>> Matan Koch: Good evening and welcome to our event, "Rising Stars." This is really going to be a moment where first, you're going to get to experience the different waves of talent that RespectAbility is privileged to work with in our speaking and training bureaus. And then we're going to introduce for you a new resource to help everyone become more inclusive, that being our new Jewish inclusion toolkit. And it is free for everyone, but we're also going to make sure that anyone that registered for this webinar gets a copy sent right to them make it even easier. A couple of technical notes as we get started. Number one, you will notice that we have sign language interpretation, and if you have trouble seeing the interpreter when we put up the shared screen, be sure to pin him and then you will be able to see him. Number two, you will note that we have closed captioning available for this event. If you click live transcript at the bottom of your screen, you should be able to view the captions. Now there will come a time a little later on when we're having a panel discussion. I am going to start by posing actual questions to the panelists, but then you'll note there is a Q&A box. So if you have a question that is not one of the ones that I have posed to the panelists, with what time we have left, we will open to questions from the audience. Now, without further ado, I would very much like to introduce our opening artist Erika Abbott. At just 45, Erika Abbott made a name for herself with her award-winning poetic memoir Porgy's Revenge. Tom Hanks and the late actor Olivia Dukakis were early supporters of Erika's unique poetry and storytelling style. Today, Erika is quickly becoming a prominent speaker on poetry, art, epilepsy, and redefining what it means to be disabled in society. Diagnosed with epilepsy, discalculea, and mild cerebral palsy as a toddler, Erika began her advocacy in early life as the ringleader of the disabled posse, a small group of children with varying disabilities at her Montclair, New Jersey elementary school. Erika continues to enlighten others as she shares her journey as a woman, a Jew, a poet, and a disabled person, with sharp wit and a unique perspective. Erika, will you share with us your poem?

>> Erika Abbott: Sure.

>> Matan Koch: Jake are you bringing up the text so -- or -- how are we doing that?

>> Erika Abbott: I thought it was going to be in the chat -- ah here we go.

>> Jake Stimell: It's in the chat box now.

>> Erika Abbott: Great.

>> Matan Koch: Okay.

>> Erika Abbott: My -- first of all I must dedicate this to my grandmother Francis, who gave me a solid foundation in my Jewish education. My Jewish education started at three and a half years old with names like Golda Meir. My grandmother made sure that I was woke to Israel and her enemies. My Jewish education continued to flourish through stories around the dinner table. Is anyone at temple shocked by your disability? No, because I am not your mitzvah project or your Hashivenu. I am my own Moses.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you Erika. That is -- that's deep and for us to ponder and, you know, anyone who would like to check out more work by Erika, you can certainly get yourself a copy of Porgy's Revenge. I believe Jake already put the link into the chat. And I'm sure that you will enjoy it greatly. We are about to transition into the panel portion of the discussion, but before I introduce the panelists which -- it'll be really exciting to do -- I wanted to take a moment for both reflection and remembrance, because as this event shows, there's a lot of great talent associated with RespectAbility: speakers, artists, panelists of all kinds, and contributors to our newsletters. One contributor that we were blessed to have as a part of our newsletters, Carol Gould, actually wrote for us on the topic of living with a terminal illness. And sadly, she passed away this morning, so I wish to honor her memory and say [Hebrew] blessed is the true judge, and to recognize her among the shining stars of talent in the RespectAbility family, and now turn us to those that we have with us today. And so I'm now going to introduce the rest of our panel. Justin Borses is a college student with cerebral palsy. Borses is unsure of where he'd be today without the close friends that he made in Hebrew school. He didn't realize until much later in life, but those people whom he had known since he was two are the closest friends he ever had. They supported him through the journey of cerebral palsy, joining him in his lifelong journey. He has devoted his time to learning broadcasting and writing about sports. He sees the connection between the preparation and he puts into his journalism and broadcasting and the preparation the athletes spend on their game. Broadcasting and writing makes Borses feel as if he is a part of the game. Ava Rigelhaupt is a writer, consultant, actress, public speaker, and advocate for the disability and autism representation in the entertainment industry. Rigelhaupt was chosen to be a Ruderman Family Foundation inclusion ambassador during her senior year at Sarah Lawrence College class of 2020 -- congratulations. Rigelhaupt produced the college's first sensory friendly theatrical performance. She organized and moderated a panel of New York City professionals discussing entertainment inclusion practices with students and faculty, and honestly so much else. If you want to read more about Ava check online on our website. And bringing us to -- last but not least to Aaron Seglin, and I got to say, the most important fact about Aaron isn't in his biography, and that's that when I was 15 and Aaron was 25, we met at Jewish Summer Camp. But he was before that I think even a part of the posse that Erika talks about. So part of what's interesting about Aaron is how he's connected to so many of us, but Aaron is also a full time musician and educator in Portland Maine. Blind from birth and the son of an artist and psychotherapist turned synagogue administrator, Aaron has been sharing his passion for music with the world since he picked up an instrument at two years of age. Seglin was raised by Jewish parents who were very involved in the synagogue and Jewish community in Montclair and South Orange New Jersey. Aaron likes to say that they were always the last out of the Oneg on Friday. And that is Aaron Seglin. I am your moderator Matan Koch. All you really need to know is that I am the vice president of workforce, faith, and leadership programs at RespectAbility, and anything else you would like to know about me can be found online. All right. well this --

>> Aaron Seglin: Well done!

>> Matan Koch: Thank you. Thank you. You know, that's why they pay me the big bucks or something. The is a panel to celebrate the Rising Stars of our speaking and training bureau, and we are doing it in honor of Jewish disability awareness acceptance and inclusion month - JDAIM. So the first thing I wanted to do was pose a simple question to each panelist. What does Jewish disability inclusion mean to you? And having not established an order in advance, I am going to go to Ava to start us off.

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Hi Matan, thanks so much for having me. I want to add a little tidbit -- that for the Ruderman inclusion training, Matan was there, down in D.C. That was the first time I met him, and I had the privilege of meeting Matan in person back when you could all sit around a dinner table and have conferences in person. And it was really cool when I joined RespectAbility, I was like wait -- was that the same Matan? And then I saw him and I was like it is the same Matan! And so Jewish disability inclusion to me means exactly -- at least the first steps is exactly what we're doing. You know, bringing in Jewish voices and Jewish disabled voices from multiple different communities, multiple different backgrounds, professions. And have our voices added to the overall narrative of what it means to be Jewish, to live in America, and the various intersections that go with that. And to be able to, you know, have other people hear, learn and even ask questions about various intersections and communities that perhaps aren't always shown in the overall Jewish narrative on a daily basis.

>> Matan Koch: Fantastic. Next we will ask Justin to expand on the same question -- or expound, I guess, is really the word on the same question. Thank you Ava.

>> Justin Borses: So inclusion to me is really about being able to go to events and experiencing those events with people. You spoke about my bio, Matan, the fact that the group that I most connected with is my Jewish friends from Hebrew school. And to me, inclusion is about being able to experience life with them. And because of that I think -- you know, for my Bar Mitzvah example, I was able to carry the Torah, you know, through the synagogue in my wheelchair through the help of my, you know, clergy and my friends and family. And so inclusion to me is being able to experience the full breadth of what Jewish religion can really be about, especially growing up as a kid, to the best of my ability, which would be, you know, with modification and stuff. But it's about being able to experience as many events as you can within that time frame as well.

>> Matan Koch: Fantastic and thank you for that. Aaron.

>> Aaron Seglin: Yes.

>> Matan Koch: Same question. I can repeat it if you really really want me to.

>> Aaron Seglin: Okay, I'm sorry my phone is also talking to me here while you are. But yes, I would absolutely agree that being -- having been blind from birth and gone to public school, being the only -- everybody -- there were other people with disabilities, Erika being among them. But in Hebrew school, for example, there were not Hebrew braille books. But I was in a situation where they made letters out of glue and sand. And of course the thing I didn't realize was that, because of that, everybody was suddenly interested and all these other bored -- 10 or 12 other bored students were suddenly interested in trying to learn the letters or asking me what the letters were, and it helped everyone. So here was something -- and I've tried to use that when I did -- once I realized that happened in other teaching examples that are not even necessarily Jewish ones, but that I've had to get the entire group of people to understand -- there's something different here, and once we focus on it -- everyone benefits.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you Aaron and now it's Erika's time to answer, but just before you start Erika, I noticed Justin's put his hand up. I want to make sure he's okay. Is everything alright?

>> Justin Borses: Yeah, everything's fine. I just wanted to piggyback off of what Aaron said.

>> Matan Koch: But let's let Erika answer and then you can piggyback, how about that?

>> Justin Borses: Sounds good to me.

>> Matan Koch: All right. So Erika, what does Jewish disability inclusion mean to you? We need to unmute you so that we can hear what you're saying, as opposed to just --

>> Erika Abbott: [laughs] I'm horrible with technology. I think for me it's, really more a part of -- okay you can't necessarily -- it's always been hard for me to understand in a certain way, because does it really mean that there's only accessibility up to a certain point, right? So does it mean that -- we can only get into the building, or is it really the intersectionality of, because we're now in this -- because we're now in this wide world global catastrophe, does it really mean that we can go into nature and be heard? Or does theater become more religious? And I would say absolutely, because if theater now becomes religious -- and by the way theater was -- came out of prayer, then I think prayer takes on a whole new accessibility, and that's really what we're looking for anyway. I'm not quite sure that's the answer you're looking for but it's the --

>> Matan Koch: There is no right answer but let me paraphrase for the audience make sure that we understand that -- from your perspective, then, Jewish inclusion is how we connect to the divine, and there are different ways to make that connection, so inclusion is connect -- figuring out where those connections connect, is that where you're --

>> Erika Abbott: Yeah I mean I think -- yes, and let me just expound on that for a minute, because I think for me, not being able to drive myself, accessibility becomes a whole different issue, right? Because I can't drive because of my epilepsy or whatever, and so -- I must find alternative ways to make prayer come alive for me, right, whether that means listening to someone like Matisyahu, or whether that means, you know, listening to or reading Allen Ginsburg, there have to be different ways, rather than just accessibility to the computer, because what if somebody doesn't have a computer? Are they being left out?

>> Matan Koch: I think that -- now I think you you've made clear your point, and so now we'll go to Justin, I think, because you wanted -- you wanted to add a little gloss on Aaron's point, although I do want to remind that we do have a bunch more questions to go through so yeah, a quick response would be great.

>> Justin Borses: I'll be fast. So I was gonna say that that one of the things that makes the Jewish experience so great and Hebrew school so great is, because I was there for so long as, you know, a three-year-old I didn't have to work as hard at accessibility, because they got to know me to a point where they were just okay with it without having to work at it. So I think -- that's another part of the Jewish intersectionality of it, is that when you become ingrained in such a community from such a young age, you don't have to put yourself out there as hard. And for me that was that was something that I really connected with too.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you. So I am going to move us to the next question. Every one of you has some form of art. For Erika, it is your words. For Aaron, your music. For Ava, both your work in various performative mediums, television, stage, screen. Justin, you practice a different verbal vocal art, that of your sports broadcasting. And so the question to each of you -- and each of you will have a different answer -- is tell us how you became an artist and sort of -- the themes and things that you bring to your artistry, with I think a nod and a mind to the subject of why we're here and the audience that we have. And to flip around order, this time we're going to go Erika, Aaron, Ava, Justin, just to give a sense of our order. So Erika, starting with you.

>> Erika Abbott: Well I was actually lucky enough to be raised by my late father who was a producer on Broadway and a stage manager on Broadway. And my mother's an actress. And so I come to the arts very naturally. And one of the things I got to see at a very very young age was Gregory Hines on stage tap dancing. And for someone who couldn't get out of bed without tripping over her own two feet, I really just admired anybody with that ability. Because I went, oh my god. Even though I couldn't do it, I always admire anybody who can. And so -- I also do think that when you're involved in the theater community or the music community or the film community, that it's a much more sort of forgiving community sometimes than, unfortunately, the real world. I don't know if everyone will say that, but it's certainly one of the themes of my life. So --

>> Matan Koch: Fantastic. And I think the order that I rattled off which I've already forgotten [panel laughs] had Aaron going next. [Crosstalk and Laughter]

>> Justin Borses: I think you had Ava going --

>> Matan Koch: Well, okay, Ava, if I have you going next, absolutely. Ava -- my short term memory is terrible. Never get old, that's my advice to all of you. But Ava take it away.

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Yeah, I'm actually happy that I'm going next because my answer really branches off of Erika's answer. And so I came to the arts through theater as well. I was a theater nerd in high school, and I really found that I loved -- I've always, you know, loved writing and I've always loved being on stage. And I think the reason why for both of those things is that when you're on stage or in film, you know, when you're acting, I really love the fact that you get to practice with people. And I love that Erika was talking about how the music, theater, film, you know, the arts world are often more inclusive and more forgiving to different types of people. They often look for who's different, who's going to catch the eye for certain reasons. And so I felt, of course, more included in that section. That was my little safe haven in high school. And I really also loved -- where else in life can you know what you're going to say and do, and how the other person is going to respond? I think everyone, whether you're on the autism spectrum or not, is -- you know, you kind of -- you're going to say something to someone, you're kind of really scared about how they're going to respond. But in theater you know how the other actor is going to respond, and you have that trust between you to play and to try new things. You can be like oh that didn't go well. And so to answer the question, like, what themes as an artist come into my work, it's mainly what has been on my mind recently, whether that is Jewish disability inclusion, you know, depending on how those different things intersect. Since we are talking about Jewish inclusion sometimes I think about stories of being a Chinese Jewish adoptee and those experiences, and mainly a lot of -- and I know a lot of Chinese Jewish adoptees, and a lot of us come -- are Jewish through our families, which are mainly Ashkenazi white families, and that story that often isn't told -- there are a lot of great Asian American stories being told, and I'm really happy to see all the new ones, such as, like, The Farewell, or Crazy Rich Asians, but I still feel that, like, the adoptee story, whether you're Jewish or not, hasn't been told as often. And then through my consulting work and some of the stuff that I write -- mainly recently through my consulting work a lot with RespectAbility -- is authentic portrayals of people with disabilities, regardless of whether they're Jewish, and people on the spectrum, and how Hollywood can continue being better and being more inclusive and asking questions -- why is this character that way? And so I think that's mainly the themes that come into my work in various ways. And sometimes they intersect, and sometimes to be honest I find them a little bit, like, siloed. They don't all intersect with Judaism and they don't all intersect at the same time with disability.

>> Matan Koch: Great and so -- I'm forgetting order again, but I think that now brings us to Aaron.

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Aaron, yeah.

>> Aaron Seglin: Okay. I have -- I've always been I've always -- I have an older brother and a younger sister. And my older brother and I have always -- we always sang together. So I just thought that everyone -- everyone who had a piano in the house just sang. That was just -- I didn't realize we were actually any good. So it just sort of happened. But in terms of doing things and really making it -- just really becoming an artist and a musician who had anything of a Jewish theme, once I got into -- I was told when I was like 13, my mother said oh, there's youth group, and you can sing, and people -- a lot of people play guitar. And I thought "I'm in." And that was a huge -- I didn't realize how -- you know, I just thought a couple people would learn to play, I didn't realize that people loved the idea of becoming a song leader, or just these sort of -- these things. And I didn't do any of that but I learned so much. And I learned how -- just how one can take an idea, like, a vaguely Jewish idea, and turn it into your secular music which I do mostly these days. But the -- what everybody was talking about, just the ability to do something together. I'm in a band and we barely get to rehearse these days for a number of reasons, and being able to just be in a group and make something beautiful that -- any community at its best does is such -- a thing that -- I don't know if I took it for granted before, but it certainly hasn't been granted, you know, a lot in the last couple of years. And it's just had that much more meaning.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you Aaron. And Justin, I'd love if you could answer the same question.

>> Justin Borses: So this is a particularly complicated question, considering my profession. Broadcast journalism and journalism in general is very to-the-point, fact-based. And the hard part about it is that it's very hard to find that lane where you can show artistry within the job, because you're supposed to just present sort of news, or fact-based information, and let readers or viewers say or think what they may. But when I -- what I found within my particular passion is that when I'm on the air, I can finally show off the personality side. When you're covering sports in particular you can -- inflection, tone of voice, you can scream, you can yell. I've made jokes. You know, if we're connecting it to Judaism in some way, the first thing out of my mouth when a basketball is coming directly my head is "oy." That's -- I mean -- I use the yiddish -- every time something's coming near my face. But it can be difficult to do that because when journalism is so fact-based, you know, there's only very little area where you can share an opinion or you can share a belief, or get passionate about something, even if it makes you angry or sad or -- so where the artistry kicks in is when I'm on the air and I can go, okay, I didn't like that play call, here's why. I didn't like the way that somebody referenced something, here's why. Erika and I were were talking before this event started and, you know, we're here as advocates but I'm also an activist in a separate sense. And that's part of it too, you know? If I'm advocating on behalf of people with disabilities, how can I get in front of the camera and say maybe we need some more rights here, maybe we need some more access here, you know, I'm writing a story as part of my school right now that's on that topic. And so that's where the artistry kicks in, is where can you put your passion in front of the camera and go -- this is why I believe what I believe. And there are ways to do it.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you. Now it's interesting, and I think you guys got the questions for this panel from Jake in advance, so you know there are a few more. But I actually want to take us off script for a minute and I would rather instead say the following. I'd like each of you to take a moment, react to something one of your fellow panelists said, and then pose them a question, and then I'd like the panelist who receives the question to answer it. Who feels like they want to start that process? Erika you look excited to do it, but you're muted, so I could be misinterpreting the excitement because of the mute. Still muted.

>> Erika Abbott: Really?

>> Matan Koch: Now I can hear you. [Erika laughs]

>> Erika Abbott: Matan, I knew you were going to do this to me. I knew it, I knew it. So how about we have someone else go first?

>> Matan Koch: All right. Well I'm actually going to start by saying that it is interesting to me, Justin, that you say that you find ways to use the platforms that you are given to advocate for the things that you care about. And so I am going to now say, since you gave an example, I wonder if each of your fellow panelists could talk about a way they use their platform -- not a way that they separately advocate, we all know that you're good advocates -- but the way that you use your artistic platform to advocate. And I think we're gonna -- I'm going to first ask Aaron and then Erika and then Ava.

>> Aaron Seglin: All right. For one thing, I am hopelessly typecast. For anyone else who is also blind, I am not only Jewish, I am -- I'm black and bi-racial I'm bi-racial in America -- that's black. So -- but I try not to be one of those blind piano players, because that's what people expect. So just in terms of being on stage, people expect to see one thing, and I don't do something totally outrageous. I just -- I'm a little different. I would say though that simply by -- by being aware of my own situation, especially when dealing with the setup of -- of a stage, I try to make sure that people understand that it's going forward, whenever you're working with anyone, not just me make sure you don't leave this sort of and that sort of thing lying about where -- because it is for all, for everybody -- just like I said with with learning, as I was learning it turns out that what I needed strengthened everybody. So if everyone is looking out for their -- for your cables, I mean, this is a very limited and very narrow thing, I could talk about you know just having written a lyric or two. But just in terms of being in the room, I feel that -- I have to -- well, that anyone has to advocate for themselves and realize that people aren't necessarily prepped on how to watch out for it, and how to how to do what needs to be done. So they're more professional for having met me.

>> Matan Koch: There you go.

>> Aaron Seglin: And I'm more professional for having learned how to be that way as well.

>> Matan Koch: Well, here's to more professionalism in all things and in all places.

>> Aaron Seglin: Amen. [panel laughs] [crosstalk]

>> Erika Abbott: Baruch Hashem by the way.

>> Matan Koch: To more access and people knowing each other. And Erika, do you have an example where you've been able to advocate through your art during your platform?

>> Erika Abbott: Actually yes. I may shake up your perception of what my quote "platform" is supposed to be. A number of years ago, I had written what I thought was gonna be a one woman show for myself. And because -- because my grandmother was a researcher, she taught me everything I knew. So fast forward 20 some odd years, and I went, you know, I really think it would be interesting if someone like me were to write about what quote "her feelings were" in terms of being disabled in the dating world, and is she really allowed to have those feelings? Will it make anyone uncomfortable? And I think for me, in terms of my platform, it's one of the reasons that I wrote the book that I did, because I want people to understand, yes, I'm disabled. Yes, I'm a poet. Yes I'm -- but I'm 100 other things. So that -- I never want anyone to get this sort of preconceived notion of, oh, she can only do this. Oh, she can only write this certain kind of poetry. And so I think for me it's a very different concept of what quotes people think disability is and I think we really need to sort of use whatever platform we have, whether it's music, whether it's theater, whether it's writing, to shake up those expectations.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you. I think -- that's a great example. And now brings us to Ava, same question.

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Yeah, I like what you said about shake up expectations, and also -- what Aaron was saying about how accessibility can be beneficial to everyone regardless of whether you are disabled. You know, it can make a safer set for everyone to not have people tripping over wires. I was thinking about my answer to this question, and I'm not quite sure if I should answer it now, because it kind of goes into like -- the question that was one of the proposed questions about the red sea that has really beautiful wording. Because in -- that, in my opinion, that kind of answers the similar question. What do you think Matan, should I answer it now, or --

>> Matan Koch: Well, I'm going to pose that question a little later, so you get to decide whether you have something else -- [crosstalk]

>> Matan Koch: That's fine.

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: So I don't sound redundant.

>> Matan Koch: And we were about to come to Justin Borses anyway, and now he has his hand up. But just before you start speaking Justin, I want to give you an opportunity to respond to that question, but then you also get first crack at the next question I was going to ask, which also builds off of the dialogue that was just shared which is that Erika mentioned that, yes, she's a poet, yes, she's a number -- but she's a hundred or a thousand I feel what number she used, but other things. And so you are here, and we've described you as a Jewish disabled college student sports journalist. But presumably, you too are a hundred other things. So to each person as we're looking at and relevant to the discussion that is building, think about one of your other hundred things that is worth sharing.

>> Justin Borses: I would say activist, you know, advocate is actually a different word than activist in some ways. Advocacy is sort of speaking on the behalf. In my opinion, activism is about getting in the room and changing policy. And that's really where a deeper passion for me lies. It's -- where I spoke about, you know, that story reference that I mentioned earlier about getting in front of the camera, to me -- the biggest change comes within activism, and if I can use it within the journalistic world , great. I consider myself a journalist and a sportscaster before I consider myself somebody with a disability. That's just how I live my life. Everybody of course lives their life differently. But that's how the disability intersects too, because I originally didn't have my wheelchair on camera, not because I was ashamed of showing off my disability or living with it. It was more, I felt, out of respect to my colleagues when we were on the air, I didn't want everybody else's attention to be on the chair. I wanted it to be on the content that we were creating. And in that sense I took a step back and I said no, it's okay, the wheelchair -- it's just easier. It's just easier, I don't have to transfer, and people -- people can just make of it what they will. Most people actually support me, it's not a big deal. I was making it a bigger deal than it needed to be. And I just said fine, let's just use the chair. Put the chair in front of the camera, it's another way to advocate too. Show the physical sense of what the disability means. But yeah, activism for me is even deeper which also conflicts with my profession, because you can't really be an activist unless you step back and let somebody else report on a story. And you can, you know, partake in a protest or something like that. But yeah, activism is really rooted, because that's where I think -- where the biggest change for our community comes in is affecting policies and things like that.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you Justin. And so Ava, this question, perhaps, you are in fact so many things, but what is one of them that we have not yet covered here - one of the many aspects of Ava as it were?

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Yeah. I really like that question because RespectAbility, over on the Hollywood consulting side always talks about how disabled characters are intersectional. And you know, we tell the writers rooms, the producers, if you took the disability away from the character, if you took it out, would the character in the story still have a reason to exist? And you know, if the answer is yes, then they are a fully dimensional, you know, 3D character, just like any other character that is, you know, that is not disabled. And -- what was I going to say -- oh yeah I was writing down -- I was thinking about Justin's word play and his different definitions of advocate versus activist. And I wrote it down because I find it really interesting. And for me, I call myself much more of an advocate because, like, in my opinion through my work stuff that I already love actually -- because since I was diagnosed later on the spectrum, through things that I already love -- theater and writing and acting and now consulting and things like that -- improving writing regardless of whether it's about disability, etcetera. Through that work is how I advocate to make change. You know, Gail Williamson -- an agent for disabled actors said once in a different panel I was on, "we don't have to always go out on the street and hold a picket sign, because people let the media into their lives." Right, you turn on the TV and everyone's watching the newest stuff, you know. And through watching that show, maybe you're not expecting, you know -- you're not expecting to learn something, it's just supposed to be fun, but sometimes you do. And people sometimes listen much more to the stories that they're told and shapes ideas. And so through that, I advocate. I hope to make change. And that's -- that's my perspective on that. And I really loved that that insight and so I wrote it down, I was taking some notes. And I guess something else that people don't know about me -- like, one of the different things, is that I'm an avid horseback rider as well. I guess since we're touching a little bit on sports, it's very different sports than Justin probably reports on, but it also reminded me of another panel I was actually on with the USEF -- U.S. equestrian team -- anyway --

>> Matan Koch: United States equestrian team.

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Well Matan remembers it. [crosstalk]

>> Matan Koch: Well I helped put the event together so I -- the United States equestrian team.

>> Justin Borses: I apologize if it didn't come to my brain right away. [laughs]

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: That's okay. And so it's something that I've always really loved and I think it really, for me, actually has helped me learn coordination, because Erika, I can also not tap dance. Trust me, I tried. I was in 42nd Street in High School, and I got the non-tap dancing part. And so it is something that I've always really loved -- connecting to animals and being a horseback rider, and so it's something that, you know, kind of more or less doesn't have anything to do with disability or being Chinese or something, but it's still something that is part of me, and that -- if you ask me at the different moments of something in this moment, you know, that is part of me and something that I could perhaps write on or help people make better for a story or character line. I could do that and it's something that I've been doing for a long time.

>> Matan Koch: Great, thank you Ava. So unless you, Aaron and Erika, have burning desires to speak to this question, we're running short on time and I do want each of you to answer the last question. I want to leave some time. So the last question: Erika ends her poem by, you know, saying I am Moses. And of course we all kind of know who Moses was, the rather famous Jew with a disability, seems to have led a few people to a few places. And one of the more notable things that Moses did was to act as a channel for God to split the red sea, so that, really, the Israelites' existence as a free people could begin. It was really creating a transformational way and mode into change. So what is a way and -- I'd like folks to spend maybe no more than one minute each because we are running a little low on time -- that you have created that pathway forward -- parted the sea for someone. And Ava you had expressed a particular love of this question, so we're gonna go to Ava, then Erika, then Aaron, then Justin. Okay

>> Ava Rigelhaupt: Well when we were in our pre-conversation meeting -- I can't remember who formed it, but I just really love the saying and it brings up a really great image of the red sea parting. And so I am not going to spend too long on this, because I think I kind of answered it with my -- how I see myself as an advocate through my work, through writing different stories or helping other people with their stories, and that's, in my opinion, how I part the red sea, how I try to make change in the industry and make waves. But I also wrote down an interesting thing that in my opinion, you know, some days you're going to feel like you parted the whole sea, some days you're going to feel like you may just like a little part, and some days you're going to feel like it crashed back on you. As some people say, you know, two steps forward and one step back. It's a slow process making change, especially in the industry. And also in my opinion we are not parting the sea alone. It's not just our staff in the water, it's other people also wishing for similar change.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you. Erika, it is your turn to answer the same question.

>> Erika Abbott: Right yeah. I think for me, especially when I was younger, I didn't realize that I didn't have to do it alone, that there -- I mean, I've always had a big big network, but I think in my mind, I was the only one -- I was the only kid like me, so I felt very alone. And so once Aaron and I met, I went, "oh, here's someone else like me. We can part the red sea together." And so through my love of everything theater, his love of everything music, I think it's a real -- I think both have their -- not place because it's too soft a word, but their alleys into advocacy. And so the first -- I'll just end on this note -- the first and last time that I saw anyone of a sexual nature, if you want to put it that way, was in 1986 and it was Marlee Matlin, right, in Children of a Lesser God. And I think for me, because I grew up with Lynne Bold and Jerry Jewel, neither one of them were sexual anything in terms of a role model for me. So when Marlee Matlin came along, I went okay, okay, now this is something I can sort of get my head around.

>> Matan Koch: Great. So that brings us now to Aaron Seglin, with a lead-in like that, there you go. [Erika laughs]

>> Aaron Seglin: Yeah yeah okay. Well let's see. Mine's a bit more just -- in my day-to-day I -- well, in my week-to-week I got a gig -- it's not in the Jewish community but it's a teaching gig. And in a way it's teaching guitar actually, and I'm teaching to communities of teenagers and adults who have -- they've just come -- they're just coming through a family shelter system, they're coming through -- they're coming from mostly Southern Africa. My Portuguese is minimal. But I remembered how to teach from -- how do I teach a bunch of israeli and Dutch kids, you know, with varying degrees of English. And what it does -- it wasn't -- it's not just so much, you know, that they're learning. They're -- it's helping them become -- like, this is going to be yours, you know, whatever else is going on in your life this instrument -- this is going to be your -- your wand. And I always felt that, you know, if I had -- if I could learn something, you know, well enough to be able to improvise, I was happy. That's my skill set. I could do anything, I could just make, you know, whatever was called upon me to do. I could make the world a nicer place and have fun doing it. And that was really -- I think we're all supposed to have fun doing it and that's the thing.

>> Matan Koch: Absolutely. Here's to more fun. Justin Borses, how do you part that sea?

>> Justin Borses: You know, you talk about the red sea and the fact that we're -- you know -- any of us are not in it alone. The real answer is it's about the journey itself. It's about the journey itself. And I can lay my head on the pillow at night and say that what we do here and the little steps we take every day is enough. When my time comes where the red sea closes and I pass on, and I don't have to say that -- that I did it alone or that what I did wasn't enough, because the journey itself is enough. The journey itself with the people on that journey, you guys and many others, moves the needle. And if it moves the needle a little bit before I'm gone, then great. Then that's -- that's what I came on this earth to do. And I think that's what the parting the red sea means.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you. And that's actually a good lead in. First of all, Jake, since unfortunately now I've gotta monologue for a bit just mute everybody else if you could. Because I think you all probably want to know how you can move along that journey, and how you can also join our panelists in your community. And we find in surveys we've done in things that when we ask folks in the Jewish community "what would help you to be more inclusive, to bring more people in," they say "well I don't know how." "What would help me is if someone told me how." So we at RespectAbility, we heard you loud and clear. And we have created a Jewish inclusion toolkit that we are -- we did a soft release at the beginning of February, but we are doing a full release today. Let's tell you a little bit about RespectAbility and why it is that we release that. So RespectAbility is a non-profit organization. We fight stigmas in advance opportunities so that people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of community. We do that by developing leaders. You see four of our leaders on the screen today. We do that by changing attitudes and fighting stigmas, something that was also done today and that Ava talked about even more how we do it through our entertainment work as well, and through changing perceptions on screen. And we do it by advancing opportunities, by promoting best practices, by things like this toolkit that give -- will give you the know-how. Next slide please, Jake. And part of our mission, because we were founded in the Jewish community, but because we seek the inclusion of all faiths, is that our -- is that our faith inclusion efforts are working to create a model for all religions, as faith and faith-based organizations are an important part of the fabric of many lives. RespectAbility works to equip Jews with disabilities and Jewish organizations with the capacity to ensure interested Jews can participate in and contribute to all aspects of Jewish life and organizations. And to do that, we strive to work in partnership with established organizations and change makers to build disability inclusion. And hopefully, by using our toolkit, you will be that little bit of our partner. Next slide please. So the toolkit has lots of good stuff in it, but with at it's heart -- it has basic inclusion tips, resources connecting disability inclusion to Jewish values, tips for hosting in-person, virtual, and hybrid events, strategies to avoid common inclusion pitfalls, tips on lexicon, and holiday specific resources. Are we put the URL right up there on the slide. You can download your free copy at RespectAbility.org/Jewish-Toolkit. Next slide. We really would like to thank everyone that had a part, and you can see in this paragraph the whole team that helped us to put it together. But even more than that, the reason that we're able to do this work and the reason that we are able to make it available to you for free is the generosity of our donors. And the donors supporting our Jewish work include Vivian and Raymond Bass, The David Berg Foundation, the Beverly Foundation, Shelley and Ruvan Cohen, Judith Creed and Robert Schwartz, the Einstein Sim family, Cheri Fox, Daniel Goldsmith, Aline and Leo Jacobsohn Foundation, the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles through a cutting-edge grant, the Jewish Venture Philanthropy Fund, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, the Ann and Andrew Tisch foundation, the Glazer foundation, and so many others, including individual donors. We are also grateful to our board, and most importantly, we're grateful to you. Now you can drop the slides, Jake. Most importantly we are grateful to you, because honestly, we could create all the materials in the world. If you don't go out and use them, they're just materials. And now I think Aaron is going to take us out with a song. Take it away Mr. Seglin. Well, unmute, and then take it away. All right, that's the voice we're looking for. So we're not going to see him, but we'll hear you, that's fine.

>> Aaron Seglin: No, no, you will -- hold on.

>> Matan Koch: Okay.

>> Aaron Seglin: You will see me. Sorry about the technical difficulties there.

>> Matan Koch: Ladies and gentlemen, we're experiencing technical difficulties, do not adjust your screen. All right take it way, Mr. Seglin.

>> Aaron Seglin: This is called -- this is an original composition, it's still in progress. And it is called Long Spoons. [singing and playing guitar] Once there was a soul who was righteous. The way he walked this day today And god said cause you're true, I'm gonna reveal to you the next world on display. Out one window was a celebration. People singing songs and eating good food. Out the other was the mother of all altercations and all together different moves. But they all had long spoons. Try to feed each other. Long spoons. Nobody's alone. Long spoons. Open up here comes another. Long school. Btei Avon. The voice said what you see before you. And our soul said there's something wrong. They've all got spoons in their hands, the flawed plans. The spoons are all too long. And god said no, that's part of the system. Yeah that's one of its beautiful keys. And I tell you it works, if you don't act like jerks, and find ways to share your abilities, and use your long spoons. Everybody feeds another. Long spoons. No one eats alone. Long spoons. Open up here comes another. Long spoons. Btei Avon.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you and what a -- what a message to end this on, that we indeed have the spoons to feed each other, to help each other, and to grow. Thank you to all of you who teach us this lesson through your art every day. I hope that each of you sees the toolkit that we're sharing as yet another long spoon that you can use in helping all of those around you and yourself. And I wish you all the very best of evenings, and will now ask Jake to end the live broadcast.