>> Ollie Cantos: Hi everybody! This is Ollie Cantos. I'm vice chair of the Board of Advisors here at RespectAbility and I am so excited that all of you are with us today. Welcome to this exciting event entitled Celebrating Representation and Inclusion of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islander members of the disability community. I am a Filipino-American man and my pronouns are he him and his. I have black hair. I am pictured here in a dark business suit with white shirt and red tie. I happen to be blind, and I have been involved in the government and non-profit sectors for a grand total of more than 30 years. Positions in government have included at the Justice Department and the Department of Education and at the White House, and within my non-profit work, I've done work supporting kids, low-income families, people of color and individuals with disabilities. I am really excited about all that is to come for today. RespectAbility is a national non-profit organization fighting stigmas and advancing opportunities for this nation's more than 54 million men, women and children with disabilities. Everything is interconnected in all that we do, and particularly with all of those of you who are in attendance today, and who are watching the recording - you in the entertainment and news industries have an incredible role to play, because of the ways in which you have the opportunity on an ongoing basis to facilitate authentic representation of people with all types of disabilities. And that is what is so wonderful about your presence today. Whether you are in the entertainment industry, or in the news industry or in other related fields - the things that you do have a direct impact on the ways in which we as members of the disability community are perceived. And that is why your role is so vitally important. Thank you so very much for being here. I wanted to go through a few numbers with you that I think you would find really interesting. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2019 there were 18,297,153 members of the Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities living in the United States. Out of that number, there are 1,315,999 community members who also identify as having a disability. That means for those individuals, there are folks who've experienced discrimination and who are marginalized who belong to both populations. That's why this discussion that we're having today is so vitally important, especially considering how these statistics reveal how roughly one in every 10 members of this community have disabilities. That is a significant number and it's something that we need to think about as we move ahead. On another front I would like to take this time to acknowledge the rise in horrific hate crimes against AANHPI community members. In a national study released by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, hate crimes in 2020 decreased overall by 7 percent but those targeting AANHPI community members rose by nearly 150 percent. We recommend checking out the work of Asian Americans advancing justice, which includes a reporting tool for hate crimes, bystander intervention training and additional community resources. And now, turning our attention abroad, we would like to acknowledge and support our South Asian brothers sisters and siblings as India fights the world's worst coronavirus outbreak. By this point the country has had more than 17.6 million cases since the beginning of the pandemic, with experts fearing that the real number could be up to 30 times higher, setting a record of new coronavirus infections. For more information on how you can directly contribute to COVID-19 relief in India, please refer to the chat box for a list of organizations that are doing amazing work there. And lastly, before introducing today's panelists we would like to call to your attention several entertainment non-profit organizations. Specifically, we wish to amplify the work of the Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment, or CAPE, Gold House and Define American for their efforts within the entertainment industry to ensure authentic AANHPI representation, and to support the talent pipeline. For more information about these organizations please refer to the links in the chat. It is indeed a great honor and privilege at this time to get to introduce RespectAbility's Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month panel. Each of these leaders has a unique and invaluable perspective to share as we come together to discuss concrete ways to increase authentic AANHPI disability representation in front of the camera and meaningful inclusion behind the camera. While AANHPI representation in film and television has seen an increase in the past few years, there is still much work to be done. Thank you all again for joining us today and with that I will now turn over the time to Vanni Le. Vanni?

>> Vanni Le: Hi, everyone. Thank you so much for taking the time today to join us for this panel discussion, and thank you to Ollie Cantos for providing our opening remarks. My name is Vanni Le. I am the Entertainment Outreach Program Manager here at RespectAbility. I am a Vietnamese American woman with long, straight black hair. I have a RespectAbility backdrop, and I am wearing a white shirt that says "vote" on it. And as an AAPI woman with a non-visible disability, I have had the privilege of not only working across studios, networks, and affiliated organizations to advocate for intersectional representation, but I've also had the opportunity to learn more about my own intersectional identity and what it means to be an AAPI woman with a non-visible disability. So if you would like to view the ASL interpreter in a larger screen, we invite you to pin their video, which will spotlight their video throughout the entire panel. In addition, we do have live captioning, which is done by a real life person that is available on the Zoom app by clicking on the CC button, as well as your video browser. And we have posted a link to that in the chat box. Thank you, Leslie. And this panel is live, so we will be taking questions from you in the last 20 minutes or so, so please add your questions to the Q&A box. And if you're watching us on Facebook during the live airing, we'll also be monitoring that as well, so we can take questions from there. And this panel is being recorded and will be available on RespectAbility's Facebook page after this event concludes, and a higher resolution recording with open captions and our ASL interpreters will be posted and sent to everyone who registered next week. And if you want to stay connected with RespectAbility, I invite you to sign up for our weekly newsletter on disability inclusion in the entertainment industry, and a link will be put in the chat box for that. And before I introduce my wonderful panelists, I do want to address a few things that Ollie said that have changed since he recorded that amazing introduction. I want to acknowledge that as of yesterday, there are now actually 27 million cases of COVID in India. And I would also like to take the time to acknowledge my fellow Vietnamese brothers, sisters, and siblings, as they fight COVID as Vietnam has seen the worst and largest outbreak that they have seen to date with over half of their cases having occurred in just the past month. And with that, we have an amazing group of panelists. So I'd like to take this time to have all of them turn on their camera so I can introduce them to the world. Hi everyone. So we have Ava Rigelhaupt, who is a writer, actress, and autistic advocate. We have Abigail Heringer, who is a fashion and lifestyle influencer, client financial manager, and you might recognize her as a fan favorite on the 25th season of "The Bachelor." And then we have Fatima Liaqat, who is a comedy writer and a 2021 CAPE New Writers Fellow. And then we have Shaina Ghuraya, who is a director and the writer's apprentice at Netflix. And then we have standup comedian, Steve Lee, who I want to give a shout out to because he's currently based in Hong Kong and woke up super early just for this panel, so thank you so much, Steve. And last but not least, we have Kannie Yu LaPack, who is the Senior Vice President of Publicity, Public Affairs, and Social Media at the Lifetime network. And with that, all of our panelists will be back for their various sessions and their Q&A, but first I'd like to ask all of our panelists, with the exception of Ava and Shaina, to turn off their cameras. Perfect. So with that, we will start with Ava. Ava, before you start, can you please describe yourself for our blind and low vision audience, and with the first question, Ava, as an autistic AAPI woman, who is also Jewish and also an adoptee, can you talk about how all of these identities have informed your work?

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Yes. First I'm really excited to be here today. So I'm actually finishing up being a fellow with this amazing company, nonprofit RespectAbility. And starting in June, I will be starting an internship with the Nickelodeon live action casting team. I'm a Chinese woman with long, black hair; now has some blonde highlights in it and bangs. I'm wearing red lipstick, a black shirt with a like asymmetrical neck line, and sitting in front of the virtual RespectAbility background. My pronouns are she/her/hers. To answer your question, the first thing that comes to mind is that my intersectional identity probably informs my life and work even in ways that I don't know when it's informing, you know, subconsciously because the different facets are simply a part of who I am and impact me and how I see and interact with the world, again, whether I'm conscious of it or not. But I consciously know that it informs what type of stories and characters I'm drawn to and write about. Recently, I've been writing a lot about the Chinese adoptee experience that you mentioned. Semi answering Vanni's next question, but I feel like there needs to be more representation in media about Chinese/international adoptees and very, very often transracial adoptee, the transracial adoptee experience. To say it honestly, it's not really blunt, but a lot of our parents and families are white, and not just in America. There are a lot of adoptees actually in Sweden and England. And so this is a very complex identity, and I think we need to see more of it in media. Sometimes we do wonder where we fit in with the AAPI community. And when consulting, I remind studios that autistic people are not just white boys. As RespectAbility says about disability overall, disability affects everyone. And although most of the media shows disabled people being part of the like, being white, that is not the case, and so the representation needs to change.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah. So that was super great. Spoiler alert, Ava I did talk before this panel to go over panel answers, so she does know the next question I'm about to ask her, and you did touch upon it a little bit about to your point, autistic and AAPI representation and the lack thereof. So can you talk a little bit more about maybe perhaps good examples that you've seen of either or both if that exists so far? Yeah, and what can be done to change that?

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Yeah. So yeah, and so seeing the questions for me, like, beforehand is actually a small accommodation. RespectAbility does it for many people, I believe everyone, but for me, I believe as an autistic person, it really helps me get my thoughts together and be concise when I'm speaking to all of you. And to answer your question, I have seen authentic AAPI representation and authentic autistic representation. But like together, no, I have not seen that yet. And I would love to see it. You know, of course, with my consulting, there's some stuff that I can't mention, but I think that more representation, again, of disabled people has to show the multiple intersectionalities of disability and race and everything that affects being a human. As Tatiana Lee, another employee at RespectAbility, and others at RespectAbility often say, I'm not just disabled. For me, for example, I'm a daughter, I'm a friend, I'm a Chinese woman, a writer, a horseback rider, and all of those adjectives also form my identity and who I am. And it's important for the media to show that, to focus beyond just the disability in the stories. And that's why, since I'm the first person, I'm going to say it, take the like leeway to say, that's why it's time to get more writers and professionals, such as myself and the people on this panel, right, in the room and hired. We are capable and ready to create those intersectional stories that we want to see, and to be honest, I believe multiple statistics have shown society really wants to see as well. I had some examples written, but I don't want to take up too much time, of the individual like great Asian American representation a great autistic representation in the media.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah, if you want to share one example.

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: I'll list a couple. So for AAPI representation, I personally like, like "Crazy Rich Asians." "Awkwafina Is Nora From Queens," "Never Have I Ever," and the former "Patriot Act With Hasan Minhaj," oh, and "To All the Boys I've Loved Before" series. Lana Condor is actually a fellow Asian adoptee. And autistic representation, I realize there's a little bit more that I felt like mentioning in the Asian representation than autistic representation because I was very choosy, so like, "Everything's Gonna Be Okay," authentic casting, it's a female on the spectrum, very rare to see still, and "Love on the Spectrum," an Australian documentary series about autistic people navigating dating. Both have authentic casting and really try their best to show the autistic experience from different points of views.

>> Vanni Le: Awesome. Well, thank you so much for sharing all those examples. I'm always looking for new shows, and I love seeing myself and my fellow folks from marginalized communities represented, so very appreciated. Even though Ava and I did coordinate before this, I will say, I definitely did not coordinate Ava's perfect segue about having writers in the rooms over to Shaina. And so Shaina is actually going to be a writer for a show on Netflix. And that was just announced last week, which is super, super exciting and a huge congrats to you for that. So can you share a little bit more about that project and how you hope to implement intersectional storytelling or your own personal identities into the writing on that show?

>> Shaina Ghuraya :Yeah, so I'm very privileged to be in the writers' room at Netflix animation. I'm on a show called "Boons and Curses," which is going to be a series heavily inspired by South Asian mythology, so it's really, truly groundbreaking. So when I first got the job as a writing apprentice, I thought, "Wow, I'm lucky to be here." Right? And the key word that I used was lucky. It's a show inspired by South Asian mythology, and in short, it's a show that I wish I had growing up. But then I was like, "No, I'm not lucky." The reason I have the position that I do is because of hard work, but also because people like our show runners are relentlessly championing diversity and inclusion, so shout out to Jay and Jake. And I'm really in this position because of all the creatives that came before me and paved a path for a show like this to exist, and for someone like me, a disabled Indian woman, to be respected and valued in the writers' room. Also, I just realized that I need to do my description for anybody who's low vision. So I am an olive skinned woman with long, black hair. I'm wearing a black multicolored top with a white wall in the background and a bookshelf.

>> Vanni Le: Awesome. Well, thank you so much for sharing. I think having you in the writers' room is really going to enrich that. Like you said, at first you thought you were lucky and then you realize you did it through hard work. I think the writers' room is very lucky to have you, so that too. Yeah, so going off of Southeast, or sorry, South Asian influences and cultures too, outside of your our writers were in commitments at Netflix, you are working on your own project that is also influenced by south Asian culture. Can you share a little bit more about this project, what compelled you to create this film, and all of the awesome things about it?

>> Shaina Ghuraya: Yeah, so I'm currently in development on a feature film called "Agg," which means fire in Punjabi. And it really centers around this woman who is held captive by her family in a home, and then her family thinks one day they can get rid of her by getting her married off. So having an arranged marriage, right? This is a real issue that people, particularly in the South Asian culture, face, to the point where they have statistics for it in Britain. The forced marriages of people with disabilities in general is very alarming. And so when I created this film, I did it based, kind of inspired by that fact, but also I did it in a way that would provide the protagonist with agency and make it her story and put her at the forefront because all too often, we see films about these issues that pertain to disability, and that person is just like a supporting character, right. We don't get a sense of that person as a nuanced, three dimensional character. And so that's really what my team and I are doing with this film. We're also casting authentically, right, which is huge because again, like Ava said, I never saw myself on screen growing up, right. I'm a little lucky because there was Bollywood, right, and so I at least could see Indian people on screen, people with my same skin color on-screen in big movies. But again, there were no Indian people with disabilities usually in those films. So I'm really hoping to change things and shake things up for the better.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah. That was really awesome. You hit on a lot of really fantastic points, and I'm so happy that you have the opportunity to share the story that is so nuanced, but really isn't that nuanced. It's just a lot of people living their everyday lives and just doing the things that everyone else does. And we need to see that, we need to see that representation, and I want to touch on the fact that you said authentic casting. That is so, so important. Me being an AAPI woman, not really seeing myself on screen. And then I got a question ahead of this panel asking, have I seen representation of ADHD and being AAPI onscreen, and I've not. And I wonder, having been just diagnosed with it last month, I wonder if that would have changed anything. If I would've seen myself represented, if anyone in my family or people who watched that show would have detected and seen those symptoms in me as well. And so I think that's why this representation is so important and to tie it back, like, it all starts in the writers' room, too because that's where it's the room where it happens. I'm so excited that there are two amazing folks like you working behind the camera to make sure that that onscreen representation happens as well. So I have one final question for the both of you. What advice would you give to someone who is in the disability and/or the AAPI community who wants to pursue behind the camera work such as yourself?

>> Shaina Ghuraya: Yeah, so I can take it first, Ava. So I made my first film, "Wheelchair Wendy," on a ridiculously low budget, right. It was in my apartment, it was with dolls, and it was with a dream house. And at the time I thought, "You know, this is wild." I'm at USC, the number one film school, and I'm sitting here making my showcase film... Yeah, fellow U Trojan, Vanni. And I'm sitting here like, making my showcase film that I'm going to show to, you know, 300 people I don't know with dolls and with hardly any budget. And it launched me. That film launched me because it had a good story, it had authentic casting, and it had a lot of heart, and it also like, exposed people to a viewpoint that is so underrepresented, right. And so that's my advice to anybody out there who wants to be a part of this industry. Take it into your own hands, make something small. Nowadays, thank goodness, phones have good cameras. Filmmaking is more accessible than ever now, especially thanks to things like the Blackmagic Collective, right. Where they want feedback as to how to make things more accessible, and they're actively working towards that goal. So yeah, just make things.

>> Vanni Le: Awesome. Ava.

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Oftentimes when I speak amongst California people, I am the odd one out with all the alumni of USC. I went to Sarah Lawrence College, which is in like Westchester, just outside of New York state, but I've heard great things about USC. I keep an eye on that. You never know because actually it leads into what I'm about to say is networking is your friend. So I got started with RespectAbility through someone who recommended me to apply to the lab, and then through this fellowship, I networked and had support and like, real life experience. Through networking, support, and recommendation, I got the next internship. RespectAbility has connections with Nickelodeon. And I also say apply to as much as you can. My little joke is, in my opinion, apply to all the free stuff. Like, don't pay to apply and apply to the stuff that if you get in, they pay you, but that's just me. And you will get rejected a lot sometimes, but it's a marathon, not a sprint to get into the industry. And it's also really important to have a support system such as the people at RespectAbility, such as my mom and my family and my friends, who sometimes might not understand quite what I'm doing, but they really champion that, you know, the next step is working for me. And I have two things that might sound contradictory, but I hope I have a little time to explain. So one goes along with it, so know what you want to do and go after it. Don't be wishy-washy, right. So if you want to be a TV writer, aim for that, director, aim for that, et cetera. I think one person said this kind of, but, not here, but you don't want to wake up years later, it doesn't matter what industry, but that you find yourself on a path from your first job you took just to get your foot in the door, et cetera, but you wake up and you realize you don't want to be on this path anymore, and it's harder to turn the ship around. So in my opinion, have your eye on the prize, especially as someone in the disability and/or the AAPI community. Like, put your energy where it matters for you. Nevertheless, my second thing is be open to the path changing. People sometimes say they love their job and they never imagined themselves being in it. So don't be so strict on your plan, and this is me, someone who loves plans, that you pass up on opportunities, you know. So keep one eye on the prize, but keep one eye on glittering opportunities that you have no clue where they might come from and what they might lead to. And that is my advice.

>> Vanni Le: Thank you so much for that, Ava. That was really helpful, too, 'cause I know being autistic, a lot of times, this being a very, very social and an industry that is pro extroverts, that can be very difficult. And to hear you talk about networking plus the other things that you have found that worked for you that might not work for everyone else, but things that you have found I think are really valuable, so thank you for sharing that. And with that, I'd like to thank Ava and Shaina for their time. Unfortunately, Shaina is unable to join us for our Q&A at the end because she is too busy kicking ass and doing super awesome things at Netflix, but Ava will be returning at the end for our Q&A. So as a reminder, please put your questions in the Q&A box for any of our panelists. And with that, I will ask Steve and Fatima to come on. Hi Fatima. Hi Steve. Thank you so much for joining. I am very excited to have the both of you, both having a comedy background. So we're going to shake things up, make it funny, but, like, no pressure too of that too. So we will start with Fatima. So this past year, you, alongside your writing partner, who I think I saw is attending, so I'm totally throwing them under the bus, were chosen to be CAPE New Writers Fellows, which is super prestigious and amazing fellowship for AAPI writers, where they have the opportunity to workshop and pitch their pilots. So can you share a little bit more about your experience doing that, and also speak a little bit on the importance of fellowships for diversifying the talent pipeline?

>> Fatima Liaqat: For sure, Vanni. First, I'd just like to say I'm a Pakistani American with short, straight black hair, and I'm wearing a white t-shirt with a gray and white background, and my pronouns are she, her and hers. Yeah, so in just a little tidbit, CAPE was amazing. It was an amazing experience, but to kind of understand what it meant to me, I'll like give a little more background about myself. So about five years ago, I had moved to LA and I was working at Buzzfeed as a video producer. And that was going all well and fine until I got really sick, and I had to actually leave LA and pursue treatment for a chronic illness that I had developed. And at that point, I really had stopped, you know, working on my passion. I'm a writer director, but I really could not physically direct anything. I couldn't physically show up to any kind of production. So what I did and up doing was writing with my partner, who is also my writing partner, Kyle, and we wrote a killer script. That we could do. So that is actually how I got into CAPE with just a really good pilot. And then from just getting into CAPE, my confidence just shot up because even though I felt like because of my chronic illness I had had to take a step back, CAPE put me right back into the game. Like, we met producers and managers and execs, and were able to have like, extended conversations with them and really like, build a connection with people in the industry. And from kind of the heat that we got from, CAPE heat being a good thing in this case, my partner and I were actually able to get repped by a manager. In fact, that happened like last week. And it's all been a whirlwind since. Like, we're just so lucky to have gone through CAPE, and it's been really, for me as someone who took a step back because of a disability I have, being in CAPE has really allowed me to feel like I'm kind of right where I'm supposed to be. Like, I didn't, I wasn't, you know, taken back too far. So yeah, it just meant a lot to me. And I'm still kind of processing. It ended, I think in April, so, you know, it's been pretty, pretty amazing.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah, that's really amazing to hear, too. And I believe from there, you were also able to secure representation, is that correct?

>> Fatima Liaqat: Yeah, we're now managed by Kirsten Jacobson at Good Fear, so yeah.

>> Vanni Le: That's I know something that is so difficult to get, especially for the disability community, so congratulations.

>> Fatima Liaqat: Thank you.

>> Vanni Le: That is really, really awesome to hear. And with that said too, shifting gears a little bit too, for those of you who didn't know, this month is also Mental Health Awareness Month. And I would be remiss if we did not talk about mental health and how, unfortunately, it is still so taboo to talk about it in a lot of AAPI cultures. So Fatima, in your opinion, what do you think needs to happen to break the stigma of mental health in the AAPI community and pave the way for more authentic stories of AAPI and mental health?

>> Fatima Liaqat: For sure. This is definitely above my pay grade, so I'll answer it in just my experiences and how I feel like I have broken this stigma within my community in a very tiny way. So kind of my approach to this was I, you know, I'm, Pakistani-American, I grew up in a family and in a community where I knew people had a mental illness. Like, you know, there's mental illness in my family. And it's kind of a thing that we all generally, in very, very general terms acknowledge and maybe talk about, you know, with our families or community, but for me, it was really important that I go ahead and get a diagnosis for my own self. So that's kind of how I started my journey is in college, I went out and got a diagnosis. And from there on, I think it would have really helped that once I, you know, revealed my diagnosis to my family and my community, if people were supportive about that and not dismiss it. Like, this is not really something that the Pakistani community goes through. This is not something that we acknowledge. Therapy is not something we condone, or medication is not really something we grew up with, and so we don't support that. And so I think when it comes to breaking the stigma around mental health in general, I think that the way things were, specifically talking about the AAPI community and for me, the Pakistani community, we kind of have to look beyond the way that things have already been and think about what the future can hold. So that's how I've personally dealt within my little journey with it. And I think as far as paving the way in terms of the industry, it's like, it's very important to me to use my mental illness as a strength. And I really think of it as a strength in the writing room, in any project that I'm working on. It's like, you know, my neuro-typical counterparts will have their strengths and I will have my own. So like we need to have all sorts of representation because it creates for a stronger outcome and a stronger project. So I have started to be more vocal. Like, this is my first industry panel, and it's about having disability. And so even though I in some ways have the privilege of having, you know, two invisible disabilities, I could not talk about it, I think part of breaking the stigma is, for me, is to speak on my invisible disabilities and speak about my experiences and let people have the opportunity to be my ally and say, "Hey, what can I do? How can I support you?" So, yeah, I hope I answered your question.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah, that was amazing. The way you answered it did not suggest that it was way above your pay grade. I feel like we could have an entire breakout panel just on this. So thank you so much for sharing. Leslie put it in the chat earlier as well, but Fatima wrote a really beautiful self-reflection and touched upon mental health on this as well. So if you haven't read that yet, I would recommend clicking on that link and saving it for later. I really resonated with it, also coming from first gen immigrant family, also having an invisible disability that is semi-related to mental health, having been misdiagnosed as anxiety disorders in the past. I think it's really important to keep talking about it to break that stigma, and it's okay to do all that. That's what the support is there for. And I will join you in breaking that stigma to say that I went to therapy this morning, y'all, and then I came here and I did an awesome thing. So thank you so much for kicking that off, Fatima. And now I will move on to Steve, who, like I mentioned before, is joining us from Hong Kong, but has worked in both the US and in Hong Kong and other countries in Asia. So can you, Steve, talk a little bit about your experiences doing stand-up as a comedian in both the US versus when you perform in Asian countries? - Hi, good morning first of all. Good morning from Hong Kong. And first of all, I just want to describe. I'm a Chinese American man. My pronouns are he/him/his. I'm bald, wearing a black shirt, and I have a form of disability is a form of Amyoplasia. My joints is tilted when I was born, and my muscle strength is about half of most able-bodied man. And so answering your question, the most different is accessibility. So a lot of Asian countries, depends on where what city, what country you're talking about. In the United States, there's a law, it's called the Disability Act? Oh, sorry, can you correct me? - I believe you're referring to the Americans with Disabilities Act, Is that correct? - Yes. Yes. So it's still a new concept for most countries in Asia. And I live in Hong Kong, and Hong Kong is supposed to have that kind of a law. So unfortunately, a lawsuit is very expensive in Hong Kong. So a lot of people just, you know, they can't hire a lawyer. So for example, I have a friend, he's a wheelchair user, and one time he interviewed for a job, and the office is very tiny, and he couldn't even get into the office for the interview. And the ladies was running that small company just look at my friend. It's like, what are they going to do, right? It's like, my friends, like, "Hey, I am here for the job. Like, I think I'm qualified." But he can't even get into the office here. And my friend was so mad, and he went home, he called the, Hong Kong, has like a disability office, and the person jot down the notes, right, and then the office call him back probably eight to nine months later and said they couldn't find enough evidence. So this is pretty much is what people with disability face in Asia. And Hong Kong is already pretty advanced because they at least have such a law and they have government officials who actually take care of these kind of complaints. And for me doing stand up, there is like a nightclub that they have English speaking comedy almost every Friday, and there's a very steep stairs. And I walk with crutches, and I can picture if I have to use a wheelchair, like, there will be no way I could walk down those stairs and perform. And also throughout, I remember even in a United States, there were stage that is so high I had to on the ground level that's different than other comedian because, you know, standup comedy has a lot to do with live atmosphere. And when I have to stand differently than the other comedians, it's kind of weird. It makes the whole thing awkward. Like, I have jokes to prepare if I had to get up like slower than other people, I'll pretend I'm really tired and pretend that it would take me like a few minutes just to get up. And it's like, "Goodnight, everybody. That's my act." And then I pretend to walk off stage, and people will clap and laugh, but it's like it's part of what, you know, performing live is like. And in different venues, like, you can never know what's going to happen. So this is the kind of thing that a comedian with disability have to face every single set.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah. Like I talked about being in the room where it happens and where the decisions are made, but when the room isn't even accessible for folks, how are you able to get there? So thank you for shedding light on that. This is, unfortunately...

>> Steve Lee: Can I add like one minute of that following up what you said?

>> Vanni Le: Yeah.

>> Steve Lee: One of the comedians troop I was with in the Bay area, in San Francisco, and one of the organization want to put up a fundraisers show for people with disability, and the venue they book has no wheelchair accessible elevators or things like that. Like, think about it. (Steve chuckling) Like, this is in some ways sad, but it's hilarious at the same time.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah.

>> Steve Lee: And it just like, people just never thought about it.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah, like this is, unfortunately, you're not the first comedian with a physical disability to tell me this. And it is really unfortunate that you can't even be in that room. Before you even in the room you're made to feel like you're not supposed to belong there, and that really sucks. So for all of y'all, long shot, but if anyone here is an architect building a comedy club, listen to Steve's words. So long shot, but not sure if anyone is out there. But that being said, touching upon comedy and moving away a bit from the accessibility part, but just talking about disability in comedy. I know that disability and a lot of other really sensitive topics, I feel like people have a lot of difficulty or are weary or feel uncomfortable talking about it in a comedic setting. But with both of you having comedy backgrounds, how can people address disability in a comedic way that isn't really making fun of it, but is really using it as like a defense mechanism or just a coping mechanism? So can you both speak more on that from your own perspectives? Steve, since you're already unmuted, do you want to go first?

>> Steve Lee: Can you repeat again? Sorry.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah, how...

>> Steve Lee: Do you want me to answer that question first?

>> Vanni Le: Yes, yeah.

>> Steve Lee: Okay, okay. Basically, interestingly, one reason why I choose comedy is because my disability is actually my strength. It's like my superpower here because comedy is about something that doesn't sound right, the situation isn't what everybody expected. And especially when you are an underdog, this is actually a strength to make fun of yourself and earn, let's say, understanding or earn sympathy. Or you are the heroes in comedy when you have any kind of shortcoming. So actually in a way, for example, if people don't understand too much about disability and once I'm able to laugh about myself, people was like, "Oh yeah." It's like for some reason you make people laugh, and people would have a feeling towards you that's like, "Oh, that guy's my friend." Yeah. You know, that guard will come down, and it's like, "Okay, yeah, I can to talk to that guy. He's just like an ordinary person." It's kind of cool, you know? This is one reason why I'm still doing comedy is actually it's like a form of education to people I encounter.

>> Fatima Liaqat: Yeah, so I guess I'll give my approach to comedy. I guess there are two rules that I apply to my disability that I applied to my queerness, to my race, to like any part of me, really, when I write comedy. The first rule is just, would this make us other people in inside group, like whether that's race, religion, you know, citizenship status, whatever I'm talking about that's, you know, one of my identities, would that make other people within that group laugh? Because I'm generally writing for other people with disabilities or other people that are immigrants or other people that are minoritized in some way. So like when I'm writing a joke that's, let's say, about me growing up in an immigrant family, I'm thinking about, "Would this make other people who grew up in an immigrant family laugh?" I'm not really thinking about what people outside of that group may think of the joke. And I think that approach at least keeps me centering the people that need to be centered. It's not always foolproof, right? Like, something that makes somebody with a disability laugh maybe not make somebody else uncomfortable, but at least you are considering the people that need to be considered there. And then the other rule I just have when writing is, I think it was Ava who said this earlier that, you know, your disability kind of permeates through your whole life. It's not just one moment or one action or one decision. And I think of that when I write, I'm kind of thinking of a person as a whole. How does their X identity affect them throughout, let's say, the pilot that we wrote? So I'm not thinking about, "Hey, here's where we mentioned their disability or their mental illness, so we need to really hit home how this is affecting them." Like, I'm thinking of let's bring it all throughout everything so that nobody's looking at one moment and saying, "This is where we need to really represent." The representation should be throughout. So yeah, I guess that's my approach to, you know, writing about my disability or writing about disabilities in comedy.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah, that was a really great answer. Thank you so much for sharing. But yeah, you really hit a great point is that the representation really should just be there. Like, I don't think it should be there in a tokenizing way. It shouldn't be stand out. It should just naturally happen from the lived experience of the writers or just because it naturally happens that way. Like, I think something that in the past three years with this, like, the surge of AAPI representation in media, something that I've really appreciated is a lot of times there are scenes where they're talking to the family, and there's just a ton of food on the table. And I know a lot of, in AAPI cultures, that's the way we show love is to feed each other, make sure, like, have you eaten yet, like, that's a phrase that I'm sure a lot of you would resonate with. And to really see that just like, in the background or just as a backdrop I think really resonates and is really awesome, so thank you for sharing that. Thank you to both of you. Both of you we'll be back for our Q&A. So as another reminder, and I will keep saying it, please put your questions in the Q&A box. And so for now, before we pass it on to our last two panelists, we will be taking a short video intermission that was done by Sophie Kim, who is an actress from the "The Healing Powers of Dude" and also a fellow disabled AAPI. So take this time, go drink some water, take a break. We are not in the business of making you sit and stare at a computer for a really long time on Zoom and making that inaccessible. So stand if you are able to, stretch, whatnot, and we will be right back.

>> Sophie Jaewon Kim: Hi, my name is Sophie Jaewon Kim. I'm Korean American and I also have congenital muscular dystrophy. You might have seen me playing Amara on The Healing Powers of Dude on Netflix. I'm a freshman in high school. I'm 15, almost 15, I'll be 15 in July, so I'm a cancer. I actually got a pretty significant outpour of messages on Instagram. Some are from just fans of the show who are saying, like, "oh I love seeing you," like, "you're a great actress." And those are really sweet. But my favorites are from other disabled kids or adults. The kids will usually be like, "wow, it's like really cool to see someone else disabled in this show and, like, your character was really funny." Or the adults would usually be like "wow, I'm really surprised and impressed that this happened, because I would have never expected to see disabled representation, especially from an actress who's actually disabled." It totally made my year because -- I mean, I expected that to be kind of response, because I know that -- me, I never saw a good representation in TV, and I watch a lot of TV, so like, that would be my response if there was a disabled actress in a Netflix show. So -- that's kind of what I expected, but nothing could have prepared me for what hearing that felt like, and it was just really amazing. One of my favorite movies with an Asian American lead is definitely one that you've heard of, which is To All The Boys I've Loved Before. What I really love about it is, one, that it originated from a book series with a Korean author, so it feels more authentic that way. Two, I just love Lara Jean's character. Her full name is Lara Jean Song-Covey, she is half Korean. One thing that was great about it, actually, is that even though she is half white, they didn't go out of their way to choose an actor who looks like really white passing, which I think is important. It was just great to see a Korean face, and her character is so beautiful. She's emotional and she's caring and she's poetic. I just love how artistic she is, and she has really great romances throughout the stories. Disabled representation is definitely more scarce, but I did see a movie recently called "The Fundamentals of Caring." It has two main characters, one being a boy named Trevor who is, I believe, in his late teens and he has muscular dystrophy. And then this new caretaker that they hire, Paul Rudd. And basically they have a really unlikely sort of friendship, and it's sort of like a buddy adventure comedy. I had low expectations for this movie because of the way that they described Trevor's character, which was very stereotypical. You know, jaded, cynical, really dark sense of humor. I was like, "oh, I'm getting tired of this." But overall the movie did exceed my expectations, because it was pretty fun. And they did have Selena Gomez in it, which I didn't know. And she has -- actually, she has a romance with Trevor, and I was like "wow, they're having a disabled romance." So I was impressed. One drawback was that the actor who played Trevor was not actually disabled, so I wish that that was true. But it's a fun watch if you've got like Friday night. Straight up, what I want to see in the future is disabled main characters. This might seem like a really low bar request, and you might be surprised, but I obviously can only speak for myself. So to be more specific, somebody physically disabled who's a wheelchair user who's the only main character. This is where a lot of the representation kind of gets crossed off the list because, including the other movie I mentioned earlier, there is a pattern of disabled representation taking the form of a buddy comedy where there's the disabled character and their caretaker, or their best friend, or even a romantic interest and they both share the spotlight. I have actually tried to do some research and find movies where there's just one main character who's disabled and they're the star, and really I didn't find much of any. Not any new releases. That's kind of disheartening, so yeah, really what I'm looking for is somebody chronically disabled, so none of that, like, broke your legs and you can't do soccer for a year and then you get healed at the end. Somebody who's like -- who's like me, preferably somebody who's maybe a teen or a younger adult, because I think it's a lot of old guys in wheelchairs. So it would be super cool to see a high school movie or a coming of age starring a disabled character. I could name a hundred films with only one main character. I could name 20 -- more than 20 films that are coming of age high school with only one main character. But absolutely zero of those would fit the criteria that I mentioned. So it's like we don't even get the bare minimum. That's -- that's what I want.

>> Vanni Le: Hi, everyone. Welcome back, and thank you to Sophie Kim for providing that video intermission for us. And now last but not least, I would like to bring forth our last two panelists to the be virtual stage. Abigail and Kannie, if you could both turn your cameras on. Perfect. So Kannie, we will start with you. Kannie and I actually know each other 'cause I previously worked at A&E networks, and Kannie was a really great person who I really admired and looked up to. But Kannie, a lot of our attendees are disabled entertainment professionals who are hoping to break into the industry, and particularly on kind of the corporate side of entertainment. So for you as a female AAPI executive working in entertainment that has a disability, can you share more about your personal experience advocating for workplace accommodations and any advice that you have for disabled professionals who are worried about entering the space and not being met with set accommodations?

>> Kannie Yu LaPack: Hi everyone. First off, I'm a Chinese American woman with short, black hair, against a white backdrop, wearing a blue dress. My pronouns are she, her, and hers, and I'm just wanna say thank you for inviting me to join this panel. I'm so excited to be here with Abigail. I loved you on "The Bachelor." You were fantastic, so I was thrilled to be here with you today. So going into this, so this is a little interesting for me because I didn't even realize having cancer was a disability until you told me Vanni. So this was quite surprising. I was diagnosed with breast cancer following my first mammogram at 40. But I was really shocked by it, but also knew I had a unique opportunity. I work at Lifetime, and one of our big public affairs initiatives is to stop breast cancer for life. We've been doing breast cancer awareness and advocacy for 25 years. So I did feel like to be at any place to have breast cancer, Lifetime was the best place to possibly have breast cancer. I knew they would be accommodating. I didn't feel the need to hide my illness, but I also know that others don't have that luxury and do feel they have to, you know, they do have to battle quietly. So, but on my end, I was very open about my diagnosis. I didn't have a fear of anyone thinking I was going to be incapable of anything. And I was surrounded by, you know, a team of people that really were just so supportive. You take whatever time you need, whatever you need, we're behind you. If you feel like you need to take time off, that's completely up to you. So I never felt like they weren't accommodating. I knew that I had that in my back pocket. But I was determined on my end, just me, being the hardcore Asian that I am, I felt like, well, I'm going to take this a different way. I'm not sick. I just have cancer, so we're just going to power through and just do this. So I continued going to work every day. I'm a mother two. I continue to do the mom thing every day. I would do meetings for my chemo chair, and everyone, you know, we were already starting off, you know, the Zoom sessions, and I would pop up in video and people were like, what are you doing? I'm capable. I'm going to be there. I'm going to come. So again, I just got really lucky that I work at a place that is so accommodating and willing to just let me do my job from anywhere. And this sounds extremely vain, but we work in entertainment, so my biggest fear was really losing my hair. So when that time finally came, you know, two weeks after my first chemo session, I went and shaved my head and decided I just had to embrace this. Got wigs of all shapes, sizes, and colors, because I didn't want to hide fact that I had cancer. I wanted people to know. I almost wore like a badge of courage. So I just had wigs and whatever you can imagine that obviously were not my hair. So it was kind of like a calling card. Like, hey, I have cancer, but clearly here, I'm able to do the job, and I'm going to do it with some flare now, too. So, and I recall my boss telling me at one point, "I'm adding social to your plate." I was like, "Wait, what? Did you forget when I said I had cancer?" And he was like, "No, no, no, no, don't worry. I know you can do this. I know you can do it. You can just take on more." And you know, when he said that to me, it was kind of eye opening. Like, wow, he doesn't doubt my ability, even with this challenge, and it was just another challenge of conquer. So that was really great that, you know, there's people surrounding you that support you and give you their full confidence in everything you do. But of course, whenever I didn't feel well, I didn't have to go to work and it was completely fine. So again, I know how lucky I am to be where I am and have that accommodation. And I wish that everyone could see that even if you're ill, you are fully capable, you might just have an off day. We all take sick days. That's okay.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah, and you brought up really amazing points, too, and we'll get into cancer being classified as a disability in a minute. But something that you really touched upon was just having a supportive work environment that did accommodate you because I am of the personal opinion that the Americans with Disabilities Act is really just a legally mandated way for employers to treat people with just common human decency and respect because, yes, it's accommodations for the disability community, but it's really just providing support. And the fact that Lifetime and A&E was able to do that, and for you to not even process that this is something that is legally required, it's really them just being amazing employers and caring and supporting about you. And that's what we're trying to spread it RespectAbility and do that as well. But yeah, so moving on to, specifically, you touched upon not knowing that cancer was a disability. There are all sorts of different disabilities that I myself didn't know were considered a disability as well, specifically like mental health and anxiety and depression, and actually not even knowing that I myself had a disability until I worked here and learned more about myself as well. So on the topic of cancer, which is, to your point, a disability, and it's often left out of the disability inclusion conversation, which is why it's really amazing and really great to have you on the panel to be able to speak on it. So can you talk a little bit about misconceptions about cancer that you've seen in media? Like, what is the media doing right, and what are they doing wrong?

>> Kannie Yu LaPack: Again, you know, it was a surprise to me that cancer is a disability, and I think that's just awareness and education overall. Even, you know, getting the breast cancer diagnosis, I had no idea how many different types of breast cancer there were. And there are so many different types of treatments, so there's no one size fits all for anyone. So each person's journey is their personal journey. What was for me was not for everyone else. But so for the media, often we just see, you know, when people getting chemo, they're at the toilet throwing up. They're so sick. That put images of so much fear in me. I mean, I think that fear was more than any of the actual cancer and any of that treatment, that fear created by the media. So I want people to realize, you know, again, every person's journey is different, you're gonna feel different, and I can't say, you know, you shouldn't walk in with fear, you should walk in with bravery because you can conquer it. But you know, a lot of it is something you can control with your mind. If you are going to succumb to the illness, for me, I really felt like that really made a difference. I was like, "Nope, not gonna let it take me down. I'm just gonna move on and do what I do because that's what I'm best at." Let's just, okay, here's what we're going to do on this list. Let's check off, and let's keep on going. So I think really, I just want people to realize in the media we are completely capable of everything we want to do. And I think the more images we show of that, of the thrivers, that's really important. And that's not to say, you know, there are people that struggle, and that's absolutely their journey too, but I think that to help dispel some of that fear goes a long way.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah, and that's really amazing, too, to bring up that point is that we really just want to see disability normalized. Like, that's one of the points that we always say when we consult at RespectAbility is if you were to remove the disability from the character, is this character still fleshed out and nuanced enough to stand on their own because their disability is just a part of their identity and who they are. It shouldn't be the center of the story. It's just naturally integrated into this representation. But yeah, so thank you, Kannie. And with that, I will move on to Abigail. So I think Kannie and I are fangirling a little bit in Abigail's presence 'cause we were both big fans of you on "The Bachelor." So your appearance on "The Bachelor," not only just being a fan favorite, but being a front runner and getting the first impression rose, which for folks who don't watch "The Bachelor," is a huge deal and a big indicator that the person is going to be a viable love interest, and that's something at RespectAbility that we always like to say is that we like to see disabled folks earning, learning, and loving, and to see you as a viable love interest is really important, not only for the deaf and disabled community, but also for the AAPI community too 'cause we're also not really seen as love interests in media very often. And just the fact that it's reality TV, too, it's a bit more based in reality, so it's really great to see that representation in that format. So I'd love to hear more about how you felt being on the show, your experience there, and what you've been up to afterward. What has it been like for you since?

>> Abigail Heringer: Yeah. Hi, everyone. Just really quick, my name is Abigail. I'm a Korean American. I have long, straight brown hair, and I'm wearing a white shirt with a brick wall and a clothing rack behind me. Oh, and my pronouns are she, her, and hers. And thank you for having me today. Yeah, so what it was like being on the show, it was really nerve wracking when I decided I wanted to go on just because it was... I, you know, growing up, I didn't see a lot of, you know, disability representation, a lot of people that have my type of situation, you know, being able to communicate vocally with a cochlear implant, just because a lot of times it's very black and white, either I saw it hearing people on the screens or people using sign language. And there just wasn't a lot of people in the middle with this situation like mine, and so it was really nerve wracking deciding that this was something I wanted to do. But I think when I got there, I think one of the biggest beliefs I had was I didn't feel different when I was there. And I think something that I noticed was the more open I was about my disability and just the more transparent I was, I think everyone was really interested to learn more at "The Bachelor." He wanted to learn more. The producers behind the screen were very interested in learning more. And so I think just being as open as I could be about my disability, it really just kind of opened that door to providing that education to the people that haven't had a lot of exposure to that. And I think that's kind of why I wanted to go through this process, just because I think when it comes to, you know, kind of being disabled or having a hearing loss, I think it's just a lack of education, lack of awareness. I think sometimes other people feel awkward, you know, asking questions or just not really sure how to approach it. So I think just the more that we can make it common thing, you know, so that way when the next, you know, deaf girl comes through on a show like "The Bachelor," it's not as, you know, this big thing. Its just, oh yeah, you know, that's normal. You know, there's people out there that wanna find love. You know, it's not this big thing anymore. And so I hope that this is just a step in that direction. And then in terms of what I've been up to, I just, I moved to New York a few months ago, just trying to deal with kind of this lifestyle shift, you know, just kind of being thrust into the spotlight like that, it's something that's been a little tricky. It's definitely a learning curve, but I'm just really excited just to kind of bring people along for the ride and just kind of continue just any education opportunities that I can keep doing just to kind of, you know, make the stigma around disability, cochlear implants, just more of a normal thing in our society. So I'm excited to keep doing that.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah, that's really awesome to hear and to hear that you're doing well and doing a lot of awesome things post "Bachelor." And now I have to put on my "After the Final Rose" host hat, and I have to ask for the fans, are you currently seeing anyone?

>> Abigail Heringer: I am currently not seeing anyone. I am very single still.

>> Vanni Le: You heard it hear, folks. All New York City fans logging in right now, all the people who are going to get this recording after, and all of my friends who are walking, you heard it. But yes, thank you so much. And something that you said that was really awesome was talking about it and a thing something that all of our panelists have talked about is just to keep talking about it, talking about it in order to break that stigma and normalize it. And Abby, I know that you talk a lot about cochlear implants and being deaf on your Instagram and your social media and with disability inclusion language is so important and really to make sure that that is really honed down in the way that we talk about disability, and especially in the publicity world, and Kannie now taking on social media as well. So from your personal experiences in the workplace or just personal lived experience, can you talk specifically on not just why it's important to talk about the stigma, but any tips that you would have on language and talking about disability?

>> Abigail Heringer: Yeah, so I mean, it's really important to talk about it because I think, you know, it is something that does make us different, but I think at the end of the day, it's a normal thing, too. And I think the more we can talk about and have this conversation and make it more aware of the types of accommodations that we need, it doesn't need to be so separated in society, I feel like, just because, you know, on face value, you know, I am the same in a lot of ways, but on paper you know, it's like, oh, she's deaf and has cochlear implant. But I think just moving towards having those conversations make it a more normal thing. That's really positive. In terms of language, what I've found is the more kind of positive and transparent that I can be, and I know it's not always going to be the case, and I know sometimes how I handle talking about it isn't going to be the same for everybody, but I always try to keep it lighthearted. I mean, the first night when I met Matt, I kind of caught just a little joke to say, "Oh, you know, I read lips. Thankfully, you have beautiful lips, so, you know, I'm not complaining." And that's just kind of my way to kind of open the door and just let him know that, you know, I am open to talking about it. You know, I'm very positive about it. So you can ask me anything. This is a safe space. You know, you can ask me the questions that you'd want to ask. And so in terms of language, I think just trying to keep it positive and not look at disability kind of as this negative stigma, but rather, you know, it's a thing that makes us different. We love talking, or at least I love talking about it. You know, please come to me with questions, and I'm happy to answer them.

>> Kannie Yu LaPack: You know, so at Lifetime, we always try to tell stories as authentically as possible. If we don't know the answers, we don't try to pretend and make it up. We're going to go to the organizations and ask the experts for their help and their guide, ensuring we're telling the story the best way possible, as correctly as possible with the right language as much as possible. For example, we're working on a couple projects that involve folks with autism, and, you know, we do not know every single nuance of that. So we look to them to help us ensure that our media portrayal is as correct as it could be. And again, it's having those important partners that are gonna help guide us and make sure we have the best language possible out there. So we're no expert by any means, but if what we can do can help open up more awareness to others, I think we've been doing a good job.

>> Vanni Le: Super shameless plug, Kannie, that is one of the things that RespectAbility does is consult on language at any point of the production, so from the writer's room, all the way to marketing and publicity and language like that. So if you ever need us, you know how to contact me, super shameless plug. But with that...

>> Kannie Yu LaPack: A message in your inbox tomorrow.

>> Vanni Le: Oh my gosh. That's awesome. Thank you. So with that, I would love to bring the rest of the panelists back for joint Q&A. So in these last 15 minutes, so a final reminder, and I'll stop being obnoxious about it, is that if you have any questions for any of our panelists, feel free to put them in the Q&A box, and we'll try our absolute best to get to them. But as we wait for these community questions to come in, I'd like to start us off with one question that I believe Ava would like to address first. But what would you like people to take away from this panel? Like how can people continue to be allies for the disabled AAPI community? Ava?

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Sure. I'm going to like tag along of after Vanni's plug, as I consult with RespectAbility as a female on the autism spectrum on different amazing projects. And so to answer, Vanni's question that she just asked, I really hope that people begin to learn and celebrate the vast intersectionalities of the just as vast and diverse Asian American, Native, Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community, which obviously includes those with disabilities. And the best allies are people who want to listen and uplift others who might be very different than themselves. Xian Horn, actually another wonderful Asian American disability advocate said on another panel that privilege isn't inherently a bad thing. It can be used in a very positive way. And I really want to second that because people with privileges in different areas can help others and make change that in the end is probably better for everyone. And in my honest opinion, additionally, in my honest opinion, like, the oppression Olympics doesn't help anyone. Just because different minorities face different struggles doesn't mean that we can't understand what it's like to be a minority in America. And I think as RespectAbility says, rising tides lift all boats.

>> Vanni Le: Well said, Ava. Thank you so much. Does anyone else want to take that question? Otherwise it does look like we have a couple of questions coming in. Great. Great. So let's look at this Q&A. It looks like Kyle Kubo, unless there are two Kyle Kubo's out there, I believe is pots in this writing partner. So totally throwing him under the bus 'cause I feel like we're kindred spirits now, united by our shared connection of Fatima. With large pushes for diversity inclusion happening now in the entertainment industry, what are some things that you would like decision makers to know as they are considering how to include more disabled AAPI individuals? Anyone can take that. This is a very hard question, but yeah, I'm trying to think of one myself. But it is a lofty question, and a phrase that Fatima said before, well above all of our pay grades, as well. So, but yeah, if anyone has an answer to that, I'm still thinking of my own personal answer as well. Let's see. I think for me, and I can start us off too, is that it's really, Ava said it, everyone else said it, It's really having decision-makers in the room, in the room where it happens. So having people who are writers, and I think that's something that I have to commend CAPE for, that they do really well is that I really think that they have truly done a lot of research in figuring out the key points of where the largest impacting decision-makers are. So I know they have a program for corporate executives, but they also have a program for writers specifically because the writer's room is so important and that's the way that we do it in order to reflect society. And that's just so important. And even you can't get a writer, get, to Kannie's point, get an expert in the room too because we don't know everything, and we're all here to support each other. But yeah, anyone wants to add onto that question?

>> Kannie Yu LaPack: I can add on a little bit. I can add on a little bit to that. So I talked a little bit about our autistic projects that are coming up, and in this movie there's a boy who's autistic. And one of the very first things that we decided to do is we have to cast this as actor who actually is autistic, rather than someone that is going to play autistic. Because why not show how capable this person is in that role, and I think that that's part of the authentic storytelling. And whether or not, you know a project has someone that has disabilities or not, you know, even when we have an Asian-American movie, we made sure to cast people that were, made sure the writers that were, we made sure the director was. So it was just as authentic as we could make it... And that was a collective decision for people at Lifetime. We know how important that is. So it does stem from the top down. You have to get people to buy in to make change actually happen.

>> Vanni Le: Thank you, Kannie. That is really great. And thank you for applying a real life case study that you're working on, too, on that. But again, you know where to find us 'cause we also help with casting. But because you also just answered, I believe there was a question here specifically for you or anyone else who also has insight. Any advice for someone who is a newly diagnosed colon cancer patient who needs accommodations?

>> Kannie Yu LaPack: I would just start talking to your HR, start talking to your employers, and really, for me just being as open as possible. When you're not telling people about anything, they don't even know that they should be able to accommodate you. And it's like, you know, when you put them in that awareness position, that's up to them to rise to the occasion. That's how I really feel.

>> Vanni Le: Great, great. Thank you. And then it looks like there is a question here for Abigail. Erin Silverman is asking, during "The Bachelor," if you have any advice for anyone that might have trouble advocating for themselves, and if you're comfortable sharing, if there was an occasion on production where you did have to do something that you were uncomfortable with.

>> Abigail Heringer: Yeah, so during production, I was really fortunate that I didn't have to do anything that I was uncomfortable doing. I know when my announcement came out, there were some concerns if, you know, that I was gonna get thrusted into like a water situation or a time that I might have to take my cochlear implant off, but nothing like that ever happened. I think producers were very aware about my situation because I was very transparent with them. In terms of advocating for yourself, I know it's easy for me to say, oh, you know, just tell the person right away and be as transparent, but it's not always that easy. You know, "The Bachelor" is really the first time I started doing that, telling people right away, being that forward. But I think what I found really helpful is almost like a buddy system almost. You know, it's just finding someone that you can connect with in the room or in a type of situation, and just kind of voice your concerns to them. Maybe just say, "Oh, you know, I wasn't able to hear this," or, "I need this," and just kind of having the confidence or kind of the buddy system in a way, either it's just to vent to someone or maybe they could kind of help go to whoever, might be able to advocate for you. And that was something I did on production too was I got really close with one of the producers, and so she was kind of my buddy. And so I would kind of go with her with my concerns, if I couldn't hear something, and then she would relate that to maybe the higher ups or so forth. I'm not sure if that's totally helpful, but I've kind of found that that's what works for me if I'm not always comfortable advocating for myself.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah. Thank you for sharing that, Abigail. It really does sound like you just were provided with a reasonable accommodation, and they adjusted based on the something that you needed for support to fully participate on the show, which is I think the same courtesy that we want to see extended across all aspects of community and society as well. So thank you for sharing more about that, so. And then we have a question from anonymous attendee. I have a friend who is South Asian and disabled, who wants to describe South Asian physical features in a novel he's writing and asked how he can do so respectfully.

>> Fatima Liaqat: Cool. Since I think Shaina left early, I will take the resident South Asian question. So this is an interesting question as like a TV writer or a feature writer because I don't often find myself having to describe features unless it's, you know, just like one thing. Like, say it's very important to the character, unless it's very important to the character. So my advice kind of would be, like, if it's important to the character, I would almost use a reference point, like, use a South Asian person that, you know. Like, you know, Bollywood has countless references. But if not, like, I would also say that... That, god, I lost my train of thought. I'm sorry. I was like, looking at the questions. Physical features in a novel he's writing... Yeah, I don't know. Like, it's really hard for me to say 'cause I would only say it unless it's really relevant to the character because the great thing with casting is you kind of have an open door, or at least I think of it as like, leave the door open as much as you can because you know, so many actors are trying to break in. So I don't know. Does anybody else have like a answer for this potentially?

>> Vanni Le: Well, I think something that you talked about that was really great was using a character reference as well, or just casting someone in, well, this is a novel, but in the case of a film, you wouldn't have to worry about a character reference if you cast it authentically, and that's really why we really emphasize that. But especially for a novel, yeah, to have a character reference of someone who does have the lived experience of having a disability too. And I would like to think that this in the film way, also translates over to the novel side too, is that a lot of times, like, the way that a wheelchair user might transfer to different locations is a very specific nuance to them and part of their lived experience. So to have that reference and to know and better understand what it really looks like coming from someone with that lived experience is really important. So it's tying it back to what Kannie said earlier about having experts because I think the character reference is kind of like an expert, too. So thank you for sharing that, Fatima. And so it looks like we have one last question. What helped you most going through dealing with stereotypes of people? I feel like Ava answered that a little bit earlier about things that worked for her, but if anyone else has anything to add about maybe stereotypes that you've seen about your own personal disability, or even just being part of the AAPI community and how you've been able to find support or solace. All these questions. Y'all have such good questions that are like, way above all of our pay grades, which is why this panel is an hour and a half because there's so many great things that we can talk about. And I think I can go first too, is that I think a lot of stereotypes are rooted in lack of representation because I think when you see on screen just the same representation over and over again, that is not fully exhaustive of all of the breadth and the diversity of all of our different respective communities. I think that's what leads to stereotypes. Like Ava mentioned that a movie that has great AAPI representation is "Crazy Rich Asians," and I personally agree with that. I think it's a really funny movie. I loved it. I hadn't seen a really good rom-com in a long time, but I also recognize that like, "Crazy Rich Asians" is just it. That's just a fun rom-com. It's not supposed to be representative of the entire Asian community, but I think when you project ideals of what the Asian community should be onto that movie, that's when folk will be disappointed, so I think you remove that. And since then, I've seen a ton of content that does fall into the "Crazy Rich" stereotype, and I personally like them all. I would like to see more diversity too, in that as well. But Steve, you unmuted yourself, so it looks like you might have something to add on, or was that an accident?

>> Steve Lee: Yeah, one of the beautiful things about live events is people, you know, don't go out anymore, and they can just sit behind the screen or computer, but once you go to a live event, especially after a show, if they like you, they like your acts, you're face to face with somebody, let's say, if I do a show in Kansas, which I have done, or a small town somewhere they don't even have, you know, Asian person there, is not striking for me, but it's really striking for a lot of people who live there who actually see not just an Asian person, but an Asian person with disability, who is capable of making them laugh or just so-called be their friends or hang out with them after the show is pretty amazing. Like, a lot of them have probably never would encounter one or a few, very few Asian person in their life. So I think there's a lot of beauty in not just watching TV, but like actually, you know, have people go to live events and actually go out and meet people who are very different than you, or you or the person who actually go out there and meet people who are actually very different from yourself. There's like, there's both direction. It goes in both directions.

>> Vanni Le: Yeah, that's really great. Thank you, Steve, for sharing that, too. But we are out of time, so thank you so much to our panelists and everyone who tuned in. As a reminder, if you would like to stay connected with RespectAbility, we do have a weekly Hollywood inclusion newsletter that you can sign up for. So we announce our initiatives, but also our partners too. So we like to promote and amplify the work of CAPE, Define American, and all of these other amazing organizations that I did not mention today. And also one last shameless plug is for our next virtual panel, which is happening next Friday, June 4th, which is celebrating disabled LGBTQ+ voices in media, so there is a link in the chat. If you are unable to catch it, it is on our website. Or if you sign up for our newsletter, the link is there as well. And I want to quickly end with a another message that I did see that was specifically for Abigail was thank you so much for being an amazing representative for people with hearing loss. I have a cochlear implant, do not sign, and I'm Asian American. I was crying every time you were on because I never see people like me in the media. Thank you. I like, I'm going to get emotional, too, because all of you here today are really paving the way for more intersectional representation. So thank you so much for joining me. Thank you everyone for being on a panel and speaking on a topic that is so near and dear to my heart and just to join me in celebration and inclusion of all how diverse our community is. So have a wonderful day everyone, and thank you again.

>> Fatima Liaqat: Thank you, Vanni, for organizing this and reaching out and asking your wonderful questions and just being a wonderful person to know. So thanks so much for that.

>> Vanni Le: Much love.

>> Kannie Yu LaPack: Thank you so much. Wait for that email in your inbox.

>> Vanni Le: Yes, I will look out for it, so thank you.

>> Kannie Yu LaPack: Bye, guys.

>> Vanni Le: Goodnight everyone.