ava Rigelhaupt. You are a writer, actress, and advocate for disability and autism representation and entertainment industry. You are also an alum of the 2020 RespectAbility Entertainment Lab for professionals with disabilities. And you just graduated from Sarah Lawrence, and you were a part of the first round of Startwith8Hollywood. Ava, can you tell us a littl bit about your creative background and how mentorships have played a part in that?

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Sure, hi. First, I'm super excited to be here. To describe myself, I'm a Chinese female with black hair, bangs, wearing red lipstick and a yellow turtle neck sweater. My background is a huge, almost floor to ceiling, bookshelf with tons of books. I'm also a fellow with RespectAbility and their communications and Hollywood outreach team. To answer your question, I can't believe I was part of the first round. I feel like Women of Color Unite has been around for a while, but it's so cool. Sure, so going back a little bit. I got started in the entertainment world through theater. When I was 18, I was diagnosed on the autism spectrum and this added another facet to my already diverse identity. I was already a theater geek. So my diagnosis and my love of theater eventually led me to becoming a founding member of a new neurodiverse diverse theater company. That is where I learned about inclusivity, the arts and worked on sensory-friendly performances. For those that don't know, sensory-friendly makes elements, makes performances accessible to people who are sensitive to elements such as light, sound, even smell. And that was probably one of my first experiences with mentorships in general. I really began to learn about myself and work with amazing theater professionals such as professionals at Trinity Repertory Company, which is a Tony Award winning regional theater in Rhode Island. During that time, I also met an amazing woman Amelia Acosta Powell, who works at Theater Communications Group, when I talked at the National Conference, and she is still a mentor to me today. And this worked really jump-started my advocacy and accessibility in the arts and entertainment, which bringing me to where I am today. Breaking into the entertainment industry, and as one person added, staying in the entertainment industry is really hard. So mentorships and to pivot to the media, 'cause that's what we're mainly talking about. Finding mentors in the entertainment industry. Art is really valuable for me because as someone who is really new just you're not trying to break in, quote unquote, I can admit, I have a lot to learn. And mentors have often, quote, been there, done that. My mentor in Startwith8Hollywood was really great. She gave me feedback on two of my pilots, which is always so valuable as a writer. And gave me advice about working in an industry that is not always made for anyone who's different or marginalized. My mentors, shout out, was Teale Sperling, a development executive and content producer at Mattel, who's a little person. And fun fact, she's married to Nic Novicki, founder of Easterseals Disability Film Challenge. Lauren said at a meeting, actually we were in earlier today that people with disabilities, I'm going to add anyone who is marginalized, you need someone in your corner, someone who is willing to answer questions, I know I have a lot of questions. Someone who wants you to succeed. Someone who is willing to help you get there. And without support, sometimes it can feel or be impossible. So mentorships and the Women of Color Unite program can be key to finding that person, or later even finding multiple people, who could all in their own way, offer you advice. I see so much of the staff at RespectAbility as mentors too. I got my start with RespectAbility through their summer lab program, shout out to the lab. Applications are open. And during the lab I met so many amazing entertainment professionals from such cool companies. Name dropping like Disney, ViacomCBS, who came and they really wanted to meet people with disabilities because of our unique perspectives, and what we can add to the writer's room onset as directors, producers, et cetera. And I've connected with many of those guest speakers. So many were open to having short little chats and you never know where those chats can lead to down the years. And for me, I think of a mentor as anyone who has helped me on my creative path, even for a short time. For example, great acting teachers that I've had. It was actually an acting teacher at a six week residential theater program at Brown University that suggested that I might be on the autism spectrum. And he was such a great mentor to help me become a better actor and obviously, quote, cliche but changed my life, and still supports me today. So, and also at the very least, mentorships are networking. As they say, we all kind of know it's not what you know, it's who you know, especially in this industry, and I believe that. And I often that work like my life depends on it. And I was just thinking, because if I want to work in the entertainment industry during my life, my life kind of does depend on it. And so that's why I think mentorships are so important, and important to find someone who, or multiple people. You might find a disabled mentor if you're disabled or a mentor that is part of your community, racially, et cetera. And they might be two different people, and that's great, 'cause the more people you have in your corner, the better.

>> Tatiana Lee: Definitely, I agree, I agree. So many women on this panel right now are people that, are colleagues I get to work with, but I also look to them as mentors. And like you said, they have different perspectives and it's to have all of those, and have multiple people in your corner. So thank you so much for that. Next is to Sheryl, one of the mentees from the Startwith8Hollywood program. And you recently are the show runner of "Sweet Magnolias", a romantic drama for Netflix, and you have an impressive resume of credits. You spend time being a mentor and an educator in this industry. Why do you think it's important for you to spend time educating and mentoring the next generation of entertainment professionals?

>> Sheryl Anderson: Well, first of all, thank you very much to the women who are doing the heavy lifting here for inviting me to appear on behalf of the mentors. I am a white woman with auburn hair, blue glasses, a navy top with white polka dots. And I am sitting in front of a red brick fireplace and some books, but certainly not the impressive books that Ava has behind her. I started in television at a point where my agent was often told, "Thanks, but we have our girl." And that obviously stuck with me. And I did not have a mentor coming up through the ranks. I made some spectacular mistakes along the way that I like to think I might not have made had I had a mentor to whom I could go and say, "Here's the situation, here's how I'm handling it." And have my mentor say, "Hmm, maybe not." So as I have gained experience and gotten a little bit higher in the pecking order, as it were, it's been very very important to me to share my experience. I tell my mentees the same thing I tell my kids, "Learn from my mistakes and maybe you won't make them." And so anything that I can do. I've taught on the university level, I've taught at a lot of workshops, but the thing I like about being in a mentor-mentee relationship is that it's one-on-one, and that you can really get to know each other. And it's not just, "Let me help you with your structure, "and let's see if we can find you a better act break." It's, "What's on your heart about not just your work "but about your journey. "And I want you to feel safe when you talk to me. "Pour it all out, let's sift through it. "And I'm hoping I'll be able to tell you this 50%, "we all feel that way, just forget it, "take that off the table. "This 50%, what can we do? "Where can we get you better feedback "or introduce you to other people or whatever." To piggyback on what several people have have already said, it is so much about connecting with other people. And I've actually, in this last year or two, been moving away from the notion of networking. I prefer to think of it as community building. And I want my community to be filled with fabulous, talented people. And this program allows me to meet fabulous talented people that I might not meet otherwise. And it was certainly the case in the first round. I hope I helped my mentees. They helped me, they inspired me. They educated me, which is really important to me to be aware of concerns outside of my sphere. Not just so that I can be better educated and more sensitive, but so that I can be on the lookout for ways to be more inclusive as a show runner. It was certainly important to me on "Sweet Magnolias" to have a diverse writers room because I knew we were gonna have a diverse cast. But by extension, I got into conversations with reps who were like, "Oh, we don't have the writer "you're looking for." I'm like, "Why not? "Why? Why don't you have a whole list of black women "that you can send me when I ask for a black woman writer? "And why are you saying, 'Yeah, no, "here are some white man.'" So I think it's really important for show runners and other people who have, I mean, I don't have power, but I have some leverage

>> Tatiana Lee: Leverage. (panelists laughing)

>> Sheryl Anderson: to push back and to say, "I'm not looking for a white man, "I'm looking for a black woman, "I'm looking for an Asian woman, I'm looking for..." And, to hold the people who should be throwing those doors open accountable, and not let them shrug and go, "Ugh, well, we just don't." Expand your list so I can expand my room. So part of my getting involved with Startwith8 is an end run. I don't want to have to rely on the reps. I want to able to say, "I know either the perfect writer "or a writer who might know the perfect writer." And I'd rather do that directly.

>> Tatiana Lee: Yes!

>> Sheryl Anderson: Stand at the gate and go, "Come on, "you know you need to do better."

>> Tatiana Lee: Yes. And Cheryl has been the perfect connector. I remember when I met her and I was very much impressed with all the amazing women that were a part of the JTC list, Women of Color Unite. And actually as me, as a black woman who's also disabled, a lot of times spaces, you don't feel completely seen or heard. Like you can be in spaces where there's people with disabilities and you feel seen and heard, but not really. But then you go to communities where there are more people of color and then you may not feel seen and heard in terms of disability. So I will say like Women of Color Unite has been that space for me, where I felt welcome, accepted, and seen with all my marginalized identities that come along with me. And yes, with the JTC list. And it's like if you don't have that list, Cheryl has that list. (laughs)

>> Sheryl Anderson: I keep that list on my computer so that if somebody comes back and says, "Well, I know you said this is what you wanted, "but I can't find." I'm like, "Hmm." "Try these people."

>> Tatiana Lee: I got this for you. (laughs) (panelists clapping) Yes. So, Thuc, do you hope in the future there is no need for programs such as these? And if so, what do you hope in terms of hiring women of color in high? What do you hope for in terms of hiring women of color in higher positions within this industry?

>> Thuc Nguyen: Well, that is a great question. I'm a public policy major, and I did my masters in public policy as well. So our goal and my studying non-profits is to not have a job to fulfill our missions. Put me out of work. Yes, I think that change has to start at the top as well, because the decision-makers are the ones who can help more people. Or it's been proven through studies where when you even have a woman director, more women will be on sets. And we're not even talking about women of color yet. So, definitely. I saw a story and I repost it where, one of the major agencies promoted 14 agents and just visibly, I couldn't see any women of color. So that just struck me with instant fear of, well, I mean, unless they're very, very observant or trying extra hard, they're going to be more women of color stories that might not make it to the surface or make it to their desk. Or, their assistants might not even source things that aren't within their immediate sphere or lives, or you see so many even friend groups in Los Angeles of a dozen people who are all white, or have a certain socio-economics strata. Even I think that public policy wise too, we need to get more people of all kinds together on every level. Because it shows, we see it in the articles, we see in the studies. And those are the reasons why so, we do have to change that what you said, the hiring.

>> Tatiana Lee: Yes, I agree. Thank you so much. Next we have Diana Romero. Diana, you have been in the industry sometime as a word winning filmmaker, producer, and writing scripts. You also acquired your disability and navigate the industry now with an acquired disability. How has making connections and being part of Women of Color Unite and the RespectAbility Lab, helped in your confidence to continue on your creative path?

>> Diana Romero: Hi, everyone. Thanks for having me guys. And thanks for everybody who's here listening. Let me describe myself. First, I'm Diana Romero. I'm a Latina woman wearing a black top, and I have a necklace on with a jade piece holding a Chinese coin for luck. My hair's curly, and it's held back in a ponytail, and behind me is a tan colored wall, and part of a black and white print can be seen. Yes, you're right, Tatiana, I acquired my disability about three years ago, and where I was faced due to illness to, my mobility was impaired and I use a wheelchair for my mobility now. After many, many years of having worked in the film industry on set, and production on set, I found myself not knowing that I wasn't going to be able to run around the set anymore the way I used to using a wheelchair. And also knowing that most sets are not necessarily accessible. It wasn't a fight that I was willing to tackle at the time, I thought maybe it became more about me just reevaluating my life and what it was that I wanted to do. I've always wanted to write. I've always wanted to write for TV, but somehow my experience took me into the feature film production. So in 2019, I was accepted into Producers Guild Diversity Workshop where... Like, Ava, you were saying how Teale was your mentor, my mentor was Nic, on that. Interesting, and she was also a mentor there, but there I met a board member from RespectAbility, Delbert Whetter, who introduced me to RespectAbility, and introduced me to all of you guys involved. And you guys took me in and you welcomed me, and I felt like I was now a part of a group that I had never even in my life imagined existed, because as somebody without a disability, it wasn't something that I was actively looking for. (clears throat) Excuse me. So I learned a lot, and in a very short period of time last year, I was in the summer lab, RespectAbility summer lab, which brought me into now not only was I having to face a disability and having to face what it was that I wanted to do for the rest of my life, was how was I gonna do it? Because of so much experience working on set and working in feature films and writing, how was I going to make that step over to TV? And the summer lab program was just so amazing, educationally, the guest speakers were wonderful. But they all opened doors for us and leaving it, making themselves available to us if we wanted to contact them and set up an informational meeting, which I've already had two informational meetings with two of the speakers. And I learned a lot, and I realized that then that we all need some... I don't come from a family that works in film TV industry. I don't have, aside from friends that I've met now, I don't know anybody in those higher positions that are there to hire, or that are there to guide us along the way. And in a lot of ways the odds are stacked against me. Not I'm a woman, I'm Latina, and I'm now a woman with a disability. And so if you take just one of those, if you just take the fact that I'm Latina, that's already hard enough to make it in this industry. If you add to that as a woman, now I'm a little bit harder. And now a woman with a disability of color, even harder. So, going back to, so through RespectAbility I was able to meet, to get to know more people my tribe, but also get to know people in the industry that are the people that are gonna be making those hiring decisions. And then as to Women of Color Unite, I met Cheryl at a conference that you guys gave many years ago at the American Film Institute, which is where I went to school. And so I started becoming more involved, and just now I'm part of the second cycle of the mentorship program, the Startwith8. And just today I just got my mentor. So I'm excited about that, but I hope that answers your question.

>> Tatiana Lee: Yes, it did. Actually, when I first met you, Cheryl, one of the events that, I was always bugging Cheryl, I was like, "We need to do something, "we need to do something." And we held a session and actually one of the first times that has ever happened. Talking about women of color with disabilities working in this industry, which was such an amazing conversation. So many people came out at AFI and it was just really really great to be able to have a space to talk about that because people talk about different groups, people of color, and then you have people with disabilities, and then you have the LGBTQ here, but there was never a space where we could have that nuanced conversation of the intersectionality of it all. So to be able to do that was quite awesome, and Cheryl's just bad in just making all that kind of stuff happen. So, and that was where we met. And, so I'm so glad that you were in this fold in this community, it is so needed. And actually thinking about I'm getting warm and fuzzy 'cause I'm like, "This is what we need. "We need to all be here and support one another." And speaking of supporting one another and raising of the future generation, I'm gonna take a question back to Ava. Ava, were there any barriers for you to participate in any mentorship programs as a person with a disability?

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: So for this one, so you said any mentorship programs. So for this one in short, no, for the Women of Color Unite. I learned about this program through the RespectAbility Lab. And so, Cheryl Bedford came to speak to disabled entertainment professionals. Thus showing that, again, the Women of Color Unite program #Startwith8 is for everyone, women of color, including those with disabilities. And the small blessing of this unfortunate pandemic is that everything is virtual. So, I'm on the East Coast, but I was able to just like this meet with mentors and other people that are in California. So, no, I haven't thus far had any barriers for mentorship programs besides having to go through GDS applications, that is not part of the #Startwith8Hollywood. Which have their pros and cons.

>> Tatiana Lee: Awesome, thank you. This pandemic, in sort of a way has been a huge benefit towards people with disabilities in terms of accessibility and things like that. I think, there's some barriers, but it's helped in so many ways. And then not only that, I asked you that question because a lot of times people assume that there are barriers for people with disabilities to participate in programs that have nothing to do with their disability. And so I kind of wanted to prove the point that it's like, "Just invite them, they will tell you what we need, "and just have us there." And I remember when I started doing stuff with Cheryl, with Women of Color Unite, I said, "As long as the place is wheelchair accessible "and a bathroom is wheelchair accessible," I was like, "I'm good to go." People want to make up these continue excuses of why they can't support people with disabilities to be included, and it's not that hard.

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: As one person said on a panel yesterday that access, I think multiple people, that accessibility on set et cetera, all it takes is just planning ahead asking, is not often expensive, tedious, or hard to do. Planning ahead of time.

>> Tatiana Lee: Yes, thank you, thank you. So, to Sheryl Anderson, it is rare to see women of color with disabilities excelling in this industry. As someone who spends time as a mentor and an educator, what do you think some of the barriers and misconceptions exist for marginalized groups, particularly women of color with disabilities?

>> Sheryl Anderson: Well, I think it's an extension of what you were just talking about, that show runners actually are kind of nervous. Like, what do I have to do? And what does this mean? And... I had a writer with MS, and I said at the beginning of the season, "Tell me what you need. "Tell me what I can do for you, "and if there are any accommodations or schedule changes "we need to make, to make sure that you're comfortable, "tell me, and let's just get everything "squared away up top." And I would have that exact conversation with anybody regardless of what their disability might be. But I think a lot of people can't imagine that far because they don't have people in their lives with disabilities. So the whole concept, if you were, just makes them nervous. Like what if I do the wrong thing, say the wrong thing? There's also a certain personality type that we encounter in television where they want to be surrounded by people just like them. And to expand their vision to say, "Well, think of yourself "as a great writer, and surround yourself with great writers "and leave it at that." Is something that I'm eager to help to. I know as I'm looking down the road, I will say I was very specific in the women of color I wanted in the room for "Sweet Magnolias" because of my cast, but I know I need to be better about it doesn't matter who's in my cast. I want to make sure that my room is diverse beyond my cast, and think about just about how beautiful a diverse room is, and the great product that results. So to me the more diverse, the more beautiful. So, again, one of the reasons that I love Startwith8 is because I'm meeting people I wouldn't meet otherwise. And I just I want to be able to encourage other show runners to throw open the door as much as possible and not think, "Well, I need a one-for-one match with my cast "and my writers." Even though some still need help with that. But, to go beyond that. Because also, my feeling is if you're saying, "I don't need a diverse room,

>> Tatiana Lee: You need a diverse room.

>> Sheryl Anderson: ‘cause I don't have "a diverse cast." I'm like, "Why not?" On both sides of that equation.

>> Tatiana Lee: Exactly. I hear you. And sometimes accommodating a person with a disability to be a part of your team is literally what you did is exactly that. What can I do to support you to make sure that you are successful? Sometimes it just needs to just be an open conversation, and just knowing that we have that space to ask for that accommodation if need be. So thank you for the work that you are doing and the openness that you are bringing. It is so important, and especially to expand to disability, which is great. And for our viewers out there, just some stats for you to think about when it comes to in terms of disability. Disability representation we only make up about 2.3% of what you see in media, although we make up 20% of the population. And most representation of disability is of a cisgender white male in a wheelchair. Not only that, the disability market is valued at over $1 trillion, over 1 trillion. So, having a diverse room of people with disabilities is a win-win for representation for that community and also buying power. You are gonna have people that are gonna tune in and consume your content because they are happy and excited to see great representation of their selves, which is why I got into this work. Next, Cheryl Bedford, the amazing Cheryl Bedford. What are your hopes for Startwith8Hollywood and other programs that exist to support marginalized community succeed in this industry?

>> Cheryl Bedford: That eventually we don't need it. That eventually we won't need it. So the interesting thing about Women of Color Unite is that we did such a thorough mission statement that we could actually run production through Women of Color Unite and serve as a fiscal sponsor. That's eventually all I want to do, because we don't own it. So it empowers women of color, 'cause they own their project. We're the fiscal sponsors. I'm a producer, line producer by trade. So, and it would be tax deductible for people since we're a 501(c)(3). So that's what I eventually would like to do. I mean, we have that section. And so I'm hoping that all of this, that we can get rid of exclusion by familiarity. I will say that sometimes I feel like I've take a small step forward just to take a giant step back. I... How can I put this? I think that we just need to get more people in spaces. I think that, and I've said this before, Tati, and you know this. Like for instance, when a woman of color runs a company in the State of California profits go up by as much as 30%. So why aren't there more women of color running it? Let's just talk about a white Trump screen. The more marginalized you are, and you know this as our disabled advocates, so for people who also know the way we keep the quote unquote, lights on, is the work that we do in diversity, equity and inclusion. And because I'm a former chair of diversity development, it's one of my specialties. And so, and Tati, and our other disabled advocate, Diana Elizabeth Jordan, they both give our disability, as we call them, workshops. So that's how we keep the lights on, and are able to do a lot of the things that we do for women of color, but within the diversity equity and inclusion space. So within that matrix, which is known, it's the combination of white supremacy and white power, we don't call it white privilege, because he really is the power of whiteness. Not really, the privilege of whiteness is something that is a construct. But the power of whiteness is something that is very, very real. And so that in that intersection, the very first thing is perfectionism. And the more marginalized somebody is, the more perfect we expect them to be. The studies from the National Institute of Health talk about the damage that that has done. That is why #Startwith8Hollywood is so important, it's just first come first serve. We're gonna do additional rounds. Eventually you'll get in, you will get your mentors, you will be able to come back and do additional rounds, all of that type of stuff. When Manon did the exit form. Remember, everything we do is based on statistics. 'Cause my mother was a statistician. My mother actually told me, "You don't know "what's in the hearts and minds of white folk, "but here's what you can do, "you can break it down to the lowest common denominator." And what that does is that lets them know you know. So when Manon send out the form, here's the thing, 76% of the mentees from round one said what it gave them, the most important thing was hope.

>> Tatiana Lee: I love that.

>> Cheryl Bedford: Every time I say that, just, yeah. Like every time I say it. I say it a lot and it just makes me stop. And it makes me really, really angry. And it makes me angry because all of the isms have led to this lack of hope. And the more marginalized somebody is, the less hope they have. I'm just going to say it. This industry should be fucking ashamed of itself. 'Cause here's the other thing that I know, and that is minorities need to know about the majority, but the majority does not need to know about the minority. And what I mean by that is that black people can write for white people, because that's the default. Women can write for men, because male is the default. Those with disabilities can write for those who aren't considered disabled. Because to exist in this country, let alone thrive, the minority has to know about the majority, but the opposite isn't true, and that's why we get a whole lot of crap. That's why this industry makes a whole lot of bullshit. A lot of not getting stuff right. 'Cause what we have is the majority writing for the minority except they don't need to know about us. To exist, to thrive, they don't see things through our eyes. So if people really wanted to make money, hey Hollywood, you really want to make money, actually you would hire the most marginalized because they can write about everybody. They can write, they can direct everybody, they can do every fucking thing.

>> Tatiana Lee: And then when they don't include us, you end up with the inspiration porn, and the trauma porn, and all those other things that are not what we wanna see because that's not my experience, that's my experience based on your assumption of me, not what my life is actually like. So I love that you said that.

>> Cheryl Bedford: The other thing is that, I'm just gonna say, we do everything that's real cool. We're real cool. That's that panel and here's the thing, Women of Color Unite, we put on the very first panel of women of color with disabilities in 2019.

>> Tatiana Lee: Then did another one at Soho house, that was before everything-

>> Cheryl Bedford: Yes, then did another one in, wait. Yes, 'cause of the pandemic, I'm like, "What year is this?" (panelists laughing) And yes, and then repeated it at Soho house. At Soho house. I got in a donation to be able to pay 'cause AFI gave me a discount 'cause I'm alum, but we still had to pay for that. And yet we were the very very first ones that did it. Again, this industry should be fucking ashamed of itself. It took an organization of women of color, who at the time were only been around two years, we had three years at the end of this month. But you don't fund, don't donate to, don't talk about, yet we still make strives with the most marginalized. Because we have a saying that women of color are unite. We leave no marginalized group

>> Tatiana Lee: No marginalized group.

>> Cheryl Bedford: behind. I will not do it. And here's what I tell all of our allies, which is why I love Sheryl J. Anderson on here, step up or step off. I don't want to see that your motherfucking table, your table was not built for us, it was not built for the most marginalized. So that's why I'm over here, and I'm gonna build my own table, 'cause for the most part, I just stay in my motherfucking corner, and I just do my thing, that's what I do. And I keep proving, and with our allies, we keep proving Hollywood wrong. So knock the fuck off. 'Cause I'm just gonna keep proving you wrong. Me and all the people. Me, RespectAbility, China Directors Initiative, Native Media Strategies, the List, the MD Fem, all of us are just going to keep proving you wrong, so knock the fuck off. Step up or step off. Get out of my way.

>> Tatiana Lee: I love it. I love It, get out of my way, step up or step off.

>> Cheryl Bedford: Get out of my way.

>> Cheryl Bedford: Anyway, so that's the usual Cheryl, like I was trying, I was trying not to curse. I was like, "Yeah, we're on with Sundance last night, "last night, last night." Look, I'll just say it. Last night I was on clubhouse and I was asked to do a panel and I was just being me, and I was tone policed. Somebody said, and actually I just dropped one F bomb. I wasn't even like this, I just dropped one F bomb. And I was called vulgar.

>> Tatiana Lee: You're just so passionate.

>> Cheryl Bedford: I know, I was called. And actually I was tired, so I wouldn't talking like that, I was like, "Aah." (Tatiana laughing) It was very kind of monotone naturally. And so what I was tone policed by a white woman, I left the room. I was like, "You don't know, we don't do this. "We don't do this." When I left another black woman, Tomica Briscoe, was then, a white guy then took up white tears, white guy takes up, and I was called aggressive. But here's the thing, that thing-

>> Tatiana Lee: That's something black women are always called.

>> Cheryl Bedford: But I'm gonna bring this back to the other realization that leads to a dehuminimization, when you have all of these people fighting for this thing and all of a sudden you have these, people and so forth and so on. It leads and other realization leads to a dehumanization, and here's how I know. When I want to, do you know what they said? You know this white guy said about me? That no one should act, no human should act like that, because I called it out. Think about that for a second. No human-

>> Tatiana Lee: Someone has a problem with us speaking up.

>> Cheryl Bedford: But that other realization that leads to a dehumanization do not tell me it does not happen. Stop with all of these diversity, equity, inclusion program that pay everybody against each other. My mother had a saying out of the '60s which is, don't break your arm patting yourself on the back. So that's Cheryl. That's, we need more of us in spaces, we need more allies like Sheryl J. Anderson. We need more people expanding their minds hiring off of, there's Alice, there's Brown Girls Doc Mafia, there is Black and Film and TV. Don't know more excuses, no more excuses. Because here's the thing, in the entertainment industry that leading that thing about, no human should act like that, that dehumanization, that ends up in media. That ends up in media, and then we have the deaths of three black people.

>> Tatiana Lee: Definitely, I want to continue

>> Cheryl Bedford: And something,

>> Tatiana Lee: so that we can get-

>> Cheryl Bedford: one last thing.

>> Tatiana Lee: Go ahead 'cause I want to be able to get to our questions.

>> Cheryl Bedford: I know, I know, I'm going off. No, it's something that you let me know, Tati. Which is why we need more diverse voices. When you told me that 50% of the black people who are killed by cops have a disability. That stopped me in my tracks. That should stop all of us in our tracks. Anyway, that's it. Hi, everybody. (laughs)

>> Tatiana Lee: Thank you so much. Thank you for your, you just always speak with so much passion and protect is going off in which it always does. So, thank you. Next, I'm going to Diana. Diana, I know you're a part of this round for mentees for the Startwith8Hollywood. What do you hope to get out of it, and what do you want to tell people watching that may assume what you are capable of as a writer and producer who has a disability?

>> Diana Romero: Okay, great. I'm going to... Cheryl, I don't know how I can get anywhere near that passion that you just exhibited and how wonderful and how beautiful words, beautiful words, thank you for that. Let me answer your question, Tatiana, I'll answer the second part first. But one of the things I've thought about a lot about having a disability and using a wheelchair is that we all sit in chairs, everybody sits in chairs. As a matter of fact it is such a problem in this country of people sitting in chairs that there's all the incentives to exercise to get up off your chair, to do all of this. So I not different than everybody else. I sit in that chair. Only my chair takes me to the bathroom, and my chair takes me to the break room, and my chair takes me to the conference room. But I'm no different than anybody else who sits in a chair in front, and at a desk at work all day long. So, to even, to have this idea that I'm different because I have to use a wheelchair to move around, is not true. My legs don't do my thinking. My legs don't give me my creativity. My legs don't do the typing. My legs don't do anything, but, well, sit there nicely and pretty. So, with that being said, it's this kind of, this idea that just because I have to use a wheelchair to move around, it doesn't make me any lesser than who I am and who I've always been. Also at the same time.

>> Tatiana Lee: Exactly.

>> Diana Romero: And this is the same thing for acting because I delve in acting as well. And it's that for auditions, for actors, for writers, for anybody else, I don't need to be hired to a writer's room, for example, only because they happen to have a character that uses a wheelchair, and now they want me to be able to come in. No, I want to be able to write about everything. You know what I mean? I don't care if your show does not have a person who uses a wheelchair, does not mean that then you can't hire me. Just like for acting, the same idea of behind acting. The only auditions that come around for people with disabilities are-

>> Tatiana Lee: Wheelchair user. (laughs)

>> Diana Romero: Exactly.

>> Tatiana Lee: Woman in wheelchair.

>> Diana Romero: Because I can't play a teacher who uses a wheelchair, or I can't play a mother who uses a wheelchair, I can't. It's this weird-

>> Tatiana Lee: Or an assistant.

>> Diana Romero: We're put in this little box that says, "Well, you can only, since you use a wheelchair, "that's the only thing you can write about." Or, "Since you use a wheelchair, "then the only acting you can do "is a character that uses a wheelchair." And that's just wrong, that's absolutely 100% wrong. If you look at me right now, you don't see that I use a wheelchair. We look at Tatiana, we don't see they use the wheelchair. So, what does it matter? What does it mean? Any of that? It's just, and it's amazing how much more I see that now, coming into this industry now, three years ago with a disability. It's amazing to see the doors closing on him so much. So yes, I'm very excited, as I mentioned before, about the Startwith8Hollywood. I'm so happy I was able to get in in this round because I know that it was closed because you guys hit like 500 people or something at once with not even 24 hours. I don't think it was even up for a couple of hours. So I'm glad I was able to make it in. And what I really hope from past mentors that I've had, one of the great things about mentorships, it's something Sheryl was saying, Sheryl with an S was saying is that, it's not only just the mentee who learns, but the mentor also learns. And so it's a two-way street and these can be lifelong relationships, lifelong friendships. But I know for myself in particular, and I was just given my mentor and she is a woman who works in TV, who deals with drama, more hour long drama, thriller mystery, which is all up my alley, that's what I love. I was a detective in another world I think. But with that being said is I can only hope that she, we need a little bit of handholding. If you're just, even though I've been in this industry for so long, I've never been a writer for TV, and it's like starting all over again. It's like I'm starting a career from the Vietnam, making my way up. And so, my hope is that with this mentor is that she will guide me in, not necessarily by giving me a job or necessarily, but more like showing me what's worked for her in her career. How she got to be where she is now, and throughout her whole career and what she needed to do to get there. Because otherwise, I don't know. I don't know, if I don't have a mentor, or if I don't have somebody that I can speak to. And, you can't just pick up the phone and call whatever writer or show runner or executive. You can't name them, they'll probably ban you. So, my hope is that I will learn from her and my hope is that she will learn from me as well. And hopefully the more this happens, the more mentorships we have, the more mentees we have, the more we start opening those writers rooms. Every speaker I've had, I've asked this question, how many writers and writers rooms that you've been in, use a wheelchair? None of them have said, "Oh, yeah, we do, we do, we do." Why? Or people who say, "Well, you should be in the writer's room." I'm like, "Yeah, I should, how do I get there?" "How do I get there?" But I mean, and just because I'm Latino doesn't mean that I can only do Latino TV shows, and that I've could only be in a writer's room because I'm a Latina. No, you know what I mean? I remember somebody asking once, an actor asking somebody, "How do I play a serial killer "if I've never killed anybody?" And the person came through and said, "Have you killed a fly?" And they're like, "Yes." "And did you get some kind of good feeling "out of killing that thing that was bothering you so much?" "Yes." "Well then guess what? "You've killed something you know what it's like, "you know what it feels like." Same thing, you know what I mean. It's like, just because I use a wheelchair talk to me about grief, ooh, I can write to you about any kind of grief, not just me losing the ability of my legs, but grieving the loss of something is huge. I can talk about... You know what I mean? So it's like, it doesn't have to be because you use a wheelchair, you can only write about people in wheelchair, that use wheelchairs. Or because you're Latino, you can only write about Latinos. Or because you're a woman, you can only write about women. Writers we're creative people, we build these worlds, we build everything. So I think that is my biggest thing is, just because I use a wheelchair, just because I'm Latina, just because I'm a woman, doesn't mean that those are the only three things I can write about.

>> Tatiana Lee: Exactly, exactly. I always tell people that I'm a daughter, I'm an aunt, I'm a cousin, I'm a best friend. I'm somebody that people I'd lend my ear to, and be supportive of, and all of these other things, and all of those things have nothing to do with my disability. So I think that that's so important. So we are towards our end, I have one last question for Manon, but I wanted to say for everyone listening, if you have questions for our amazing panelists, please put them in the Q&A box, we will get to those next. Yes, someone said we are more than our identifiers, which we are, I love that. So put your questions in the chat box, and we'll get to those in a moment, we already have a couple that are in. So, Manon, I know everyone on this panel kind of touched on this a little bit. But I just wanted to hear your point of view and some of your thoughts and share your final opinion. Why is it important to uplift and support women from multiple marginalized groups like the disability community, LGBTQ and so on?

>> Manon De Reeper: I guess it's more of a summary at this point because everyone's already said it so incredibly well, but I wanted to touch, especially on what Diana was saying is that we are more, and as Maya Miller in the chat said, we are more than our identifiers. And I think that this is something that people who do not know us, whether we are LGBTQ, disabled, women of color, any type of marginalized person is, we all lead really full lives. As you said as well, Tati, we are friends, we are sisters, we are mothers, we are.... All across that spectrum of life experience, and we have all of those. And I think that by uplifting and supporting women in these marginalized groups and putting them on screen but also in any role behind the screen, be it above the line, below the line, onset, offset, in the office, anywhere, it will contribute to basically the representation of visibility of these people. And it's going to give, if we're still talking about a film content and TV content, it's going to give it more of an authenticity that everyone will be able to connect with. On top of that, we will unionize all of these people and we will make it easier for people to empathize with each other, which is something we, especially in the current political climate, so incredibly desperately need. So the film and TV industry have an incredible responsibility in that, I believe, which is one of the reasons why I personally find it so important to contribute to increasing the visibility of women of all marginalized groups. And on top of that, we are showcasing how talented all of these women, and also non-binary people by the way are. And I noted earlier today for this panel, a tweet that came from one of our mentors who is participating in this round, and that's Sal Calleros, and he also a show runner. And he said, after he received his mentees, his assignments, he tweeted, "I'm participating as a mentor "in the #Startwith8Hollywood program. "After reading the bios of the mentees I'll be helping, "I can tell you Hollywood needs to buckle up "for this talent. "I am humbled." And I think that that is something we really really need to be mindful of. We are flooding the industry with incredibly talented people who have come a long way, mostly on their own. And what I hope as well, and with this program is that all of these women, because they have come in and seen us do this work pretty selflessly, is that they will want to pay it forward. And so the ultimate goal is that we will reach organic diversity, and that no one will have to say, "I don't know any anymore." The agents will all know someone that they can recommend when a show runner asks for a black writer or a disabled writer, or anything. Everyone will be have at least eight mentees that they can refer to others, and that is the end goal is that we will create lasting relationships, friendships, people that can connect and refer each other. And yeah, we're getting diversity, that's the goal of #Startwith8Hollywood.

>> Tatiana Lee: I love that, organic diversity. It's like it doesn't need to be that much of a conversation, it's just naturally organic. I love that. So we are gonna go to questions. We have some questions flooding in. One is, and whoever can answer this, it seems like this may be a question for Sheryl with an S, but anyone can answer. It says, when discussing disability, are we including those with heart and lung disease and autoimmune disease? How do you handle being in the industry and having multiple doctor's appointments? I can answer the question in terms of those. Yes. Heart disease and lung disease and autoimmune disease it's classified as a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act. So I didn't know if you want to add to, accommodating someone who may have autoimmune disease or if they are a writer or a part of your show or something.

>> Sheryl Anderson: I don't mean be simplistic about this, but it's my responsibility to take care of everybody who works for me. And if the people who work for me have anything that comes under the umbrella of disability, or even it just health challenges, life challenges, I like to get everybody home for dinner. I think it's really important for showrunners to be sensitive to what the people they've picked on the basis of talent and shining personalities, 'cause that's a big part of TV. What they might need, require, ask for, and you should be valuing everybody in your room is a person. So if there are accommodations, let's make them. And, again, I would always want somebody to feel safe enough to come to me and say, "I have these doctor's appointments." I used to make the joke, if you go to therapy, please tell me because I will schedule around it, because it's really important that all writers go to their therapy appointments. But I mean, genuinely, if you've got doctor's appointments, tell me. If you have any other things going on in your life that need attention, I want you to take care of them because I want you to take care of yourself, because then you're gonna be more comfortable and more focused in the room. And I worry that that sounds simplistic, but I do think it's that simple, to take care of the people who work for you.

>> Tatiana Lee: I love that, I love that. And that is something that I think is very much needed first, I hope all show runners think like you, and if they don't, they need to. And that is something that I love about our Hollywood team at RespectAbility, too. Lauren and our team we support one another in all of that stuff. If one of us isn't feeling well, someone else can pick up the slack and make sure it happens or just take a day off, take care of yourself. You're able to be more productive when you're able to get everything done that you need to get done. So those accommodations actually help you be a lot more productive. So thank you for opening up to give people that space, it's so much needed. Another question that is in, someone says, in terms of general mentorship, what is the best way to cold email someone whose work you admire for mentorship? Anyone have an answer?

>> Cheryl Bedford: Sure. I say, reach out on social media. That's how we found all of our mentors, but this is something that I actually would teach. So when you're looking for a mentor, don't make it I, I, I, I, I. Meaning that, how are you going to make that mentor’s life easier? Like when we match people, as Sheryl said, she learns a lot. So what is the gift that you're going to provide to that mentor? People are busy. How are you gonna make their life better? I mean, besides buying them a cup of coffee. Cause everybody's like, "Oh, I buy yourself a cup of coffee." I'm like, "I have been buying my own coffee." For me, it can be anything. I have mentors, I mean, mentees myself, just because I don't ask anybody to do something I'm not willing to do. And though these mentees needed me, I actually, they were very good at making me see that I needed them. And there is no sort of, how do you do that? There is no way, it's really about connection. It was about looking me up, seeing the work that I had done. They wanted to do documentaries, I had done a documentary. They wanted to do documentaries about marginalized people, mine was about colorism. They found somebody who wouldn't just be interested in them, but interested in their work. Something that I could get excited about, something where I could actually be useful, because we all want to be useful. And that's what I would say. Is do your homework about finding someone who fits the project. And not just the project, even where you want to go in your career. It's not always about the immediate, it's about playing the long game. And so that's what I would say.

>> Tatiana Lee: Thank you, thank you so much. We have another question and then we're gonna wrap up and I am gonna allow you guys to do any shameless plugs you want really quick. But let me get to this one question. So someone said they are a non-profit that's based in Georgia, their challenge is finding non-Hollywood performers who self identify as actors with disabilities, and they've done a national search, and used the term disability. It said, can anyone give them language to use to find performers? Is it possible to have this topic-marketing language included the future disability and art sessions? Also, we've just made history by showcasing America's first ever inclusive chorus. Congratulations. I won't answer that question, reach out to RespectAbility. We do a lot of helping with language. We are Women of Color Unite go-to people for language. I always drop in and help with language on all the materials they produce. So please reach out to RespectAbility, that is something we can definitely help you with in terms of language. Now we have a couple of minutes, but shameless plug. Anybody, go for it. [Crosstalk]

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Yeah, I'll go.

>> Manon De Reeper: Go ahead, Ava. No, go.

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Oh okay. I didn't know if we were going to like go by name, but I guess I'll, I'm just gonna like plug myself.

>> Tatiana Lee: Go ahead.

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: So, 'cause my projects are mainly with the wonderful RespectAbility, so I'm also going to plug their lab, like shout out. So, I applied to the lab, the links probably somewhere in the chat. And so, I'm gonna plug myself as a writer, and an actress, and hope to network with people. And, yes, reach out to RespectAbility. Plug, plug them as well.

>> Tatiana Lee: And Women of Color Unite, which is a great group, community. It's a welcoming, amazing women, non-binary, that is amazing. Awesome community. We support one another. Everybody is just amazing. Go ahead, Diana, you next

>> Diana Romero: Me. I don't know how to plug myself.

>> Tatiana Lee: Where can we find you?

>> Diana Romero: You can find me on Facebook. You can find me on, I'm terrible at Twitter. And I Facebook or you guys, you can contact Tatiana, and you'll have my contact information. Cheryl, does as well, and right now I-

>> Tatiana Lee: Shout out the work you do. I was like, shout out the work you do, hire you.

>> Diana Romero: Yes, exactly. Hire me, my goal, my long-term goal is to be a show runner, creator executive. And I know that I need to start somewhere, so I'm looking to work in a writer's room. I'm looking to be a staff writer and get going in that way and climb that. But I am a writer, and I am a ghost writer, and I have a pivot that just got picked up by a producer. So I'm a writer, I'm a writer. So thanks everybody for being here, and so great meeting you guys on the panel that I haven't met yet.

>> Tatiana Lee: Manon, you wanna plug Startwith8, Women of Color Unite, and all that good stuff?

>> Manon De Reeper: I do, I do. So, we're going to have multiple future cycles. #Startwith8Hollywood cycle three is going to happen in summer of 2021. We're going to also do cycles both in the United Kingdom, as well as Canada. And at some point in the future, we would also like to go to Australia's one and improve things there too. And where else it will take, wherever else. And then for all the attendees here who are women of color and would like to join Women of Color Unite, you can do so @networkthatwokeunite.com, I just put the link in the chat. And lastly, I am a screenwriter myself, mostly in features. I mostly do horror and science fiction, and I shot my first horror short film during COVID, it's called "Uncontrol" and we are very, very close to finish. We've finished posts, and we are basically exporting the video as we speak. So I'm very, very excited to share that with the world very, very soon. So thank you so much, everyone, it was a blast, this wonderful.

>> Tatiana Lee: Congrats, thank you. So now Thuc, and then we'll go to Sheryl with an S and then Cheryl with a C and we'll close it out.

>> Thuc Nguyen: Like Manon said, worldwide, and Europe we're coming for you too, 'cause we got a couple with of us with EU citizenship. So we'll be looking for that government funding to take care of more women of color everywhere. And I just hide out with my dogs and type so people can pay me for that eventually sometimes. (panelists laughing)

>> Tatiana Lee: Tell them you're a writer, hire you, hire you. Sheryl, do you have, Sheryl with an S, do you have anything you want to plug?

>> Sheryl Anderson: Well, I promised my line producer that if he gave me the day off, I would plug “Sweet Magnolias". So if you have not seen season one, we're on Netflix. We are heading back shortly to the Atlanta area for season two. So Tatiana, I'm gonna reach out to you to get the name of the Atlanta group that you were just talking about. So I think my biggest plug is if you're not involved with these groups, get involved with them now. And don't think of building community is only reaching up, reach out. Peer community is crucial, rising tide lifts all boats, as my dad always said. So look around you and see who you can help. And then join wonderful organizations like this and meet brand new people that you can help and who can help you. And in just in closing Diana, one hour TV lady to another, I'd love to have virtual coffee with you. I'll figure out how to do that through Tatiana or Cheryl, but- I'm sorry, go ahead.

>> Diana Romero: I was going to say, I was chime in and say I just sent you a little message on the chat.

>> Sheryl Anderson: I never watch chat, so thank you. I'll look.

>> Diana Romero: They reply so fast, but I'll get you, I'll definitely get you. Thank you and I'll definitely get your information through Tatiana, as well.

>> Sheryl Anderson: Wonderful, wonderful.

>> Tatiana Lee: Yes. This is how the magic happens. I love it.

>> Sheryl Anderson: Well, thank you all for creating this space and for letting me participate.

>> Tatiana Lee: Thank you so much for all that you brought, thank you. Last but not least, Ms. Cheryl Bedford.

>> Cheryl Bedford: Sheryl, thanks. sometimes this fight it's a lot. And when you can create organic matches. So we hope for.

>> Tatiana Lee: Thank you.

>> Cheryl Bedford: Thank you, Sheryl. Thank you, Sheryl. Thank you Thuc for tagging me. Manon for everything that you do. RespectAbility for being a partner. Tati for being a bad ass, for teaching me, for making sure we don't leave any marginalized group for always giving me the correct language and the statistics. Ava, what a lot of people don't know is that for RespectAbility's lab, I am they're producing... What's my title?

>> Tatiana Lee: You are one of our advisors.

>> Cheryl Bedford: Yes, I am the producing advisor for RespectAbility, which is where I met Ava. Diana and AFI. There, just everybody, thank you. Like this moment makes it all worth it. So, thank you.

>> Tatiana Lee: Thank you, thank you. I'm so touched, oh my gosh. So make sure you check out Women of Color Unite. If you are a woman of color, if you are not a part of the JTC list, make sure you are. Check out, Startwith8Hollywood program so that you can be in one of the next rounds, it is really groundbreaking. And if you are a person with a disability in the entertainment industry, make sure you're apply for our Hollywood lab, which Diana and Ava are a part of. I've had the honor of being there, starting it with Lauren from the beginning, it has really shifted and really impacted so many entertainment professionals with disabilities. So if you wanna get involved with any of the work that Women of Color Unite are doing, any of the work that RespectAbility is doing, please message us, get in touch, come into the fold into the community. I want to thank you for joining us at our RespectAbility Accessibility Inclusion lab here at Sundance. And thank you to Sundance for having us. And check out women of color Startwith8Hollywood, and apply for our lab. And with that, I want to say thank you so much, We are out.