>> Graciano Petersen: I have the distinct pleasure of making sure that I introduce our next panel. I am -- we're going to have a wonderful conversation coming up being led by our moderator Lauren Appelbaum. We're gonna -- switch our focus here, right? So we were just talking about getting jobs in the policy space. I think now it's time to talk about getting jobs in the entertainment and news media space. And who better than -- to lead this conversation than our very own Senior Vice President of Entertainment and News Media Lauren Appelbaum? So Lauren, I will turn it over to you to introduce your panelists and allow you to take over.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Excellent, thank you so much Graciano. It was really wonderful learning about all the pathways that exist for folks looking for work in government, public policy, and civic engagement. And in the next hour we're going to focus on jobs in the entertainment and news media sectors. So this might include, for example, folks who might be interested in journalism roles covering government and politics. Like we did previously, we will be taking questions from you during the second half of the panel, so please add them to the Q&A box to do so. A little bit about me. As Graciano mentioned I'm the SVP of Communications and Entertainment and News Media at RespectAbility. I'm a white woman with brown hair wearing a black top and pink blazer. My pronouns are she and her, and I have the background behind me that all the RespectAbility staff have, the gray background with our logo in yellow and white advertising our upcoming 10th anniversary. As an individual with an acquired non-apparent disability, reflex sympathetic dystrophy, I've had the opportunity to kind of work at the intersection of disability, employment, entertainment, and news. And been able to conduct trainings on the why and how to be more inclusive and accessible. Before I introduce the panelists I'm going to let you know a little bit about my background that is pertinent to this panel. My first job out of grad school after receiving a Master's degree in broadcast journalism was in news media as a political researcher with NBC News. I will go into a little bit more detail about that later when we talk about news media. And then after working in a variety of communications roles for nonprofits and for-profits, I joined RespectAbility a little over eight years ago, where I'm honored to oversee our initiatives to create equitable and accessible opportunities with studios, production companies, and newsrooms, with the goals of increasing the number of people with lived disability experience throughout the overall storytelling process. This work helps increase diverse and authentic representation of disabled people on screen, with the goal of leading to systemic change in how society views and values people with disabilities. I'm now going to get a chance to brag a little bit about some of our wonderful panelists. I'm going to invite Lawon Exum to turn on his camera. Lawon is our Entertainment and News Media Director at RespectAbility. He's worked in the entertainment industry for 30 years, starting in music at XM radio, now SiriusXM, and Arista records. He then worked at Sony Pictures Television and 20th Century Fox Studios in marketing, legal, and content creation. His projects have included some shows you may have heard of, including Breaking Bad, Empire, and This Is Us. Throughout his career, he's realized about the importance of mental health and wanted to do something about that. A desire to bring change to the entertainment industry, especially around mental health, is what brought Lawon to RespectAbility. And among his responsibilities, he works with other disabled creatives in helping to advance them their careers. Eric, if I can ask you to help Lawon get his camera on, that would be wonderful. And Isabella Vargas is our Entertainment Media Coordinator at RespectAbility. She is a filmmaker and community organizer whose experience with multiple disabilities and love for advocacy has led her to RespectAbility. A first generation graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, she earned a Bachelor's degree in filmmaking. During her time in college, her main interest was celebrating underrepresented experiences, and her work has focused on identity and the nuances of navigating immigrant spaces as someone with neurological disabilities. She's worked in a bunch of different areas of the film industry, from development to production, and ultimately wanted to figure out ways to kind of combine that with disability advocacy. Her ultimate goal is to be a disability advocate in the media space, while also cultivating the tools necessary to craft compelling stories about people who identify as both disabled and BIPOC. And last but not least, Samuel Krauss is our Entertainment and News Media Fellow, and participating in our National Leadership Program, which was mentioned a little bit earlier, and you'll get chance to continue to learn about that in the third panel today as well. Sam's a TV comedy writer and a gay disabled and wheelchair using man who focuses on telling young adult comedies featuring disabled protagonists. He's been shortlisted for shows on Netflix, and has completed several mentorships --completed a six-month mentorship with Lara Spotts through Eryn Brown’s 1 in 4 program. He also was named as a Fellow of RespectAbility's Entertainment Lab, and his latest pilot was announced as one of the winners for WeScreenplay’s Diverse Voices and has garnered numerous awards. So I'm going to now give each of our panelists an opportunity to give their visual descriptions. Lawon, let's start with you.

>> Lawon Exum: Hello. My name is Lawon. I am a black male, curly black hair, I have brown glasses -- optical glasses on, a beige shirt with black flowers, and my pronouns are he and him.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Isabella?

>> Isabella Vargas: Hi everyone, my name is Isabella Vargas. My pronouns are she/they. I'm a light-skinned brown woman with a beige shirt and wavy brown hair with gold lined glasses, and it's a pleasure to be here.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: And Sam?

>> Sam Krauss: Hi my name is Sam Krauss. My pronouns are he/him. I am a white man with brown hair. I'm a power wheelchair user, and I'm wearing a nasal cannula.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Thank you all. Our first question is going to go to Lawon. Lawon, you are based in Los Angeles and have had a 30 plus year career in the industry. Can you share with everyone, how did you get your start and what advice do you have for folks looking to gain employment -- and I know you've worked in both the music industry and in the studio system, so if you could kind of share a little bit about both of those.

>> Lawon Exum: Well, my journey was very interesting, because I've always known that I wanted to be in the entertainment industry since I was a child. And when I attended College I went to college with a communication and radio and television major. And how I got my start was interning. I interned at XM radio -- it was the first internship program at XM radio in D.C. And I did that while I was attending University of Maryland -- my last year of completing my Bachelor's degree. I interned in the music department -- in the the jazz music department. And what I did was just networked - as soon as the first day that I got there I started to network. And while I was interning at XM radio I also had another intern on the side which was Arista Records. And I traveled from Maryland on Fridays to New York to go to Arista Records to do my internship. And they were shocked because they were like, "wait a minute: you don't live in New York?" And I -- when I went and interviewed for the internship, they were like -- I was like, "no I don't. I don't -- I don't live in New York. I want this intern." They immediately said because you drove just for this interview and we did not even realize that you driving from Maryland, we would give you a job as a -- we would give you an internship as an A&R repertoire, which at that time was representing and going with the different artists that they let me work with to promote their albums. I worked with different artists such as Usher, I interned with the The Neptunes, P!nk, and I was able to be with them with doing their journeys when they go to different TV stations at the time. And so while I was doing that, before I graduated, both of my interns hired me. And once they hired me, I was like okay, I can't go to New York and be working in Maryland at the same time. But luckily, XM had a station office in New York, so I was able to do the two, because they combined with each other. I was doing radio and music and I just felt like I was on top of the world. And unfortunately at the time during I was working, that's when computers and Napster and all that started coming into play. And unfortunately I was let go. But I still had the passion of being in entertainment. So as I was working in and interning in my different XM Radio and Arista Records, I was also making relationships with people at studios and at -- just different places that I would always go to when I was interning. And so I flew out to Los Angeles on a vacation. And what happened was I sent out my resume to all the studios in L.A. And I was fortunate enough to be able to work at Sony Picture Studios. And that was the best thing for me because, number one, they knew because of relationships that I built at my previous jobs. And so during that time I went into working at the studio not knowing what to do because they wanted me to be a TV legal assistant, and that was, like, totally out of my range but I was like, you know what? I'm gonna take that opportunity because I could be able to learn everything I need to know about contracts and everything -- regarding film projects and TV. And I took that position and soared, because again, when I took the position, I was always networking and establishing relationships within my department and outside of my department, to the point where they would know me as Mr. Sony due to the fact that just because of the way I conduct the business and the way I have done my job. And from there, I worked in the TV legal for a long period of time, and also what happened was my work preceded me, and they wanted me to start working in the marketing departments. So I started working in the marketing departments and working in legal. And then marketing -- I just started networking again, and I was able to be the person who could be on red carpets and interview people for the TV premieres and movie premieres at the studio. And from there, I was still just doing what I love to do within the in the entertainment industry. And then I was able to continue my position and go and work in other studios. And at studios I was working at at the time, I was able to work in the business departments. And that led me to be able to network and talk to people that were working on sets and working on the different projects that I was assigned to. And I became a guru of social media and just promoting different TV and film projects, and that was just -- that was great for me. And I mean, that prolonged my career for, like, 20 years in entertainment. And it was all built on building relationships. And at that point I felt like I was going to a ceiling. And I just could not go any further. But I still knew I wanted to work at entertainment. And that led me to go back to school. And I went back to school and I received my Masters in Communication and Journalism, which led me to be able to work in entertainment still. And from there, I started working for the news stations within the area and doing entertainment and media. And my advice to people who wants to get into the entertainment industry: intern. Because that helps you build relationships, and it helps you see what you may want to do. Because again, my journey was so all over the place that I just thought was gonna just be in entertainment and just work and just be able to promote people and that would be my job. Then I learned that there was so many other avenues that I could go in: marketing, producing, social media promotion. And I just say get an internship or try to work on a project or work with people in the field that you may want to get into within entertainment, and build relationships, because you never know the person that you're working with may be your boss or may be someone that want to hire you. And that's the advice I would give people who want to start out in the entertainment industry.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Thank you so much Lawon, I think building relationships is a theme that we've been hearing throughout the day yesterday, as well as the earlier panel today, if people are looking for -- big things to do, figuring out ways to build relationships. Isabella, I'm gonna pass that next to you. And you've found success working kind of more in the independent area, working with independent creatives and nonprofits. And -- I think you're lucky -- I mean, you get to work on our team together, which I know I count myself as lucky -- that you've been able to kind of find a day job that's very much in line with your creative goals, but also gives you the time to pursue additional creative pursuits on the side. So I know a lot of people working in this industry often have more than one job. So what advice do you have for folks who are kind of balancing their creative desires with the need for a regular paycheck?

>> Isabella Vargas: Yeah, that's a really good question and I think it's really hard to find that balance. I think as someone with a disability, I also kind of had to learn really early on that I had to prioritize, like, my health first and, like, maintain my peace. And so through a lot of experiences with burnout [chuckles] that involved juggling multiple jobs, I realized that stability was kind of key. And I think a day job provided me with that stability. And maintaining that stability actually, like, helped me advance creative pursuits, because I was able to kind of maintain my health and take care of my peace. And so I would say my biggest advice would be to take care of yourself as much as possible, and find something that kind of promotes kind of self-care and care of your body. And sometimes for some people that means stability and a paycheck first before kind of diving into multiple pursuits. I really had to kind of take a step back and kind of needed to see what's best for me to prevent burnout. And once I was able to do that, then I was able to kind of, like, throw myself into multiple things at once, because I was able to kind of find that balance. And I'm now able to say okay, this is pushing myself too far, this is maybe risking my day job -- I'm able to find that balance now, and I think knowing what's best for me and my health first is kind of key. I also think for some people with disabilities, living with a disability and dealing with health stuff becomes a part-time job. So people don't always expect it, but I kind of naturally have learned to be able to balance multiple responsibilities at the same time, because that's what disability sometimes does for you. So finding the perfect balance, for me personally, has been really helpful. I hope that answers that question. It's a -- tough question, I know, like, a lot of people struggle with it and it's a constant struggle I think, so yeah.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: You're absolutely right, it is a tough question. And I think -- you addressed -- it can be -- the answer might be different for each individual. But -- things like self-care, figuring out a way to take yourself, and learning the balance, I think, is really great advice for folks. So Sam, you're a writer and you're not based in LA or New York, where people think that -- if you want to work in the entertainment industry you need to be based in. But you've been able to find success while working remotely. So can you talk about what it's like to kind of live in the middle of the country and work in this industry?

>> Sam Krauss: It is -- it's weird, it's wild, it's -- I never thought that it was a possibility. But I -- what I come to realize after getting to know professional established TV writers is that most of the meetings are via Zoom, so it's not -- it's -- I had always imagined -- I've been around for a bit, maybe a decade. And I got an agent really early. But it was a regional agent, and it was -- we did several things, because I was also a performer. And so I learned a little bit, but I really -- the message was very clear. I needed to live in LA to be a performer -- and to write. And that was years ago. However, I think it was with the pandemic and just the way the world's shaped is suddenly -- the doors have opened up and people don't meet in person. They're more apt to get on a Zoom call with you and -- and I'm talking about network executives, development executives, ABC, NBC, whatever, whoever you need to talk to, it's so much more easier for them to schedule a Zoom coffee. And so -- navigating living in Louisville and being a writer right now has been -- wonderful. Now I will say this, it's also communicating, like, what your abilities are. So I always say I go between Louisville and L.A., so I'm based in Louisville, but I can work in L.A. I just -- right now now my home is -- my permanent residence is in Louisville, and so communicating that is really important. But there's certain kinds of jobs as a writer that you don't need to work in L.A. for. If there's assignments where you're writing a script, like a feature script for a production company, you don't need to live in L.A. for that. If you're -- you get hired to clean up someone else's script, you don't need to live in L.A. for that. So there's lots of options for folks that are even more limited than me in terms of travel. And so yeah, it's just -- a lot has changed since a decade ago, and I'm very happy for it.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Sam, if I could ask you a follow-up question, this is -- this came in through the Q&A from someone else who also lives -- in a small town. Any tips on kind of breaking into it? So how did -- how did you kind of start?

>> Sam Krauss: Well I always say education, but I don't mean -- I don't mean formal, because I -- everyone's got different access. So I just mean -- learning how to write, getting some kind of education. So a lot of my connections -- and I cultivated my craft through my education, but if you maybe can get a screenwriting book, and then join a screenwriting group, that's great. But once you got that down, to get started, a really great way is to start applying to programs. So RespectAbility's got programs, there's just -- all of the programs, all of the contests. Each program and contest has a list of, like, judges and sponsors. And so you may not, like, win, but if you get placements, you can reach out to the judges, the jury, or -- the sponsors of that program, and say, hey -- I saw you on this list. My script made quarterfinalist or semifinalist, would love to connect. So that's a way to do it. For me it was just -- getting into these programs -- and then also connecting through friends of friends -- it's yeah it's -- but yeah, start at the programs. Try that.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Excellent, thank you so much, lots of wonderful advice. Lawon, you mentioned this a bit when you took us through your career trajectory, but as we're trying to address all different areas that someone might work within the entertainment and news media work, can you share a little bit more if someone's interested in kind of a news position -- whether they want to be an on air reporter or a producer behind the scenes -- when it comes to someone wanting to work in a news position?

>> Lawon Exum: Yeah that was very -- I have to admit that was a very hard career to kind of get into. And I found the way that -- the easiest way to get into it is join journalism clubs, like, National Association of Black Journalists, I was a member of. They have National Association of Hispanic, they have all nationalities and genders of journalism programs. And they always have career fairs every year, they have career events. And that's when I began to start networking. But I -- I joined National Association of Black Journalists when I was in undergrad. So each year they have a convention. And the convention consists of all different news media, public broadcasting, you name it, from around the world come to a city. And it's like a weekend of networking. And they have -- days of career fairs where you can -- they have like 50 or 60 stations there, and you go, and you network, and you interview. You bring your reel, and you can bring -- whatever position that you maybe want to get into, they have that options, because they send you information way before the convention starts to let you know what you can sign up for. But they always had a career day -- two days out of the long weekend, which starts on Thursday to about Sunday or Monday. And that's where I would say that'd be a great start for people to get into the news media, because that's how I was able to start my career in news media and journalism.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Wonderful, thank you. And I mentioned that I also worked in the news media area, so I'm going to take a moderator moment -- and share some advice from my perspective as well. So I always thought -- when I was in high school and college that I was going to go into entertainment media. And then while in college, I started doing a lot of work in newspaper. And I kind of was then, when I was debating going on to grad school, I was figuring out a way to kind of combine my interest with, like, television production and journalism -- newspaper journalism. So I pursued a Master's degree in broadcast journalism, kind of combining a bunch of different interests that I had. And I was in a program with most of the folks wanted to be on-air reporters. My desire was to be behind the camera. So I like to joke that my first job was very similar to folks in entertainment media. It was logging tape -- and so -- and I got a -- pretty much a dream job -- dream job right out of graduate school, and that was all through networking and making connections. My grad school program involved the last six weeks being in Washington, D.C., where folks who wanted to be on camera had internships with stations -- a lot from, like, the middle of the country, but, like, representing D.C. news back. And then -- I had an internship in kind of production. And there were a bunch of different speakers who would come for evening events, and I had the good fortune of sitting next to a woman who, at that point, was a producer at CNN in their political unit. And she told me that she had started as a researcher and basically worked her way up. And I just really loved how she talked about her work, and I basically said I want to be you. Like, can you help me, like, figure out a way to, like do a similar path? And so unbeknownst to me -- she was in a relationship with someone at NBC News. And we ended up -- I ended up getting a call from NBC saying, hey, I hear you're looking for an entry-level position. And -- when I later asked, because my interview was very very short, it was via phone, and I said hey, do you want me to come down to -- I was in Philadelphia at the time -- and I said do you want me to come down to D.C. for an interview? And the next thing I know, I was getting offered a three-month temporary position. And so -- and when I later asked about it -- they're like, "well we knew you had the technical skills" because of where I went to school. So like -- so sometimes networking with other folks you went to school with is a wonderful way, because they know what you were taught. And then -- sometimes you can tell very quickly in an interview if someone's just going to be a personality fit as well. And I must admit that I -- I wanted that job but -- I was given advice to take another job that I had been offered. I had been offered a producer -- to produce the morning and noon news out in Kalamazoo, Michigan. And that would have been a two-year gig. And so people are like "three months, two years." But at the time, I was not married, I was not responsible for anyone besides myself. And so I said let's take a gamble. And so my three-month position ended up turning into a two and a half year position. And so I worked in the political unit at NBC News in D.C., and -- it was taking risks. And I know at some points in your career you can take risks more than others. But really goes back to -- just having a conversation with anyone and everyone you could, and then following up later and sending the resume over. And sometimes it'll work out in wonderful ways like this one did. Other times -- you've made a contact where you can go to and ask them for advice at future times. But -- you really never know -- forget which one of you said it but, like, you never know who could end up being your boss, who could end up, like, being the person to help you get the position. So really talking to everyone. And now, in the work that we do, we find it super important that -- if we're talking to an assistant for an example, or a coordinator, treating them the same way that you would treat an executive. And I have to tell you that some folks that we met -- when we first were starting this work at RespectAbility -- six years ago were assistants, and now they're running programs. And -- so the fact that we treated them with such respect then has made a difference now. So some other areas of -- tidbits of advice. And I'm going to go to Isabella for some more. So Isabella, like Sam, did the RespectAbility Entertainment Lab. And now, Isabella, you are helping to organize cohorts of future lab Fellows, which is wonderful to see. And you've been helping -- dozens of disabled creatives find success. What are important skills that you think it's important for folks wanting to enter this space?

>> Isabella Vargas: Yeah, I love my job also. [chuckles] But I think when it comes to entry level jobs, you'd be surprised by how many skills are transferable. I think before I came into this work, I did a lot of nonprofit work, and I realized that there's a lot of transferable skills in there -- once I had sharpened my coordinating skills, my organizational skills, and my administrative skills, it kind of really made a difference in the work I did in the entertainment space. I would say that studio assistant jobs, internship jobs, a lot of those jobs rely on a professional ability to take really good notes at meetings, the professional ability to, like, calendar in meetings really well, and to just kind of listen and pay attention when needed. And I think those skills can actually take you pretty far. I would say in a lot of the workspaces I've been in, just being able to like take notes, listen well, and do my job while also kind of just being kind to others has helped me secure other jobs, because like everyone has mentioned, networking is really important, and in that same same vein soft skills, I think, are also key in this industry. I used to work as a script reader and in development as well, and someone told me that just be a nice person and do your job and you'll get pretty far, and that sounds very simple but it's actually very key -- just being nice to everyone and genuinely being interested in what they're doing and genuinely wanting to help out is a really great skill to have. And it will kind of eventually help -- a lot of the people I've met, it's because I've been able to form relationships with them, because I've been able to kind of stay in contact and stay in touch and be nice to them basically. So I would say sharpening -- for entry-level jobs, organizational skills are key. I think coordinating, organizational key skills, and just also being professional in the workplace is a very important skill to have. I also was surprised to see that skills I had in these office jobs also translated to production spaces. I think, like, being able to take notes here at this job has helped me when I'm a production assistant -- because that way I'll listen to people, I'll pay attention to them, I'll take notes, and I'll just help out on set. And a lot of these skills are transferable and can work in different areas in this industry. Yeah, I would also say --last thing -- being able to multitask is also very key. A lot of these spaces are very busy, not just on set but, like, I guess like when I worked at studios or within a lot of internships, being able to like be flexible and adaptable is also very important.

>> Lawon Exum: I have to -- oh.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Go on.

>> Lawon Exum: I have to piggyback on what you said, Isabella. The key thing is being nice. When you get these positions the -- especially the entry levels, you never know who you are talking to. I mean, for -- again, like, for my journey, the entry level positions that I had, I was having lunch and sitting at lunch tables with the presidents of the company and, like, executives, not even knowing, but having those conversations. Then when they walk away, someone saying, do you know who you was having lunch with? I'm like no. They're like, that was the president of marketing, or that was -- and just being nice got that attention from someone who thought of a job that I might want or what have you, and said you know what, I was talking to this guy at lunch, and he's telling me what his skills were, and telling me what he does and what he would want to do. Why don't you ask him or contact him and see if he'll be interested in this position? So I have to say that being nice is definitely a key ingredient to entry levels and moving up in this entertainment journey.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Lots of great things mentioned there. Lawon reiterated -- just being nice and -- having that open conversation. Also heard about -- learning to to multitask, taking good notes, being able to calendar meetings, and having organizational skills. So things that you could have learned in another industry -- outside of entertainment or news that can definitely transfer in. And if you're like huh, where can I get experience to take good notes? You can turn on any TV program, anything that you find interesting, and just start taking notes. You can watch a press conference and take notes. You can read a newspaper article and then -- distill notes. So some of these things, if you don't have access to internships, or are working another full-time job and don't have the time to necessarily learn some of these skills there, there are ways that you can do this on your own time at home. There are free classes you can take to learn how to do Outlook, for example, to be able to calendar meetings and such. So I know we -- we've been talking quite a bit about internships, which is a wonderful pathway for most, but for those of you that can't do internships, for time or money or any other reason, there are other avenues that you can be pursuing as well. So something that we all have had to to deal with at one point is disclosing our disability. And when do you do it, how do you do it, and such. And Sam -- you typically do a lot of work via Zoom, so it's a very different type of environment where people might never actually interact with you in person. So what advice do you have for individuals, like, on when and how to disclose your disability?

>> Sam Krauss: I love to, like, rip it off like a bandaid. That way I can -- like, it's really not -- it's -- for all of us that are disabled, it's our every day, but for someone else, of course, if it's their first time meeting you -- just very quickly I'll reference my wheelchair or my cannula, which is actually new to me, I just started wearing one, I think a month ago. So just sort of letting them know that -- that's what's there, because -- you can't really see my wheelchair. But I find the most useful way to do that is, like, just in the greeting of my email, I'll often, like, send them my bio or, like, a link to it. And in my bio, it lists me as a gay wheelchair using man. So it's quite -- upfront, but it's also designed to be that way. For writers specifically, for TV writers, often -- those sort of specifics are incredibly relevant if they need someone with a certain Identity or experience. So I put it in my bio, I link my bio, and if I'm not sure if they know or -- I'll reference it -- like, oh, I've got to roll my wheelchair across the room for a second. And then -- they sort of see.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: And then Lawon, you have a non-apparent one. So, what advice do you have from that angle?

>> Lawon Exum: I say -- I have to be honest with you. Be honest. I will -- tap into an experience of mine, and I'll be very transparent about it. Your mental health is everything, and I feel that if you don't feel well, and if you're quote unquote "sick," that's a reason to call out of work to get your mental health together. And I've always been transparent about that in all the positions that I've had throughout my career. And so at one point when -- and one of my bosses was like, "you're calling out?" And I was like, "yeah, I'm taking a mental health day." And they were, like, "you're not sick." I was like, "no, but I need to self-care so I can do my job very well when I come in." And they really acknowledged that, and they were just like, "wow." That makes me think about -- other people who come in to work and may not feel mentally ready to go into work but they do it anyway. And so that opened up conversations for other employees. And I am a true believer: self-care is the best care. If you can't take care of yourself, you can't do justice at a job, you can't do your work. So I say that to say be open and also take care of yourself mentally and physically, because that's how you get sick. So I just say self-care, and be honest. It's nothing -- about being honest, I mean, no one can say anything if you're honest.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Thank you, and Isabella, did you want to address this one as well?

>> Isabella Vargas: Sure, everyone has said really great things. I think it's really hard, especially if you have a non-appparent disability, because sometimes people won't see it coming. And it's -- can lead to pretty bad experiences, but I've learned to, just like Lawon said -- just like Lawon said, to be honest and to also kind of know my rights and my accommodation needs. That way if I need an accommodation, I can just be honest upfront, tell people what I need and how I can best do my job. And usually, if you're working for a really great team in a really great place, then they won't mind and they'll give you what you need to do. Sometimes it kind of works as a litmus test as well, because if someone's reacting -- negatively to your disability, then maybe you can pause and think about if that's the best space for you to be in. But I think being honest and also kind of knowing what you need to do the job you need to do is the best thing to do. I was on set the other day, and I tend to dislocate my joints a lot. And I dislocated my knee. And at first I was really scared, to be honest, but I kind of just sat down and told them, like, just give me -- just give me 30 minutes and I'll be okay. And it worked out just fine. I think just being honest and upfront is the best thing to do in every scenario, and knowing your rights as well as a disabled person. I'll throw it back to you, Lauren.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Thank you. Lots of different advice, but the the theme of being upfront and honest is very much coming through from all three of you. And mental health was mentioned, and so this question is going to go to all of our panelists as well. How do you take care of your mental health during the application process when you're sending out application after application, and receiving rejection after rejection, because that's happened to all of us. What are some ways that you take care of your mental health during that process? Who would like to go first?

>> Lawon Exum: I will probably go. I have to go first on this. I would have to say music. Music helps me as -- I mean, before I even got this position, I mean, as they previously said in the panel, I mean, you keep getting nos and you keep getting rejections, and it's just like, "will I ever get a job?" And it could put you in a dark place. It really can, especially in times we're living in right now. But what I saw, for me, was music calmed me down, and let me know that okay, I can do it -- I can do it again. I can push that button and send, send, send, send, send this resume. But for me, it's music, and knowing that one of those nos are going to turn into a yes. I know -- I know it sounds very hard. It's hard to do, I mean, I know. But for me, what helped me during those rejections and during those times where months went by -- sometimes six -- more than six months went by, I wasn't getting no response from anybody. I would always go to music, and music would help me.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: That's great, thank you.

>> Sam Krauss: I got a tip for writers. If you're applying to programs, competitions, or fellowships, and you're like, oh no, I think -- like, let's say you get rejected or you don't make quarterfinalists -- I would say the very next moment or day start writing immediately. Just write another script or -- draft the same script. Whatever you want to do, but like, write immediately, because your life and goals should not stop if your application gets denied or -- you don't get forward momentum, because there's so many different programs. So many -- so many different competitions. Many different jobs. So just, like, start that awesome pilot script that you've been wanting to write immediately after. And it makes -- you just sort of forget it, and then you get to go after the next. So yeah.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Excellent, thank you. Isabella, is there anything you'd like to add?

>> Isabella Vargas: Yeah, what Sam said is great advice. I would also add -- I learned to not take it too personal, because sometimes they reject you for reasons that are completely out of your control. It can not be a fit for a thousand other reasons. And I think that's true also for, like, film festivals or writing programs too -- You never know why they didn't choose you. I also like to commiserate with other people, because then I've noticed, like, oh, other people have been rejected too, it's just kind of part of the process. And you can cry a little bit, and then kind of move on. Yeah.

>> Lawon Exum: I also look at -- I also look at it too, if I get that rejection email or don't even get a response, I'm like, they don't know what they're missing. Or I look at it like -- it's their loss, not mine. I mean sometimes I didn't -- I'm not gonna lie, sometime I'm like, oh, but -- like you said, I mean, if you're a writer, keep writing. I mean if you are someone who is -- want to be behind the camera, keep doing shots, keep doing those different little short excerpts that drive that rejected you, make that drive push you to do something better that next day or that next hour. But let it be a push for you. If you get that rejection, let it be a push like, okay, I'mma keep going.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: I want to remind folks in the audience that if you have questions, you can put them in the Q&A box, and we'll be kind of addressing them in a moment as well. And while we're waiting for more questions to come in, I have one other question to ask to all the panelists. So we started the NDEAM Summit yesterday with a session on networking, and I know Lawon was a panelist on that one as well. So I'm going to ask everyone here to just give one short tip on how do you specifically kind of begin networking, and we actually have a question in the Q&A that goes along with this, that -- what are, like, the best ways that you've done with networking, in terms of groups, LinkedIn, in-person events and such. So how do you kind of begin that networking, and where do you best -- where do you best go to network?

>> Lawon Exum: I would have to say for me, I'm -- I have to admit I'm a people person, so I love to go to events. I love to go to events to network. It may be an event for journalists, it may be an event for entertainment per se, a TV opening or what have you. I start there, and I always go in with the intentions of I don't know who I might meet, cause I mean, I have to admit, when I first started out this business, believe it or not, I was shy. I was definitely shy. But I had to learn, like, how to push through that. And one person gave me this advice. They said go into a room and try to meet at least one or two people that you would probably never talk to -- just go up to them and just start talking or introduce yourself. And that's what I started doing. And -- as each event kept going in my career, I got more and more confident to be able to go into a room and be able to conversate with different people and introduce myself. Just start out by introducing myself, and introducing what I do. And then that conversation would go on, and then that network would go on, and then they might -- let somebody pass us by and be like, this is Lawon -- and this is what he does. And that's how I began my network. But I also would say a little tidbit for me as well, because being in the entertainment industry, I like to dress, I like fashion. So I would always try to wear socks that people can conversate about, because I say that was a conversation piece. So I would be like if you cross your legs when you're at an event and they see your socks, then someone would come up to you and say "I like your socks," and that's when I would start networking. So I would have my socks be my conversation piece.

>> Sam Krauss: I wanted to add -- and I love everything Lawon's saying. And I think -- so figure out what you want to do, and then Google search who's doing what you want to do. So what kind of -- I'm going to talk about it as a writer, so -- because it'll make it simpler for me. But figure out what you want to write, figure out who's writing what you want to write, Google search them, look if they've got an Instagram, a LinkedIn, a Facebook. Reach out to them via that sort of those platforms. Just say -- who you are. That's another thing -- come up with a three liner of who you are, what you do, and then invite them for a Zoom coffee -- just saying you'd love to learn more about them and what they do, or something along the lines of that. And I've done that before. That's a great way to start. And I would make a comprehensive list of people, of showrunners, of -- look up who's their staff writers. You can watch a show's credits to get that. And yeah, try that. And then there's obviously IMDB Pro that you can purchase that gets you certain emails. It doesn't give you writers' emails, and their agents are not really going to connect you usually, but that's a great place to start.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Excellent, thank you!

>> Isabella Vargas: I would add -- and that was such great advice, Sam, I was about to start writing it down. You, like, put it so clearly. I would just add for people who are like immunocompromised or prefer, like, virtual things, there's also a lot of, like, different organizations or groups you can check out outside of LinkedIn. The first thing comes to mind is Women of Color Unite, or there's, like, the IDA if you want to work in non-fiction. There's a lot of different affinity groups as well, and you can reach out to people virtually that way as well. But Lawon and Sam gave such great advice, I have, like, not much else to add.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Isabella, there's a question in the chat and I think might make sense, because it goes along with what you were just saying. With all the network TV fellowships going back to in-person only, what are the best options now for immunocompromised writers, or we'll expand this to anyone in the industry who couldn't survive COVID, and so --where they can't go back and such. Because I know you were just mentioning a bunch of things that were virtual, and then we'll open it up to Sam and Lawon as well if they have additional things to add.

>> Isabella Vargas: Yeah, the first thing that came to mind is actually something that Sam said earlier. Like, writing programs and festivals and things like that. I think writing and having something really good that you're proud of and submitting to all these programs could be a great way to break in, and could be a good virtual way to break in as well, because you can submit virtually. And like I said, a lot of these affinity groups provide good networking opportunities. If they don't have, like, events going on, I've also kind of joined a lot of affinity groups and just kind of messaged people who have similar interests that I do. I invited them for, like, a Zoom chat. And that's also been very great and a good accessible way to network and break in. And -- I kind of want to pass it over to Sam, because I feel like he might have advice as a TV writer as well. [chuckles]

>> Sam Krauss: I love that. So that was pretty much what I was thinking, I think -- I think -- what I've learned from RespectAbility and their Entertainment Lab and their Leadership Program -- is that that will give you a bunch of networks. It's very much lifelong. You've got an ever-growing network. And so there are plenty of programs like RespectAbility's got. There's -- I think Inevitable Foundation, 1in4, there are plenty of programs -- even ones that are not just specifically for disabled people, just -- competitions, labs, things that are still online or virtual. And you can, like, almost get the same amount of connections and relationships built from those. You just continue to do them. So yeah.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: And this next one, I know we kind of -- sort of addressed it, but it's more about -- when you're not in L.A., and other than internships, what would you say are the best ways to try to enter in? For example -- would you suggest that someone makes a short? Would you suggest that someone should try to win some contests? Would you suggest that someone writes a book? Or is it more the informal networking? Like, what do you think the best ways are for people to try to navigate or -- I think all of the above, I think, are applicable. Maybe there are some others you can suggest as well.

>> Sam Krauss: Oh, Lawon, you go first.

>> Lawon Exum: I still feel that you can be able to network online. I just feel like you have to really do research on what particular -- what career path you want to go, because they always have some type of Zoom meetings or some type of Zoom for -- just to get to know each other. So I will really research what craft that really what you want to do in the industry, and start looking for different organizations that can help you. And I would say network through that, because I still feel that there's still organizations and companies that still partake in Zoom. And if you're not in L.A. or New York, I still feel you can take that opportunity to do that.

>> Sam Krauss: I was going to say that one of the speakers from RespectAbility, DMA, encouraged us during my cohort's session to develop writers groups. We keep it small, my group. We're just five of us. And in that group, you can write and do workshopping of each other's work, but you also can have guest speakers or guest people. And so sometimes it's harder to get one-on ones like Zoom coffees, but if you say, hey, will you come speak at my writers group via Zoom, they're very happy to do that, because it feels more, like, cost efficient for their time. So if you want an agent or, like, a development exec or, like, a showrunner, which we've had all of those in my writer group come and hang out with us, that's a great way to start doing the networking. And then what Lauren said: contests, film festivals, shorts, that's fabulous. But yes. Books as well -- I've seen screenwriters suddenly write children's books, like, that's cool.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: I'm going to -- we have too many questions to be able to get to, so apologies for the ones we don't, because we only have about two minutes left. And so we have one question about positions in news media and other areas for post-grad folks, for folks who are already getting a Master's degree and such. And we heard in the first panel one of the panelists sharing that -- he thought he was ready to just get into a job and such, and then had to realize that taking an internship was the next step to a job. And so -- I understand -- sometimes there's frustration of, like, being like, well why should I do an internship when I -- have a lot of experience? And sometimes that is difficult and -- but sometimes that's your way in to then lead to a job. For example -- Isabella was our intern before getting -- before getting hired and such. So you never really know what could kind of lead. But in this last minute, I'm gonna give each of our panelists kind of if you have one little last tidbit of advice that you wanted to share, and then we'll be moving on to our next panel.

>> Lawon Exum: Be your authentic self. Introduce yourself as you, because there's nobody out there like you. So network and be you.

>> Isabella Vargas: I guess I would say -- and I'm still thinking about the internship thing Lauren said. I would say just kind of be open to learning at any position level -- it doesn't matter what it is -- pay attention, listen well, and just be kind to the people around you. I think this industry has, like, a lot of smokes and mirrors almost, but people are just people, and people just want to make genuine connections and help each other out. So just be nice and make connections and be open to learning is, I think, what I would say.

>> Sam Krauss: I guess something I learned is that figure out what an executive or a -- sort of, like, a really important person -- figure out what everyone asks them for. And ask them for something, like, a lot less, and they'll be a lot more eager to fulfill your request. So if a development exec is asked, hey, I want to pitch you my new show, like, AKA, give me millions of dollars to create a show that has no guarantee that it will work, asking for, hey, I would love to reach out about maybe being a staff writer for one of your existing shows. Like, go for the smaller ask, and you might be surprised, so. Thank you all. Thank you so much to Lawon, Isabella, and Sam.