>> Vivian Bass: Greetings. Welcome to our webinar, "Accessibility for All". I'm Vivian Bass. I'm a white woman with brown hair and glasses. Behind me is a set of bookshelves with a few framed photos. I invite each of you to think about, through a disability lens, why I took the time to describe myself and what's behind me, to whom in the disability community might such audio descriptions benefit. Feel free to add your comments or your response in the chat box. I am extremely pleased and proud to be here today, representing both organizations that means so much to me. As the vice-president of Save a Child's Heart, US, and as a vice-chair of RespectAbility's board of directors. In fact, I am wearing two pins today, side-by-side, one for Save a Child's Heart and one for RespectAbility. Most of you know, Save a Child's Heart's life-saving mission. For those who do not, Save a Child's Heart is committed to improving the quality of cardiac care for children in developing countries and has saved the lives of more than 5,000 children from over 60 countries around the world through surgery in Israel and medical missions abroad. I want to say how pleased we are to partner with RespectAbility to bring you today's training. For those new to RespectAbility, we are a national nonprofit that fights stigmas and advances opportunities so people with disabilities can truly participate in all aspects of community. Before I turn the mic over to your esteemed moderator for this awesome event, I will cover some accessibility tips. We will add these tips to the chat box, now in periodically through the training for those who arrive later. First, today we have live captioning and American Sign Language, ASL interpreters, to maximize the experience for everyone and to model best practices. For captions, click at the bottom of your computer screen on the CC, got it, to view the interpreters, use the gallery view and click on the grid icon in the upper right corner of your Zoom window and to view the interpreters during the PowerPoint, watch in a side-by-side view. Okay, now, I have the great privilege of introducing my dear friend, colleague, fearless leader, and legendary advocate in the disability movement, Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi. Jennifer is the co-founder and the president of RespectAbility. Jennifer, we can't begin to thank you enough for all you do on behalf of people with disabilities, both in the United States and all throughout the world, While we'll place your bio in the chat box, the words cannot capture your commitment to championing our cause. I could go on and on and more but now, I'll let you speak for yourself. Jennifer?

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Thank you, Vivian Bass, and that's over so much love from you and you are one of the top disability and Jewish leaders and women's leaders in the world, having chaired to a global organization and all the work you do from so many places, Vivian. So thank you for putting this together. Thank you Rabbi Litvack and Save a Child's Heart for doing this and our upcoming speakers. It's just so great to be with you. If we can pull up our slides, we will get going because we are so pleased that this wonderful group of people are listening in today. And our goal is really to equip you with skills so that you can include people with disabilities. So what you're seeing in the cover is some pictures of people with disabilities, including Ollie Cantos, who's going to be one of our speakers later. There's a photo of him with his sons who are triplets. And I just want to say, that his triplets are all Eagle Scouts. They are the first blind Eagle Scouts in history and amazing. So we'll hear from Ollie later. Next slide, please. People with disabilities are one plus billion people around the world. At least 15% of the global population live with a visible or non-visible disability. And that was even before the pandemic which has brought more disability to us. Next slide, please. One in five people of all ages in the US have a disability. Next slide. And disabilities, people don't always know what a disability is. Disabilities can be temporary. You know, we just saw Tiger Woods had an accident last night and we can expect that he will have a disability with his legs because he was in a car accident. Hopefully, he will recover. Disabilities can be visible. You can see them if somebody uses a wheelchair, but actually the majority of disabilities, chronic pain, mental health conditions, et cetera, are actually non-visible. And they can be something that people are born with or something that they can acquire later. Next slide. According to UNESCO, though, 90% of the children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school. Indeed, there's so many stigmas around disability that literally around the world, there are approximately 10 million children with disabilities, who have essentially been dumped at orphanages because their families have rejected them due to a lack of inclusion, lack of supports, lack of what is needed for them to be in mainstream society. So this is a major, major issue. Next slide. Anyone can join the disability community at any point. And we're very diverse as a community. We impact every single demographic group. Next slide. But people with disabilities, they can be some of the most talented people in the world. If you think of the inauguration of President Biden, we saw Amanda Gorman, this amazing poet. She has disabilities. If we think of Gretta Thunberg, who's a climate activist, she has autism. So people with disabilities, they want opportunities just like anyone else. Next slide. Now, how do you include people with disabilities in your work? The first thing is that when you have an event, you want to really signal that you want them to participate. You can signal that by having pictures of people with disabilities on the publicity that you send out, for example. And you can really signal it in a very important way by putting right on the event registration form, "Do you need any accommodations to fully participate "in this event?" Next slide, please. It's very important when we're back in the physical space, hold on just a second. It's very important that you use a physically accessible space. And so you don't want to use a space where the only entrances are through stairs because then you're excluding people from participation. So you'll want to check that out in advance, next slide. And you want to be working with people with disabilities to make sure you're inclusive. So you don't need to just do things for people with disabilities. It's always better to do them with them. We always say, nothing about us without us. Next slide. And you want to be sure that your events are accessible. So this one, you will see the captions that Vivian talked about which if you go to CC at the bottom, you can see the live transcript, which is a phenomenal way or you can do ASL, like we're doing today, but also make your PowerPoints accessible. Next slide. Anything you do that's on the web can be accessible to people who are deaf and people who are blind. You want to be sure to use etiquette that is respectful of people. Next slide. First of all, is you want to remember that people with disabilities are simply people like anybody else and you follow the golden rule of treating people equally. Next slide. Don't talk down to people with disabilities and you want to use good language, like don't use handicapped or crippled or the "R" word, because that's very disrespectful. And you can use person first language or identity first. And you can ask people their question about which they prefer. Do you want to be known as somebody with a disability or a disabled person, but mostly people want to be known by their name and not by their disability or their label. Next slide, please. If you have any questions about how to welcome and include people with disabilities, the best way to do it is just to ask the person. Say, "Hey, I want to do everything I can to make sure "that you're comfortable in the event. "What can I do to make it more successful for you?" And also, you don't want to start helping somebody without asking them. You don't want to start pushing their wheelchair without making sure that's something that they want. So you just ask them, "Hey, can I be helpful? "Can I open the door for you?" And if they say no, just respect that. Next slide. Remember to speak with people with disabilities as adults. Now, that seems so obvious. But I remember when I was in college, I was hit by a car and I used a wheelchair for a year. And while I was in the wheelchair, I found people spoke to me really loudly, really loudly, and really slowly, as if I was deaf or as if I had an intellectual disability. No, treat people equally. Talk to them like adults. Don't use baby language. Next slide. You also want to be sure that when you're talking to somebody with a disability, that if they have difficulty speaking, you need to have the patience for them to really finish. And don't pretend to understand somebody if you don't understand them because then there might be a miscommunication. You can always ask somebody to repeat what they said. Next slide. You want to speak directly to the person with a disability. You don't want to be talking to their personal care assistant, for example. Sometimes people with disabilities have somebody who's helping support their success but talk directly to the person with a disability. And that goes for when you're talking to someone who's deaf who uses a sign language interpreter. Look at the person who's deaf and not at the person who's interpreting. Next slide. You want to be sure to respect people's personal space and not think of their wheelchair, for example, as something that you can lean against. You want to really be respectful of them throughout. Next slide. And you want to be sure that you don't pretend to have a disability which can be mocking to them. And also can be misleading if you're doing simulations where you pretend, for example, to be blind, because people who are blind, they're blind every day and they've got work arounds and they really know how to navigate things. So it is a different experience once you're used to it. Next slide. Some things with disabilities you can see, and some you can't. I said that earlier, but I want to underscore it because sometimes loud noises can really bother people. Also, you know, it can be very troublesome for people if there's a lot of perfume or they might have food allergies. So think about the other kinds of ways that you can be helpful. And again, you can just ask on your registration form if people need anything so they can be included. Next slide. Mental health is now the most common kind of disability, particularly in this pandemic. It's very, very hard for people to be so stressed out with the economy, with the coronavirus and everything. And so, try and be sensitive. And even when people on the surface look like they're happy, they can be struggling inside. So you want to do check-ins with people and also want to offer help and not to put any stigmas on people who have mental health conditions. Next slide. I want to thank those who really helped with this webinar. And I'm excited that we're about to introduce our really special guest speakers. The first guest speaker is Ollie Cantos who is an exceptionally talented attorney and who has been working at the Department of Education. He's a major leader on employment for people with disabilities. As I mentioned, he is the father of triplets, by the way, he adopted the triplets and they are just awesome. And he is a role model. He's also vice-chair of RespectAbility, alongside Vivian Bass. And so I'm going to turn it over to my hero and friend, Ollie Cantos.

>> Ollie Cantos: Thank you, Jennifer, very much. It's been a pleasure to be here. I would like to take just a few moments to just drive the philosophical implications of why we are here so that we can spread the word further about how we can expand these efforts to support people with all types of disabilities. Essentially, when we think about our lives, there are different experiences that we each have. We, because of our unique experiences, bring to the table a variety of different experiences, as well as perspectives. I neglected to mention at the beginning here that I am a Filipino man and my preferred pronouns are he, his and him and I have the backdrop of RespectAbility in the backdrop, background here, and I am blind. So when we look at our lives, we also must recognize that as we learn each day to do whatever we can to advance these issues, we must recognize that we don't know what we don't know. And so therefore, rather than worrying about making mistakes along the way, we cannot let perfection be the enemy of the good. In other words, as long as we dedicate ourselves, periodically and on an ongoing basis, to learning about the needs of people with disabilities and to strive to serve them in every way possible, then we will be able to progress forward. That includes patients with disabilities, families of patients with disabilities, and those who advocate for them. It also includes visitors to hospitals, as well as administrators and employees and family members. We can go on and on. But ultimately, we must recognize that roughly one in five individuals in the world has a disability. And when we also see that disability is both visible and non-visible, we must keep in mind the importance of learning on an ongoing basis. That means tapping into organization of and for people with disabilities. It means tapping into asking these organizations about their perspectives. And it also means having them at the table when organizing conferences, events, and events, both online and offline. It also means and entails making sure to ask wherever whenever we don't know the answer to something, because the reality is that even among the disability community itself, we each continually learn about one another. And so, you are all to be commended for being here and for spreading the word about this webinar and sharing the recording about this webinar with others. Because as people see what is being presented here, they and you will continue to be able to recognize different resources that are available to you and better still, building further dialogue among leaders and members of the disability community. And so, I'd like to turn the time to Jennifer to pose any specific questions that you would like to bring forward at this time.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi So, first of all, thank you so much, Ollie, for your great comments and for reminding me that I should have also identified that I'm a middle-aged white woman wearing glasses in front of a Save a Child's Heart set of photos and that my pronouns are she, her, hers. And also want to let folks know that if they have questions, they can put them in the chat and we'll try and be sure to ask the speakers to address those questions but you've just done a major publication, Ollie, that's about employment for people with disabilities. And I have just put a link to that publication in the chat or at least, I'm about to put it in the chat, a major, major publication. Why was this so important and what does that publication offer to people?

>> Ollie Cantos: The publication offered a step-by-step guide, essentially, for taking people with disabilities from determining what they would like to do in terms of career pursuits and moving them through the entire process of understanding what resources are available for internship and employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the private, public, private sector, and the public sector and the nonprofit sector. And it also describes a brief history of the disability rights movement as well as how people with and without disabilities fall into the bigger picture of promoting economic advancement for all individuals, including those with disabilities.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Fabulous. I'm going to ask you one more question which is for people who are blind, what are some of the unique challenges during the COVID crisis? How has that impacted your family and what do you want people to know about how they can be more inclusive of people from the blindness, low-vision community?

>> Ollie Cantos: For people who are blind or low-vision, there are unique challenges to our community, particularly when people who are blind are in public spaces, there may be a tendency to reach out, to grab an individual or to come close to them, to offer help. And while that is appreciated in many instances, there are unique challenges because of the pandemic, because of the need for social distancing. There are other challenges, too, relating to how blind individuals and others cannot leave their houses because of these concerns that were brought up previously. And for those reasons, they need to find ways to have supplies and other materials delivered to their home. And so, whether people are blind or visually impaired, another thing that is important to keep in mind is for material to be accessible to us. That includes the need for websites to be accessible to our technology, as well as providing audio description, wherever possible, if there is information that's needed that is only otherwise available in a visual format.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Thank you so much, Ollie. I really, really appreciate that. We're going to turn it to Rabbi Leigh, who's just this extraordinary talent, really filled with wisdom. And by the way, we're going to come back for more questions at the end. So I want to remind our audience that if you have any questions for any of the panelists, just put them in the chat and we'll circle back at the end. Rabbi Leigh, can you please share with us your thoughts today? And I just want to thank you for your leadership on so many, so many different issues.

>> Rabbi Darby Leigh: Well, of course, thank you so much, Jennifer, and good afternoon to all of you joining us today. We're so thrilled that you are here. I present as a white male with a beard and mustache, short curly brown hair. And I'm sitting in front of my office background wall which has some framings hung on it. I'm wearing a black suit, blue shirt, and a button on it that said Black Lives Matter. I am also profoundly deaf, and I'm communicating with you by spoken language at the moment, but I very much appreciate the ASL, American Sign Language access. I'm not signing at the moment because I'm not a big fan of trying to use two languages at the same time. I find one to be hard enough. And I want to just start by sharing with all of us a way to think about disability that had been kind of revolutionizing for me in this past year or so, which is I've grown up. I was born profoundly deaf, and I've grown up with a sort of an understanding that people with disabilities are in a binary model. That is, you are either a person with a disability or not. And my experience is that the disability community and disability advocacy community had inadvertently maintained the perception over the years that we often think about those of us with disabilities and those of us without disabilities. What had been really radical for me over the past year and a half is to really come to an awareness of the fact that there isn't an us and them, here, but the truth is we are all, every single one of us is on a spectrum of ability. So take my definition for example. I know lots of folks who as they grow older, certainly develop a mild hearing loss or a little bit of hearing loss as they grow over the course of their life. So some of us may hear really well. Some of them may be profoundly deaf. Some of us may have a mild hearing loss. Some of that may have hearing loss which then we can hear it, if we were an assistive listening device like a hearing aid or have a cochlear implant. And we may find that over the course of our lives or days with respect to any physical ability in the human body, that people move over the course of their life on this spectrum of ability. So rather than think about people with disabilities as a them category, the truth is all human beings experience a range of ability and disability. And I mentioned earlier, I was born profoundly deaf. It happened to be the case that both of my parents are deaf, as well. And although I like to think that I present as pretty young, who knows, my perception, when I was born, I was actually born in the days of black and white television before color TV and certainly, before closed captioning access. And I remember as a young child watching television and never being able to understand it. And I remember how exciting it was when the technology of closed captioning first began to emerge. But in the earliest days of the closed captioning technology, it was a free for all, and completely up to independent television stations, channels and specific programs to determine whether or not they would actually caption their content to the point where certain television commercials would be closed captioned and certain ones would not be. And I remember watching television as a young child with my parents, and whenever commercials came on, that were not closed captioned, my parents would turn to me and say, "Oh, well, I guess this company doesn't want our business. "I guess this company does not want "us purchasing their product." And they would actually make a note of which company those were. And we would, as a family, engage in a minor civil boycott as it were of those companies that were clearly not interested in making sure that we could understand them, that they were not interested in making sure they could reach us and we were certainly not inclined to give them our business. So their inability to reach out to the deaf community, in this case, resulted in a financial impact, a negative financial impact, a minor one, agreed, it was just one family, but an impact nonetheless. When we noted that there were companies that did caption their content and expressed an interest in reaching us as potential consumers, buyers, clients, and so on, we had a vested interest in choosing to support those companies and using our commercial, our consumer dollars to reflect our values and to reflect the organizations we felt were paying attention to us and interested in us, our experiences and our business, of course. All of this is to say, that I feel like I was raised with a certain attitude of a willingness to be a disability advocate, a willingness to put myself out there to push for change and access where the was none where there were barriers for me or for my family members to advocate tirelessly on my behalf and on the behalf of the deaf and hard of hearing community, as well. But as I've grown older, I've realized two important things. One, not everybody with a disability was raised to be an activist and an advocate for themselves at all times and quite frankly, it is exhausting having to do so. And two, I believe deeply in working to create a world in which we don't have to, in which folks with disabilities do not have to be our primary advocate for access to the field of society that we wish to be able to participate in. So I'm trying to put increasing awareness on private organizations such as Save a Child's Heart and other organizations that I have the opportunity to speak with to say, alleviate some of the burden from the people with disabilities constantly having to advocate for ourselves, constantly having to knock on the door to say, we want to come in, we want to be part of this but to be proactive about extending that welcome mat, about creating an environment, a forum, whether it's a class, a program, a convention, a place to work, whatever it might be, that's already got accessibility built into it because that is ultimately, the world that I want to live in and I'm trying to create. And finally, one last point, if I'm not out of time just yet, it's actually two points. So the final point I want to make it very often, I think that people who are advocating on behalf of folks with disabilities think that they're doing it for the people with disabilities. That is, very often the attitude of an organization or of a community is, oh, we're so kind, we're so thoughtful, we will make an accommodation for you, poor person with a disability so that you can have access to the wonderful programs and services that we provide. But the truth is, my friend, is that when an organization or a community makes themselves acceptable to a person with a disability or a community of folks with disabilities, it is profoundly transformative for the organization itself in ways that you cannot yet even begin to imagine until you have done the work and gone through the transformation. So the truth is, while making accommodations and creating access for a person with disability does, yes, benefit the person with the disability, of course, it also profoundly benefits you. It profoundly benefits your organization. It is a transforming experience from which you will ultimately learn and grow. And providing disability access is ultimately about providing access for everybody, about providing access for all. Things that we do to benefit people with a disability ultimately truly benefit all of us. And I'll close with one example, which is where I started, closed captioning. So when I was a kid, there was no closed captioning, and closed captioning slowly but surely began to creep into television and visual media of all sorts, to the point where something that was once upon a time created for the deaf and hard of hearing community is now enjoyed, appreciated, and valued by everyone. Pre-pandemic, none of us could go, if we could see, none of us could go into an airport, a bar, a restaurant, any venue that had television without seeing closed captioning on the screen. And if we were in a bar or a restaurant with background noise, there was no audio from the TV, many of us would be reading closed caption. The research is overwhelmingly supportive of the way closed captioning helps folks with learning English as a second language, young children learning to read and developing language, not only those who are deaf and hard of hearing, folks who process information visually rather than auditorily, folks who are losing hearing later in life. So once again, something that was done to create access for people with disabilities, the deaf and hard of hearing, in this case, actually truly benefits everybody. So as you go forward on your work and you think about creating access to people with disabilities, please know that whatever changes you implement will benefit far more than the number of people you think it will, and it will transform you and your organization in amazingly powerful and beautiful ways. And I could go on. There's so much more to say. I think Debbie wanted me to mention also how grateful I am for the ASL, American Sign Language interpretation here today, but please know, I understand this is an international gathering. We're joining this morning from all around the world, which is so exciting. And if there are deaf people here from different parts of the world, they may not have access to ASL because sign language is not universal. And just like every country has their own spoken language, so too, every country has their own sign language, as well. And so the opportunity to create access across an international or on a global scale are limitless and endless, and there's so much more that we can always be doing. And I'll stop there. Thank you so much for your time.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: That was so helpful. And I really appreciated how you talked about the universal benefit of inclusion of people with disabilities, because our society is so much richer because of the talents that people with disabilities bring to us. When I think of how Stephen Hawking unlock the secrets of the universe while using a wheelchair. If I think about Harriet Tubman who freed the slaves while she was living with epilepsy. If I think about Thomas Edison, the greatest inventor of American history, who was also living with a disability and who was deaf. If I think about, you know, so many talented people, artist Frida Kahlo, you know, just so many people with disabilities who have enriched our lives in so many ways, every organization from Save a Heart to everybody else should want to have that talent in the room, especially since by the time people are adults, one out of every four people, one out of every four, 25%, has some form of disability. And one of the most important common disabilities is hearing loss. So this is not people who are deaf. This is people who were hearing before and they don't know sign language but as they have aged, they were losing their hearing. Many times they're embarrassed. They don't want people to know, "Oh, I didn't hear you." They don't want to ask people to repeat but they need captioning. We did a major study that over a thousand people who work in the nonprofit space answered questions about. We learned that only 14% of nonprofit organizations put captions on their videos. Only 14%. You, Rabbi, gave us all the reasons that captions help. They help people who are deaf, help people who are hard of hearing, help people who are English language learners so they're learning the language so having the hearing of it and seeing the writing, people who are learning to read. They're so many reasons to have captions. One of the things that's so remarkable that I want the folks from Save a Heart and everyone else to hear is that YouTube has an algorithm that if you take your video and you put your video on YouTube, the captioning happens instantly, automatically. It's not perfect. There'll be spelling mistakes, but also using Zoom, that Zoom has an automatic feature that you can just click on and Zoom will provide captioning for free if you get the newer model. Now we're very lucky because we have a professional captionist who works with RespectAbility so ours is a higher level of captioning, but most of the captioning can happen on Zoom, flawlessly, or maybe some flaws, but you can use the technology. So I'm wondering if you can talk about the evolution or the revolution of automatic captioning and what it means for people who are deaf.

>> Rabbi Darby Leigh: Absolutely. Again, it is a two-pronged approach, right? On one hand, it's the technology and having the technology available but it's also the attitude of people providing media content and increasing the awareness and a willingness to take an extra step to actually make sure the technology is part of their media presentation whether it's online or through another form. And I said, you know, I've watched technology, that captioning technology be created and improve and change over the course of my life, to where we are today, which is the ability to have these automatic speech-to-text program, which by the way, Zoom only included in it online platform and program on January 21st. There was a, I believe a false start a little bit earlier. It was released with some bugs that needed to be fixed that was removed from their program and only reintroduced on January 21st. So the ability of technology to be able to take a random human voice, including mine, which is a deaf voice, right? I don't speak as clearly as hearing people do because my speech was artificially taught and learned to me to actually be able to automatically transcribe what I'm offering, is an incredible boom. So that folks can no longer use the financial burden as an excuse to not provide this access. For too many years, for too long, folks with disabilities have heard, "Oh, we'd love to provide this X, Y, and Z access "but we can't afford it. "We don't have the money. "It's not in our budget." I love hearing that last one because it gives me an opportunity to use my little zinger. Well, if you want to see what an organization really values, if you want to see the true values of an organization, look at their budget. And once you start telling people they're not worth money, then you are committing a crime against humanity. So, I often say that this technology that we have now has come in at just the right moment, particularly, as we're all confronted with this horrific pandemic. And we're all turning to platforms like Zoom and YouTube and online media in far greater numbers than we ever had before. One final example, one of the greatest challenges, you asked Ollie about the pandemic and living as a blind person in this COVID-19 moment. And I will say as a deaf individual, the greatest challenge to me and to other deaf and hard of hearing folk is all the mask wearing, right? For those of us who depend on lip reading and on visual access and visual communication to get our cues from people's facial expressions, mouth movements and so on to be able to understand folks, the mask wearing had been a soul crusher. That being said, technology is meeting the challenge and I've actually been able to download an app on my phone that is essentially an automated speech-to-text program, so that when I have to interact with someone out of doors in the real world, socially distanced from six feet apart and there's no possible way I can understand that individual without an interpreter present, I can take out my smartphone, open up a speech-to-text app, and it will not perfectly, but it will essentially give me a text-based access to what that individual is saying. So, we're in this really exciting moment of watching the advances in technology meet the needs that we have, but we still need that piece of attitude and willingness for folks to go that extra step. There is no reason why anybody's video online now doesn't have caption. The technology is there, doesn't cost anything. It just takes the willingness and the commitment to making it happen.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Fabulous. Thank you so much, Rabbi. I really, really appreciate that. And I just want to highlight that in the chat, you can see that we've put in some webinars on how you can make your materials particularly accessible. So there are a number of different webinars including how to do captioning and so many other issues. I'm so excited that we're going to turn it over to Donna Walton, who is a complete superstar as the leader and founder of Divas with Disabilities. She is just a real powerful force for women of color with particularly physical disabilities, but other disabilities. She's also an inclusion advocate, a senior advisor to RespectAbility and a former board member. She is a coach. She is an inclusion expert. So Donna, take it away.

>> Dr. Donna Walton: All right. Thank you for that glowing introduction. I am grateful to have my name associated with Save a Child's Heart, a life saving organization that does so much for so many. And the mere idea that I may be a part of helping children who will grow into adults who may have chronic illnesses, be treated with dignity and respect and equal access to all spaces in our society makes my heart smile. I'll tell you a little bit about me. I present as an African-American woman, amputee. I have curly hair. I am light complexion. I am sitting in my office. In the background, I have lots of artwork on the walls. I am wearing a black and white, polka-dot blouse today with lovely pearls and pearl earrings to match. I am a diva, for sure. I want to start off by talking about a quote in my book. I wrote a book called, "Shattered Dreams, Broken Pieces". The book chronicles my life as an amputee. And it puts in perspective all of the things that I've sort of confronted with regards to accessibility and perceptions of how individuals are treated with disabilities. Aristotle says, "We are what we repeatedly do. "Excellence then is not an act, but a habit." The reason why I want to start with this quote is because I believe that in order for our spaces, programs, and services to be accessible for people with disabilities, full-inclusion, we have to establish good habits. The more accessible our spaces are, the more inclusive our society becomes and the more involved people with disabilities and the full participation of people with disabilities are involved in our lifestyles and our work spaces. A little story here, quick story. When my leg was amputated over 42 years ago, folks had some really bad habits. You know what those bad habits were? They were bad habits of assuming what my capabilities were, what my abilities were. And I endured these kinds of, I confronted most of these perceptions with employers. Employers would sometimes not hire me. Why? Because they didn't feel that I could do the job based on my disability. They looked at my disability and discounted me without having the opportunity, giving me the opportunity to show my abilities. The point here is that what we bring to the table in terms of our perceptions, how we perceive individuals with disabilities has a greater impact on their success. We want to establish good habits. Like Jennifer mentioned, we want to use a first person. We want to give people with disabilities respect and dignity. We do not want to do name calling. I can count a number of times where I was called out of my name, crippled, handicap. It was just exhausting. But we have to establish good habits. We have to really know how to use good language to communicate with individuals with disabilities. And as Jennifer mentioned, the best way is if you don't know, ask a person, they will let you know. Another thing, another bad habit in terms of perceptions is how we sort of make assumptions about individuals with disabilities. Workspaces can be so easily accessed if they just take the time to say or to think about what would be useful in terms of individual's access. universal design, looking at creating spaces that are universally designed appropriately so everyone can access them. That way, everyone gets an opportunity to participate fully without having to be excluded. I don't want to share admonishments but I really want to illustrate that people practicing good habits from the start establish a way by which everyone gets to enjoy the freedoms and benefits and programs and services in life. Let me just tell you another example. I used to work for a federal agency and it was made, when they created the cafeteria, they didn't take in consideration that persons who were blind would have to access the soda fountains. So while they made the access counters accessible through ADA standards, they did not make the water fountain, I mean, I'm sorry, the soda fountains accessible. So what that caused is a lot of money to do what's called retrofitting. We want to avoid making those costly renovations and retrofits from the beginning. I mean, from the backend when we can make them from the frontend by thinking about how people will access the environments. Things that you can do simply in the workplace. Have alternative formats for your meetings such as braille and electronic formatted documents. One way if you want to invite individuals to enter your space is when you have meetings and conferences, you can put on those documents, as Jennifer mentioned, that there will be a person that you can contact to see if you would need any particular accommodation. You can hire a compliance officer, a consultant, who can really come in and do a quick assessment on from entry to exit of your work environment. We can stress the recommendations and strides that we can make, don't happen overnight. They don't happen overnight, but we can prioritize what we need to happen so that on just a micro level, individuals who are blind, who are deaf, can access our environments. And we must not forget those individuals with non-visible disabilities. These individuals may not speak up about their disabilities but they would want to come into the environment and have it accessible for them. They may have episodic conditions. So we have to think about these conditions that they may not always present themselves at the beginning but your environment is already set up so that if something occurs for that individual, they will be available, it will be available to them such as offering telework. Since the pandemic, we've seen how telework has become a real easy and business is getting done for persons with disabilities. It's a lifesaver. I want to say that people matter. The type of disability should not matter. When we're thinking about making our environments accessible, the disability should not matter. The person should matter, but the disability should not matter because our environments should be easily accessible, all the time. And that's my point here. And Jennifer, do you want to ask any more questions of me?

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: First of all, thank you so much, Donna. That was really fabulous, Donna. I really appreciate that. And it's interesting that you talked about stigma because on the line is the global leader, lay leader, of Save a Child's Heart, Judy Shore, who's a tremendous leader of the nonprofit space and this life saving organization. And by coincidence, her husband is David Shore, who created the TV show, "The Good Doctor", which I'm quite passionate about. He's the lead creative behind that show. And just this week, they not only have a storyline throughout every episode of somebody with autism, who's very, very good as a doctor, but they had somebody with down syndrome who was getting an organ transplant, just like Save a Child's Heart does do transplants for people with disabilities. And they had a lead storyline with an actor who is an amputee. And so, you had mentioned the importance of stigmas. I wonder if you can just expand about what it's like as a person living with a disability, to see somebody on screen, as somebody who is successful who has a disability.

>> Dr. Donna Walton: It's wonderful because as an African-American woman, images of black and brown women are not seen on television. Our images are not reflected. And I know when I lost my leg, there were no examples of how I could sort of navigate my world in this society. So seeing persons with disabilities on television is amazing. My organization, the Divas with Disabilities project, its mission is to amplify those images, to reshape what disability looks like so that there can be more inclusion in mass media, particularly on television. If you see ourselves, that reduces the stigma, because the more that we are included, the more people have an idea of what disability actually looks like.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: And how can an organization do that if they're a nonprofit? Where are some of the opportunities for an organization like Save a Child's Heart to amplify that they're inclusive through the imagery that they use?

>> Dr. Donna Walton: That's a great question. One of the aspects you could do is you can basically reflect your environment. Just hiring individuals with disabilities, first and foremost. You can advertise more for persons with disabilities. You can also make your environment that reflects what disability looks like. That's another example. But you can also reach out to the Divas with Disabilities project, if you can. There are many organizations that work with recruiting and hiring individuals with disabilities and you can use them. The Bender Association, for example, is another organization that will be very helpful in reducing stigma because it will have qualified individuals with disabilities that can fill those jobs.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Absolutely. Thank you so much. I want to remind our audience that we're here for you and if you have any questions, you can just put them in the chat and we'll ask them of our speakers. But now, I'd like to bring in the whole panel because the world is changing so quickly. People are learning about all kinds of prejudice. I know that we, at RespectAbility, we stand against racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, any kinds of anti-gay or trans or other kinds of identities. And we always have to learn more about these issues and these issues are emerging as we learn more about these issues. I want to talk to Ollie about a brand new app that has really caught fire because there's a lot of controversy about this app. So it's called Clubhouse. Ollie, tell us about Clubhouse. And then I'm going to come to Rabbi Leigh to talk about Clubhouse because, well, there's a challenge with Clubhouse for the deaf community. So maybe we can get a little controversy going and then maybe Donna can talk about navigating some of these issues when there is a new hot, hot thing that is not accessible to people with disabilities. Ollie, what is Clubhouse? And how has that been helpful to people who are blind, such as yourself?

>> Ollie Cantos: Clubhouse. Clubhouse is literally one of the most amazing apps I have ever seen. What it does is through the power of voice, it allows various folks from across the world to connect with one another. There is an opportunity for people to post profiles and then to create different rooms that serve as spaces for discussion. And then within the rooms, there is a place for moderators, as well as speakers and audience members. And as the effort has progressed forward, there are people who are the leaders in their fields, who are there, who are extremely accessible for the time that I've been on there, it has been magnificently wonderful networking, literally with people at the highest levels, literally millionaires and billionaires, as well as people from other walks of life. And also, the wonderful thing about Clubhouse is there is a culture there of service, of wanting to do whatever you can to be of support by utilizing your own talents and abilities. By the same token, with everything that has happened, there have been accessibility struggles and members of the disability community have spoken up about that and on Clubhouse have organized to also reach out to Clubhouse to help ensure that these problems are fixed. And because of these ongoing efforts to organize and to step up to the plate by making sure that our voice is heard, there are new protocols that have been put into place such as saying your name at the beginning of when you speak and then at the end saying your name again, and then saying, I am done speaking, so that when the information is transcribed, then people who are deaf or hard of hearing can read that information and they also have an opportunity to proceed forward. There are still a number of issues that are ongoing, but the leadership of Clubhouse has said that they are going to keep working on it. And this is yet another example of how as technology progresses, we as members of the disability community and our allies need to stay at the table and really push hard for changes that are needed, including if there's resistance like there was within some quarters with some speakers who originally resisted even following these protocols, but then literally what ended up happening within a short time is they started utilizing these protocols.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: So thank you, Ollie. I'm gonna turn it to Rabbi Leigh because you talked about captioning on television and that's now been resolved for most TV shows, still not for the advertising. So for example, many political ads don't even have captions. And now we have Clubhouse which is, you know, by definition, it's just sound and it's very much like podcasting. So how does the deaf community deal with such an issue and what do you experience as somebody who needs to do self-advocacy and what kinds of advice do you give to others who give advocacy on these issues?

>> Rabbi Darby Leigh: Well, thank you, Jennifer. This is fascinating to me. I am not surprised by it. And at the same time, in the spirit of full transparency and honesty, this is the first moment I am hearing of this particular app and of this particular technology. So this is brand new to me. But that being said, based on your collective descriptions of it, I can just share with you a general sense of exasperation and frustration on behalf of, again, I can't speak for the entire deaf and hard of hearing community, but certainly for myself, that as we live in a predominantly hearing society, the predominant vehicle of information in our society and in our world is spoken language and auditory communication. It's not the only vehicle for information transmission, but it is the predominant one. And deaf people and hard of hearing people, I think, have constantly been playing a game of catch-up where, you know, there was a telecommunications article in the ADA to essentially mandate that all audio communication have a visual component, as well. But as technology continues to advance and the internet was created and online content would generate it, the deaf and hard of hearing community are constantly in a state of catch-up where we feel like there are all these wonderful things happening now in the audio world that people who can hear can have access to and people who cannot, cannot have access to, and what laws needs to be in place, what protection needs to be in place to continue to ensure that as things like podcasts and Clubhouse continue to develop and take off, that the deaf and hard of hearing community is not totally left in the dust. And our experience, my experience, has been generally that if the content is closed captioning, if hearing people create things, music, podcast things, that are based on audio access, and we're constantly sort of asking after the fact, you know, please don't forget about us and let's make sure that we can ensure a visual access component to this program, podcast or app, as it were. So that's probably what will be happening with this one, as well.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Thanks, Rabbi Leigh. And I'm gonna turn it to Donna but I'm going to use the analogy because this new app that people are using, Clubhouse, is not different than other new products that are out there that are hot and sexy and interesting and particularly have their moments. And so there's a question from somebody about just shoes, you know, shoes are so important for women's identities. A lot of, well, I'm sure there are some men who care about their shoes too, but let's face it, there is a special affinity for those of us who are females, sometimes, around shoes. Can you talk about brands that are particularly trying to be inclusive of people who are amputees or have other disabilities in terms of the fashion industry?

>> Dr. Donna Walton: Absolutely. That's a great question. You know, fashion is a part of women. Because we have disabilities, doesn't exclude us from wanting to be sexy, doesn't exclude us from being fashionable. One of the major issues are shoes, as for an amputee. I know for me, in terms of the heel height and whether or not, you know, the shoe is going to fit the prosthetic leg is incredible. And Nordstrom's and I know, I'm going to just give a plug to Nordstrom's, is a phenomenal organization. It's phenomenal retail that works with the type of shoe that you might need. So they will allow you to have a size smaller shoe or size larger shoe to fit your prosthesis. And that has been one great retail organization that really is great. The other one is we have a fashion, they call it stylist, whereby they work with individuals with disabilities, amputees in particular, to help them work with cobblers in their communities to build their shoes, to make their shoes, to actually design the pair of shoes to fit them. That's been really a great resource to Divas, is working with, building partnerships with different cobblers so that we can have different shoes made for women who have to have certain types of shoes for their prosthetic limbs. Because as we know, all amputees are not the same. You have bilateral amputees. You have amputees who have no toes. You know, so it's just basically the type of shoe that's going to be really best fit for that person. But having a stylist, a fashion stylist, and reaching out to those brands stores really is helpful.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Great, thank you so much. I misspoke earlier saying that Save a Child's Heart does transplants. They fix hearts, they don't transplant hearts, but the hearts that they're fixing are frequently connected to bodies that will have some form of disability in their lifetime. And obviously, you know, people who are in staff or lay leaders, they're connected to people with disabilities. They have loved ones with disabilities. They may be people with disabilities, themselves. The three of you, our guests today, you each have a different kind of disability. Ollie is blind. Rabbi Leigh is deaf. And Donna has a physical disability. I wonder if we could start with Ollie, then go to Rabbi Leigh and then go to Donna. And if you can, because we don't have too much time, but if you can give just a couple of pieces of personal advice as somebody who has been very successful with your disability about how other people can also be very, very successful when they have disabilities. Turning it first to Ollie.

>> Ollie Cantos: Particularly with blind people, it's important to recognize that blindness does not represent tragedy. A lot of people associate blindness with darkness and difficulty and stress, but actually, blindness for us is just a characteristic. We are just as lazy or ambitious as anyone else. We're just as anything as anybody else. So when it comes to thinking about blindness, recognize that the experiences of people are different based on whether they were born with blindness, or they acquired it later in life, but either way, it is critical for us to support people who have this disability by empowering them to be at their very best in every aspect of life. And by aligning with consumer-driven organizations and with others to support civil rights advancement and to be a part of the solution with making that happen.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Fabulous. Rabbi Leigh?

>> Rabbi Darby Leigh: Thank you. So, I certainly never had the "chutzpah". You know what that word means? The attitude of being able to dispense advice to an entire community of people. So what I will say about deafness and the deaf community is that there is tremendous diversity within the deaf community, a tremendous range of speaking, of communication styles and of language preferences. Folks who communicate exclusively in American Sign Language, who do not use voice at all, to folks who don't know American Sign Language, and utilize the system listening devices, hearing aids, cochlear implants, and so on. And there's a range that goes all the way from sort of a really strong deaf community, deaf culture, deaf identity portion of the deaf community, all the way to folks who essentially want to be part of the hearing world and want to assimilate and to have access and don't want to be perceived as all that different and everything in between. And so, I guess the only advice I have come from, you know, it's been shared by so many prominent deaf folks in the visible public eye, Molly Mattman, certainly has said this many times. A friend of mine, Nyle DiMarco, who was the winner of "America's Next Top Model" and "Dancing with the Stars", a friend of mine, he very fond of saying, you know, deaf people, the only thing we can't do is hear. And there isn't a single thing that a deaf person can't do other than hear without an assistive listening device or so on. And so the world is ours. Anything that we want to do, we can go get it. And sometimes, it's up to us to go and get it and to make it happen.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Fabulous, I appreciate that so much. I also want to mention, because we're talking about logistics on how to make people feel included, that some buildings have put in these different hearing loops so that if somebody is using a hearing aid or a cochlear implant, that they have better access to the technology by putting that into the physical space. And just like you wouldn't want to use a ballroom that has an entrance that is only stairs, if you're booking an event in a public venue, it is very helpful to look for a venue that has an hearing loop, right built into the physical space. Turning it over to Donna, Donna, what has made you so successful? Just a couple of tips that will, you would like to share with other people as they're going through their journey.

>> Dr. Donna Walton: Sure. I'd like to, first of all, say that, you know, amputees are not a monolith. Every amputee is different. I like to rely on the psychosocial model, the acceptance and adjustment to disability, to their amputation. That for me, was all about how I sort of navigated my world. Once I learned or accepted my disability, I was able to adjust to it. And then first of all, that's where my confidence and self-esteem sort of comes from. That's one tip. So adjusting, accepting and having self-esteem about your disability. Then, I also look at the fact that there were three things that have have been the sort of the challenges. And I know that there are challenges for other amputees, as well. There's stairs, chairs and floors. And I know any amputee when I say that, they know exactly what I'm talking about. With regard to stairs, you know, it's like, it's almost like making the, that's why the environment, and having universal design is always just necessary because you never know to what ability a person who's an amputee can climb stairs. I know that I can climb stairs, but after a while, going up many flights of stairs might be a real challenge and a burden. So having, you know, having an elevator is always important in a building. Chairs, when you go into these fancy, schmancy offices sometimes, it's always challenging when there's very short and small chairs or chairs on wheels. Amputees know that. We need handles, not chairs, to hold on to. That is really important. And the last thing is floors, you know, shiny floors, marble floors, all the things that seem so beautiful are really just real barriers to individuals who walk with prosthetic devices or who may use crutches, for example. So that's my advice. My advice is universal design. If you universally design these environments, then amputees will have no problem accessing it. And that's how I've been successful is just basically, having the confidence of going into environments that are going to accommodate me.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: I so appreciate that. I think that every organization is always going to be at its best when it is welcoming and respectful of all people. And if they have a really firm policy and if they really telegraph that policy that they're against all the isms, and I think people know what racism is to a large extent, they know what sexism is, they know what anti-Semitism is, but many people have never heard the word ableism. Does one of you want to define what it or each of you what ableism means to you. This'll be our final question. Anyone want to jump in here and say, what is ableism?

>> Ollie Cantos: This is Ollie speaking. Ableism essentially can be defined as the tendency to imagine that people with different types of disabilities somehow are inferior in some way in comparison to themselves. We must always resist those tendencies. And we must also make sure to spread the word about how people with all types of disabilities can and do perform to the highest levels and can serve at the highest levels, just like anyone else.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Perfect, fabulous. And, Rabbi Darby, as you answer that question, what is ableism, do you want to mention what the medical model is compared to a social model?

>> Rabbi Darby Leigh: I wanna respond if I may, to just sort of piggyback on or carry on what Ollie was just speaking to, which is to share that from the deaf and hard of hearing community's perspective, not only is ableism an issue, which it is for sure, but audism is also an issue. And audism is essentially as Ollie said, a sort of assumption on the part of hearing people, on hearing society, that folks who do not communicate using an auditory method of communication, using spoken language, or the ability to access spoken language are somehow intellectually inferior, somehow not up to the task, somehow not full participants in society. And there is a true bias and discrimination, which I know and live deeply because I have the ability to speak and to use spoken language to communicate, that I'm often treated differently as a deaf person than another friend to a colleague who may communicate exclusively in sign language because of that. And there is an awareness. There is an audism. There is a perception that those who do not speak or have access to spoken language and communication are somehow less than, or somehow less whole, and nothing could be further from the truth from that, at all. So within the deaf community, we battle not only ableism, for sure, as Ollie described, but audism, as well.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Thank you so much, Rabbi. Turning it over to Donna.

>> Dr. Donna Walton: Yeah, I just want to say that ableism, plain and simple, is discrimination and it is social prejudice against people with disabilities. It's the perception. And I talked about that perception that if you're perceived as disabled, that there's something wrong with you. Ableism characterizes persons who are defined by their disability as inferior and that, you know, of the non-disabled and that is absolutely far from the truth. But I think persons with disabilities have, we really fight ableism every day of our lives because of what the world looks like, the world if you will, is quote unquote, perceived as normal. So therefore, you know, able-bodied people are always not comfortable and just always, like I said, imposing their prejudice on disabled people.

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Thank you, Donna. Ollie's going to tee us up to watch a very short video that is both funny and also will illustrate the case of what we're talking about today. Ollie, take it away.

>> Ollie Cantos: Thank you, Jennifer. The video you are about to see will show various myths and misconceptions around disability. And in watching that, I also wanted to point out that there is no audio description. And the reason why I'm pointing that out is because audio description is a way to show blind people what is being depicted visually on the screen. And yet with this video, which has really done well, otherwise, it actually shows that even though we have a ways to go, this is still, these messages are really important. And so, it's actually meant as also an object lesson. Again, like I said earlier, that we cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good. We must strive continually to move forward. And as we do, then we'll be able to progress. And so now in watching the video, please enjoy and also see what the messages contain.

[Video Plays]

>> Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi: Thanks. And Vivian is going to wrap us up but before she does, I just want to go back to that study, I mentioned before that said that only 14% of nonprofit organizations are putting captions on videos. Why is that number important? Because Save a Child's Heart, by doing this training today, is really standing out. You're really taking an extra step that all of us need because one out of every four adults, one out of every five human beings, has some form of disability. Save a Child's Heart is an amazing organization that is saving lives of children from all around the world with excellent medical care, really amazing human beings who are helping day in day out for the children, all these great doctors and wonderful lay leadership, whether it is, you know, Rabbi Litwack who's your able CEO who does such an incredible job or your lay leaders, Vivian Bass and Judy Short. I just want to say thank you, for making disability inclusion a part of the work that Save a Child's Heart is doing. I believe it will make you a stronger organization, better able to save and help the public. Vivian Bass, thank you for enabling us to be a part of this today.

>> Vivian Bass: Thank you, everyone, for participating today, and thank you certainly, Jennifer, and Ollie Cantos, Esquire, to Rabbi Leigh, to Dr. Walton, for your training and applause to, don't see her on screen, but to Debbie Fink, who from our staff, who directed and produced this event and to Eric Ascher, Jake Stimel and Maya Cohen-Shields for working together with Debbie as the behind the scenes team. And of course, we want to thank RespectAbility's board members led by its chair, the honorable Steve Bartlett, for their tireless work, as well. Equally important, I also want to extend again, warm heart gratitude to Rabbi David Litvack, Save a Child's Heart's US executive director and his staff team for opening the doors towards accessibility and leading the way to inclusion and appreciation is also extended to Save a Child's Heart, co-presidents Jeff Hoffman and Judy Shore, our immediate past president Barry Perlis and all of our members of our Save a Child's Heart US boards. And most significantly, enormous gratitude to each of you who participated bringing your open minds and your hearts to learn today. The doors are open and we thank you for walking or for rolling through and continuing on this journey individually and collectively. And by doing so, Save a Child's Heart will become a more inclusive accessible organization for each of you, for each of us, for our beneficiaries, for our donors, or for all who follow and believe in us. We, again emphasize universal benefit in a mutually respectful and beneficial manner. Also, just briefly want to highlight the monumental milestone that Save a Child's Heart is celebrating in recognition of its 25th year since our founding by Dr. Ami Cohen, a blessed memory, and the celebrating of the opening of the Sylvan Adams Children's Hospital an international pediatric cardiac center in Holon, Israel. Events will be forthcoming globally throughout the year to honor these sensational highlights. So keep on the lookout. And lastly, it's not too early to mark your calendars for a sure to be added notable event, RespectAbility Summit 2021, this June, 7th through June 10th and promises to be filled with meaningful and educational panels and panelists. So we're now wishing everyone a safe and a good day and good evening, wherever you may be. And again, heartfelt thanks.