

Welcome to a conversation focused on disability justice, racial justice and the ADA. Presented by the Seattle Council on Accessibility Consortium. You are in for a robust conversation today. I'd like to go over our shared agreements. This is a safe space. We respect all efforts to work on accessibility issues in your organization. The fact that you are here is a big deal! We recognize that each organization is at varying levels of accomplishment with accessibility we are here to help and not to judge. We are diligent in studying and researching our resources and are interested in learning about those that we may have missed.

Next slide, please.

>> My name is Torey Contreras. I'm director of patron services at the Seattle Theater Group. And also a proud member of the steering committee for the SCAC. My pronouns are she and her. I have long dark brown hair, white skin and I'm wearing a blue shirt with white flowers. I'll go over the agenda quickly. There's going to be a welcome that has already happened. And next up we will do a land acknowledgment by my colleague at the consortium, Chris Moore with MOPOP and Elizabeth Ralston, the founder of the Seattle Cultural Accessibility Consortium, will do an introduction. And there will be a wonderful panel discussion moderated by consultant ChrisTiana Obeysumner. And then at the very end we'll do a Q&A. I'd like to introduce my colleague on the consortium. Chris Moore. Next slide, please.

>> Hello, my name Chris Moore. And my pronouns are he/him I'm a steering member for the Seattle Cultural Accessibility Consortium. I have short brown hair, white skin, lots of tattoos, and I'm wearing a black T-shirt.

Welcome, everyone.

We would like to start with a land acknowledgment. We'd like to acknowledge targeted we live work and play on the unceded and traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples and that we occupy this land. This acknowledgment does not take the place of authentic relationships with indigenous communities but serves as a first step in honoring the land we are on. Next slide I'd like to thank our workshop funder and Office of Arts and Culture and Northwest ADA Center for providing this workshop and providing interpreters. The left side of the slide the Office of Arts and Culture is a blue capital A with an ampersand symbol necessary wills inside a large C and the words Office of Arts and Culture below it on the right-hand side is ADA in white letters with a red background. Thank you again. Now I'd like to introduce Elizabeth Ralston the founder of the Seattle cultural Accessibility Consortium.

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>> ELIZABETH RALSTON: Thank you, Chris. Welcome, everybody to our wonderful panel discussion. My name is errand I'm the founder of SCAC. And our mission is to connect arts and culture organizations with information and resources to improve accessibility for people of all abilities and we are fiscally sponsored by Shunpike. And you see Shunpike in red with the words empowering the business of art. I use she/her pronouns and I have gray hair and am wearing hoops and a pink

shirt and I have white skin.

Next slide, please.

>> We work very hard to make these workshops financially accessible and also accessible for people of all abilities. We ask that you consider making a donation to support our mission and unite future workshops. Together we can increase accessibility and we can donate here at [bit.ly/SC AC Shunpike](https://bit.ly/SCACShunpike). If you're sending it is much appreciated that you donate to our organization.

I want to talk a little bit about our work at the consortium.

What we do is we have three main goals. Professional development and training workshops and accessibility and we are creating a Web site with resources which will soon be revealed. And we are in the future hoping to develop an equipment loan program where we hope to one day be able to lend our equipment to arts organizations like assistive listening devices, flash screens TVs for captioning, audio description equipment and so on. We also provide technical assistance to nonprofits around accessibility planning.

And so our hope is to be a community connector where we have to provide workshops for people so we don't have to reinvent the wheel. And you can find our workshops from the past at our YouTube channels will be posted in the chat.

And I'm really excited to now introduce our moderators. So can we have the next slide, please.

Actually, first I'm going to go over the goals.

Today we are going to hear perspectives from a panel of BIPOC, BIPOC black, indigenous, people of color, with disabilities about how disability justice with builds on the ADA. We'll learn how the ADA while ground breaking in many ways has perpetuated harm against by pom with disabilities. Again, please be sure to put all your questions and answer in the question and answer box and we'll try to get to as many as we can in this time frame. Now I'd like to introduce our wonderful moderator. So next slide, please.

ChrisTiana Obeysumner is a black and indigenous queer nonbinary and multiply disabled person. They are the CEO of Epiphanies of Equity. A social equity consulting firm that particularly specializes in social change, intersectionality, anti-racism, and disability justice. For almost two decades, they have dedicated their life and career to amplifying the importance of social equity -- particularly narrative identity development and its role in cultural humility and allyship bringing awareness to the lived experience of racialized ableism and externalizing and I blackness and dismantling the psychosocial paradigms that underlie social injustice and inaction.

And I know this is a repeat from last -- the last workshop, but I wanted to really stress that I'm so happy that you're here, that you're making the time to come and listen to this really important issues of objectives to amplify the justice of BIPOC with disabilities and this is a wonderful forum to do so. So without further ado, I'd like to bring ChrisTiana Obeysumner. Thank you.

>> ChrisTina Obeysumner: Hello, everyone. I'm ChrisTiana Obeysumner. My pronouns are they/them. Do introduction and I am wearing a black head wrap and a black sweater with black

glasses. I am a person racialized as black. I would like to bring on the panelists if you would take -- turn your screens and microphones on, please.

Hello.

So what I'm going to ask each of the panelists one of the panelists will to do the screen shortly. I'd like to ask the panelists in about a minute to introduce yourself, what you do, your pronouns, and a brief physical description.

>> KAMEKO: Okay.

I wasn't sure -- so good morning everyone.

I hope everyone is well.

My name is Kameo Thomas. I am a black woman. Today I am wearing glasses because I'm four-eyed. I'm wearing glasses and a red top. I am a writer, filmmaker and advocate for disabled black veterans as a black female veteran with PTSD, which is an invisible disability. And there is a lot of stigma around not just invisible disabilities but also around disability itself within the African-American community and the work that I do is to really help to highlight how dangerous some of the stereotypes and myths are surrounding what that looks like and how it navigates through the world and I've been -- I kind of fell into it accidentally. I've been doing this for about two years now. And I think it's important work, which is why I keep on trucking. Even with -- you know, in the middle of the world being on fire. Yeah. So did that cover everything? I think I got everything. Did I?

>> ChrisTina Obeysumner: You did.

>> KAMEKO: Thank you for having me. Thank you.

>> ChrisTina Obeysumner: Rikki, how about you next?

>> Rikki: Hi, my name is Rikki. My pronouns are she/her. I am an African-American woman housed in a bigger body. Today I'm wearing a gray shirt and I have my hair up in fangs and a ponytail up at top. I currently work in affordable housing. I help house homeless with housing. And then in my spare time I like to write and I like to talk about different forms of disability justice I have a invisible disability. My disability I speak on is mental disability and I like to talk about how invisible disabilities especially being black with an invisible disability and different intersections how those impact my life and those like myself. And thank you for having me.

>> ChrisTina Obeysumner: Thank you. So as it is the tradition in 2020 in these turbulent times we have one panelist who will be joining us a little bit shortly because they're computer is having some technical difficulties. So they're going to restart and rejoin the then we have another panelist that we're not able to connect with them so we're going to start the panel with Kameko and Rikki and then we'll have Kalisto join us in a little bit.

So let's start off a little bit with shared definition of things of because one of the questions people have is just foundational what does this mean or what are these terms? So the first one is how would you describe disability justice? It's popcorn style.

>> Kameko: I forgot I was on mute.

(Laughter)

You know, for me, disability justice, if it you're serious about it when you say disability justice, then you're going to be inclusive not just of people who have the disabilities that you can see, the ones that you know might need walkers or in wheelchairs or you know if they're blind and have canes and seeing-eye dogs, I think that for true disability justice, encompass the entire spectrum of disability because I think it's -- it's kind of tragic that the only time -- like when we think about collectively when people think about disability, what they're thinking is immediately what they can see. So when I say as an example that I'm a disabled you know black veteran, I -- you know, I get these looks like I'm somehow not telling the truth about it. And that kind of causes a little spiral for me because I feel like I have to convince someone that I'm not lying. And I shouldn't have to do that so for me that encompasses an entire spectrum of what that means, you know, from the -- from those who are hearing impaired to like I said, from you know, people with mental health and concerns, I hate issues, concerns. That's my perspective.

>> Rikki: I'll piggyback off that and we'll talk about intersections of race and types so talking about people who might be in bigger bodies or even those in smaller bodies, understanding impacts of how visible disability is going to be completely different than someone who is not black. And recognizing that all disabilities manifest in different ways for different people. And that unfortunately, how society chooses and categorizes people also has a major impact. On as someone who has a mental and I think without talking about the ability levels of different people, so I'll give my own personal experience as someone who lives with bipolar disorder, there's a stereotype of that I go from sad to, like, crazy -- like to throwing things.

And also recognizing that just because today I'm fine and I can work, doesn't mean that tomorrow is going to be the same. And understanding that there are some people on even on those spectrums that have -- you know with good -- with good interventions can have months and months and years and years with no symptoms whereas, other people that doesn't work for them and knowing that it manifests differently in people and especially with the invisible disabilities which I don't think are necessarily invisible but what we call invisible. Meaning that we just show grace and when someone says you know this is what I live with. You don't need to question that they live with it just because we don't see it how you think it should be seen.

>> ChrisTina Obeyesumner: Thank you for those answers. I love to -- I just want to acknowledge that Kalista has been able to join us so I want to give him some time. Kalisto for 60 seconds or so a minute to share you know a little bit who you are, your background, you know, naming your pronouns and a brief physical description for captioning.

>> LISTO: Sure, good morning, my name is Kalisto affectionately known as Listo which is "ready" in Spanish. My 0 pronouns are he/and gender pronoun Z and they. I reside Seatac Washington and I'm multiply disabled on autism spectrum as well as chronically fatigued. I'm a guide worker that

formerly worked in Seattle's nonprofit community and many a survivor of multiple suicide attempts and I'm a transracial adoptee.

I popped back in because I wanted the lighting to be right. When the lighting -- when I got the lighting right my video wasn't showing for you all.

And jumping right in at this time, what Rikki was saying and what everybody else on this panel was saying when I came in, I can speak to that experience of being differently interpreted. Not everybody is the same. And after my experience wanting death and you no helping guide people who have a choice in their death I started seeing therapy which I hadn't thought of doing as a black man before because I thought it wasn't the right thing to do. I can handle this myself. I bottled it up inside. Didn't know anybody could interpret me correctly. I've had friends that say oh, I've seen therapists long enough. I have to see somebody and talk to them outside of my family and relationship. Otherwise things kind of pitfall out of control.

And last year, once I was becoming more of an advocate for myself and less of one who was just trying to prove myself, I don't like to prove myself any more. It just drags me down and causes my depression to worsen. Realizing advocacy presents itself in many different ways. The hardest thing to grapple with the last month or so has been that when we ask for things that support the ADA, when we ask for things it's not wrong to ask. And it's not a burden and it's not asking too much but when I've told people I need this accommodation at work, I'm told that oh, that's a fake. And it isn't fake to ask for a service animal to come to work with you. And it isn't fake to ask for interpreters to be able to understand better and to have closed captioning because I can't hear as well or I can't see as well as the next person.

And it's not inappropriate to ask for a regular lunch break.

Those are just things that I need in my own life as a person with multiple disabilities.

And there are the rare few people that do understand what we need without saying you're asking too much.

But thank you for having me here today.

>> ChrisTina Obeysumner: Thank you for that. I think it also is a great segue as you're talking about the difference the way disability justices happen I think about the first one which is intersectionality. I think some people think intersectionality disability plus but I feel like in my case for example intersectionality means being multiply disabled. I was born autistic with some other chronic disabilities.

Disability that leads me to use an assistive device is something that came out of medical racism.

Not to mention that the way that my psychiatric disability not only present but the way I've had to digest and had that be part of my experience is also rooted in this experience of racism. As I started talking about disability the psychiatric disability advocacy. I've been more open to talk about the ones that people perhaps are a little more open to digesting. To a certain degree schizo effective. What I've been trying to digest during the pandemic is associative identity disorder which I've had

my entire life but I think it's one of those things that people don't hold that so it's been really difficult of how do I explain in a space where I want to center and hold my blackness and my experience and these sort of things that require rootedness within a vessel when I feel like a system that is sort of in a space that doesn't feel like it fits in a plane of exist insure. Anyway, the point of this is a lot of these sort of mindsets and viewpoints around these transcendental things come from indigenous experiment as I read more about it -- spirituality as I read more about it in the African diaspora. But when we're in this society, when we may have seen ancestrally as a gift or just a way of life is seen as a disorder. So it makes me think how do we bring anti-racism into this? Which leads us into the next question and definition of things. What does anti-racism mean? How would you define anti-racism and how would you define it with this lens of difference between equity and equality? I think we knees to recognize that racism is real and understanding that racism just like when we're talking about disability justice, racism looks like very different things. I think in the Pacific Northwest it's easy for people to separate themselves like we're not like southern racists, we don't burn crosses but that passive aggressiveness and the micro versions are just as harmful and in my case I would say even more harmful I personally would prefer to know that you hate me so I can move along versus someone who is going to pretend to like you. So I think the Pacific Northwest niceness without the acknowledgement something I like to remind people is that the Pacific Northwest was actually made as a white super recommend sift haven we have to acknowledge the history of where we live and I think that's crucial in anti-racism work. I think that a huge part of the anti-racism work is also acknowledging your own -- not only your organization but your own personal biases and everything like that and holding space to say I used to be like that but I'm dedicated to changing because it's -- we get it like -- if you don't know then you might not know. But, if you're telling me what you're saying or behaving or if I tell you that the reason you're treating me this way is because you -- because I'm black, you have to understand, like, I'm not making that up. I didn't just pull that from the sky. By the time we call people on our experience it's probably the thousandth time that we experienced that. So I think a huge part of anti-racism work is listening to races and hearings what they're saying, challenging your own beliefs and being okay with knowing that you're not perfect and knowing you're never going to be perfect with this because you don't live these experiences and I think the hugest part is listening to without trying to gas light or overlook the BIPOC experience. If a BIPOC person is telling you this is their experience, you should listen to them and you should also kind of take that as this person probably cares about you and wants you to do better because most of us in my experience if we think it's hopeless we move along and go and process that with other people that look like us that can understand. I think you can listen and especially if you're working with any organization who comes in contact with people who experience trauma at the hands of this system if you're working in federal justice or housing or with the military or any of those systems that have or medicine or anything like that really listening to that because we're also trying to reduce harm that other people like us are going to experience because we've probably experienced it our --

>> Kameko: I moved up here from the south. I was born in confederate memorial hospital. Okay? Just to give you context with that. And I come here and you know I hear everyone talking about you know Seattle is progressive and liberal and we love everybody and one thing I notice is you love everybody as long as everyone is willing to put themselves into your blender and just erase their own cultural specificities and their identities to be part of this grand ideal that the people who are perpetuating this don't even believe in themselves because you can tell by the way that they behave. If you're talking about anti-racism, number one, I know people feel skittish about saying this but you have to address the fact that within communities of color there is an extreme amount of anti-blackness so then you have as an example, I was part of invisible disability panel was that last year? Yeah. Last year. Where there was an Indian woman who straight up said how do we know you're not faking? And this is a panel of disabled people of color, right? And she felt very, very very, very comfortable saying that. So I know that she's coming from the perspective of the stereotype of all black people want to do is steal.

You know, we're lazy. We don't want to do this or don't want to do that and so now we're going to try to use the ADA which honestly hasn't really benefited me a whole lot. Now we're trying to use the ADA to what? Get 15 extra minutes at lunch or to get accommodations that you half assed want to give anyway? Come on, that's a lot to go through for the very, very very little that's given in return. And if we're going to talk about anti-racism, we have to talk about the fact that we're -- that there are Chinese, anti-black people. There are Japanese anti-black people, there are Indian anti-black people and yes, they might be taking their cues from white supremacy, but it doesn't change the fact that in helping that system create more harm, they are using their perceived proximity to whiteness to bolster their position while also keeping a foot on the necks of people with the darker heel and if we're going to have a conversation about anti-racism what anti-blackness is a huge thing. You see it with protests even with that people are trying to make this about what did she do and what did he do? And it's -- you know, or they're burning down the target. Target is a billion dollar corporation. They will be fine if they're missing a few pairs of jeans. I know people who worked at Target. White people who walk in there and rob that store blind every day and you didn't have anything to say about that.

So why is it that now you want to make the narrative about the looting and not about here's another black person who is murdered by a cop for no reason, another black woman murdered for no reason and that's not your concern. Your concern all of a sudden is the destruction of property when you couldn't care less about it before.

>> ChrisTina Obeysumner: I think -- I will also share in a Q&A someone asked where his mental illness fit into this. And as we're talking about disability justice and so one of the things we'll have a short break at 10:40 and then I want to make sure we can still respond to this question, too. I want to give a brief history.

When we're talking about disability justice, we're talking about 10 principles and I think that was sent out with the invite to this event that I'd like to talk about the 10 principles from sent and valid

but I think if I can remember as many of them I might not remember all 10. Leadership of those most impacted. Intersectionality. NT, capitalist politicians, sustainability, recognizing wholeness, collective liberation, collective access, class movement solidarity across disability solidarity, and there's always one that I forget. But the thing about this is that there's so much of this that has been infused through this. First of all, mental illness is disability or psychiatric disability as a disability towards the black and brown body in this country has been happening since this country. In the past, especially as people started to move towards desegregation originally, pre and during the -- and reconstruction period which was 10 years after the emancipation and what they called the great Nadir. After the -- end of 1800s to 1964. Throughout that period, the use of psychiatric disabilities as a diagnosis it's I think it was quiet deliberation. Thanks.

The use of disability as a diagnosis was weaponized against all people who were not constructed as white. Whiteness itself being a construct.

I grew up in Philly. People in Philly when we talked about whites, Italian, Irish Catholic, German Lutheran, Greek. Talk about work requirements for food stamps we could talk about it in terms of racism and anti-blackness and also make a connection to the potato famine and the fact that England also forced the Irish work requirements to get their food which is why they all died in the street and fled to the United States. There was some connections there that as I moved to the West Coast, those sort of connections were not as rooted here.

So even if you go into this history, which I feel like is a whole different training, we go into the history, even to this day it's still happening but I think that as we see the CIA start to declassify some files, they started to admit about things like the Black Panther party if they couldn't be charged on crimes when they were arrested in court they were diagnosed with schizophrenia or schizo affective disorder and a lot of them died in psychiatric institutions all the way back in the past when people were trying to be liberated in the North, the enslaved people as they were being emancipated they would be diagnosed with drapetomania, a disorder of people who desire to be free and not be enslaved. That is why psychiatric disability fits into a disability justice conversation. Because as we come into the 21st Century, some 30 years after the ADA we're still facing a lot of these issues. So there's a whole conversation around the school to prison/school to institutionalization also being psychiatric institutions, medical institutions and social institutions that can have the same sort of vortex effect. With that description I wanted to give Listo if he wanted to talk on that or last word and we'll have a brief two minute break and we'll come back to chat more about more questions.

>> LISTO: Going back to that last question the thing that just kept on come in my mind is the intersectionality and realizing that when it comes to race and disability, just in, like, the past week or two, when I was talking about accommodations I was looking for at work, it seems that I didn't have to -- like I didn't take it there when a person from a generation pretty similar to ours, not boomer or far off in the distant future but they brought up a point that me asking for accommodations whether that be can I not cover my tattoos at work, can I keep piercings in my nose and some of these -- my mentor has told me are cultural ways of expressing one's self at work.



Other people say you have to be as conservative as capitalism makes it and in this discussion it turned to the same people that asked to uncover their tattoos and wear piercings at work and have headphones on because of ADHD, anxiety, autism -- are the same people who will ask for support animal and I said why are you equating all of these accommodations both culture and when they were one of the religions be that Muslim, Buddhist, Christian I'm not going to show for their own anonymity but it showed that I was out there putting myself out there as a black disabled person asking for these accommodations and hoping for support from people in the community that I work in. That has these cultural differences that are not marginalized and discriminated against and I didn't even go there. Other people went there and said aren't you a religious zealot. I said you don't need to go there you we need to come up with an equal medium so we're not putting racism at that same realm of asking for accessibility practices.

There might not be a right answer and there still is a lot of work to be done around that. And I've seen that growing up in a small rural community where I was one of maybe 10 black kids in my community and I was adopted. So that was another thing where people are like why are you a different skin color than your sibling? Could God have made you different because there was a lot of religious people in my neighborhood. And I had a privilege of really I don't know if it's privilege or me caping because it took me until 30 years old to get a diagnoses because of how females at birth are perceived by the medical system had when it comes to being diagnosed with autism. Those are barriers I've navigated and difficult things I've seen when otherwise I could be complacent and not heard it but now I've been more aware of what I'm hearing around me and having been in the south and realizing there's a different type of racism down there in our communities support each other and coming up here and realizing there was a smaller community where we support one another but the racism is buried under them trying to find a way of understanding but still not understanding.

>> ChrisTina Obeysumner: Thank you for that, Listo. That's a good note to go to. We're going to take a quick 2-minute break. Just to process and digest. Come back and answer a couple more questions. We'll talk about a couple more questions and we'll start question and answer portions of that.

>> ChrisTina Obeysumner: Okay. We're back. I was having technical issues but I'm back now. So we have 10-15 minutes until the Q&A session but we have a lot of great Q&As in here. Shared are some of these that are -- I just want to share that as people put statements in the Q&A, someone has said I think to Listo, thank you for addressing as someone living with multiple actual mental illnesses and this is people of color and hit and miss in professional setting. One of the things that I always talk about in my trainings and we talk about social construction is think about -- when I say the word professional, what comes up for you and more often than not in these trainings people are like white person with a suit and briefcase and there's also all these loaded pieces too around, like, degreed white collar job and certain ways that you're going to talk and present

yourself all of these constructs that if we talk about unconscious bias which means we're not thinking about what we're thinking. That's what comes up. Practice equality of we'll get to question questions. I want to ask you all a couple other questions before we get to some of the Q&A.

The first thing is I want to talk about racialized ableism.

Which racialized ableism is for folks who don't know this term is the intersectional experience of racism and ableism. And you know, in all of the thing that entails, anti-blackness, anti-asian racism, anti-indigenous, things like that.

I want to ask y'all how does this show up in our institution systems and society? And/or at the intersection of interaction of pandemic given that abled racism right now what should folks be doing?

>> I can think of the number one thing I thought of when you said that is the thought to get especially, you won't know and I do this in my work accommodation. If someone comes in in a wheelchair we can technically skip having to get a provide to verify their disability. If you have a mental illness, you have to see a doctor and they have to do that. And I think when we talk about ADA and the workplace, I think of my experience at a former job in which HR was one person. This one person now in my mental health history because I had to provide -- they didn't know all my mental health history but they knew my diagnosis and they were able to use that diagnosis to do things like workplace and do other things to make me or make things about my mental illness which were I -- when we talk about racialized ableism to prove your disability especially with for black people, you have to then make them go through their medical system which we know is historically and currently racist. So there's that and then the fact that like I said before, disabilities manifest in every differently. And there's -- and how it also shows up racially is going to be different. That is like I as an African-American person am aware that I couldn't have like this crazy mood swing in public and throw a chair if I wanted to because that would be criminalized. They wouldn't think oh, she -- you know, has bipolar disorder and maybe she's having a melt down. It would be she's violent.

So I think when we talk about racialized ableism a huge part is how it manifests and forces black people especially to -- before they can even -- they have to start second guessing their own mental illness or disability first and they have to think about themselves as a racial person versus as a person who might be suffering. So I think about if you're going to ask for help as someone with a mental illness or something like that, you have to think I can't go in there frantic, I need to go in there and be able to advocate for myself and endure the stress and I need to be able to convey my message and then you also deal with the fact that if you go in there you might be in the middle of a psychotic episode but you might look like you're coping too well and people don't talk about that how especially with mental illness there's a perception of how it should look. And you don't look at it or if you're able to indicated for yourself well because culture says that we need to advocate for ourselves well to be able to get the help that we need, you'll also be rejected resources. Social

Security is the number one proponent of that. If you are going for Social Security, you know, disability because of a mental illness, how very much so, if you advocate for yourself too well, they'll say you can work or you don't look like you're -- you know in the middle a psychotic episode or you don't look like you're disabled and how all of that has to do with a lot of it has to do -- most of it has to do with race because I also have been around people who are not black who disclose all their mental illnesses and no one ever second guessed them. Not once but, if I say I'm bipolar they're like well you're coping so well. You're doing so great. And it's like yeah, thank you to 16 years worth of hiding from myself and dealing with the ups and downs and dealing with all these systems. But I would -- I think that the number one point of, like, racialized ableism comes from the start of getting a diagnosis and having to deal with the very racist medical system who either wants to overdiagnose you or underdiagnose you and it's wild on the things they're willing to diagnose like they're diagnose any of those ones that can make it where you might be able to be criminalized and if you think of things like autism, the rate of -- the amount of black people who are given like an oppositional defiance disorder versus an autism diagnosis are, like, it's staggering. So it's also -- I think it's wild when we look at what they're willing to diagnose black people with. And how those diagnoses are also very linked to how they can be criminalized especially for children, thousand we can be criminalized, how they can lead to that school to prison pipeline versus the diagnosis they should be given that would open up resources for them and allow them to get the help they need and even after they get that diagnosis being able to go and find supportive systems is really impossible. Sorry, I went long on that.

>> Thanks, Rikki.

>> Kameko Thomas: I think one thing we don't talk about enough when we talk about racialized ableism is the internalized racism and ableism. Because on the one hand it's okay, I have post traumatic stress disorder with secondary major depressive disorder and generalize the anxiety disorder. So my stuff can look like bipolar disorder. It can look like so many different things because so many -- a lot of these disorders have symptom overlap.

It's like a little Venn diagram of stuff.

So on the one hand, I'll have -- because I actually had this happen since being in Seattle. I have had black people who if they knew about my disorder, immediately wanted to make everything they did that was foul about it's my mental health issue that's the reason that I'm having this problem. Not you stole money from my business and anyone would have a problem with that. Not, you just undermined my humanity in a way that I would never undermine yours and of course I have an issue with that. No, it's oh, you only have this problem because of the PTSD. Right? Then the other one is if they know about it and you do something they don't like which is saying look, I don't believe in putting my mental health in toxic situations, then it's oh, I've been called a crazy bitch, even by people who were well aware of my mental health diagnosis. That should be a hate crime but you know, a conversation for another day, maybe. So I feel that we've got to -- so this racialized

ableism goes to -- and then the -- you know, the other layer is as a black woman, you know, black women are so strong we got to uplift everyone. We've got to be everybody's backbone. We have to be everyone's support system. So it's well you know, you can't crumble because if -- if you crumble, then I can't put my burdens on your back. It's like dude, I have my own stuff that I'm dealing with. I don't need to stay strong black woman so now I have to sit here and hide. I did this for almost 20 years. And I've been dealing with PTSD for 22 years. So think about this. For most of the time I've been deal with this I've been hiding it because God forbid anyone knew and God forbid that they knew and it's like I'm not representing the strength and resilience of black women well. I'm not representing the culture well.

Because mental health issues are for white people. And therapy and medication and all these things are for white people like you are the descendants of the enslaved. You should just be able to suck it up and deal with it.

And I tried that for 15 years to suck it up and deal with it and ended up dealing with three suicide attempts as a result of that. So then I say you know what? I'm not doing that any more. Anyone that has a problem with that, they can't be my space because it's harmful to the work I'm doing to center and heal myself.

So racialized ableism in the context of white supremacy of course is -- you know, the anger that comes from PTSD being or you're just an angry black woman, not the mood swings that come from PTSD, not the grace we give to televised white people suffering from PTSD. With me, it's I just have an attitude because black women have attitudes anyway. So I'm catching it from white people and from black people. It's like -- you can't win for losing.

>> ChrisTina Obeysumner: Right. Thank you, Kameko. I wanted to give Listo some time and I'm going to ask another question and have some brief answer to that question so we can get to the Q&A questions. Because we are 20 minutes out.

I want to make sure we have time for the Q&A section. Listo, do you have any thoughts on this question before we move to the next one?

>> Listo: I was initially thinking of going second, but I feel that Kameko's dialogue led to exactly what I was thinking because I've lived in Seattle for six years, I moved here from Missoula Montana where I lived for five years and before that Memphis Tennessee and I'm originally from Chicago. The thought was -- like growing up, I had gone to a specialized school since I was home schooled from about the age of 4 until about half way through prekindergarten and that wasn't working for me so my parents enrolled me in a school called spectrum and most of the folks there were also mostly autistic but my parents never sought out a formal diagnoses. My parents are both very academic and they are journals upon journals of stories about how I grew up and how I had exhibited autism. And then my multiple disabilities started impacting my work. So I sought a formal diagnoses and thankfully my parents have those journals to back up the diagnoses with the three specialists I went through. But in my work prior to that, I was just working and being maybe I'm not,

maybe I am, maybe I'm not. And when I finally got the diagnoses it was used against me in a way saying well maybe you couldn't judge that person's facial expression because you're autistic. I'm like is that because you read the books that said this is what autistic people are like? Because I can read their facial expression to a degree. And not -- and even a person that isn't autistic could probably -- doesn't have to play a game of guessing someone's gender identity, their sexuality, et cetera. I was going through the Q&A questions kind of plays to what one would want from the workplace and that is that we're not -- that we're not one another's counselors. Just because we may know something about a diagnoses doesn't mean that we with speak to it. We can be open minded about it but not tell somebody how to behave around that.

And it's come from both black and white sides.

I have been in several leadership groups and considered myself a leader in the community. It's difficult to be my own advocate. Looking back to how things present themselves in the most unexpected ways, especially anger. The other day I was unloading a moving van and my partner was like you're having an OCD moment right now. I was like maybe I am but you don't need to call it that and don't need to make me more aware of it happening. But it circles back with many of us unemployed by coronavirus or changing our careers, because of one meaning or another. It might be because of pandemic and it might be I didn't particularly like the career field I was in and felt more called to another.

Just navigating these job interviews and thinking about how to enter it from a disability justice point of view where the ADA hasn't done much good for me but the question that nibbles at the back of my head that I fear the most is how do you handle things under pressure? And when things become pressurized for me, then I do -- I'm not medicated for my OCD. But I am medicated for my anxiety and depression.

And I feel that employers could advocate for people who are ADHD/OCD, bipolar, autistic by realizing that, hey, if somebody has decided to spend five hours writing an employee handbook or a person has decided to take their anxiety and channel that into doing the dishes in the company kitchen, that that's completely normal instead of saying well, you shouldn't have spent five hours on that book. It wasn't part of your job. Narrowing down -- not narrowing down, broadening what someone's job description entails and as long as the work is done at the end of the day, that person can feel affirmed and not called out in the workplace.

>> ChrisTina Obeyesumner: I think that's a perfect segue to the final question. What I am going to ask I'm going to ask y'all this question and I'm going to ask equal for the sake of time to give me a bulleted list of what you think can be done.

>> The last question I wanted to ask is we're witnessing this moment at the intersection of the pandemic and intersection where there's been several letters. And calls for racial justice in the arts. There's a lot of arts leaders on this call and I'm sure I want to say to folks still on this call what you're hearing and the difference between this panel and the first panel is that there are very rarely spaces for BIPOC people. So I hope this is something that is -- that people are taking in.

They're applying this to what they need. What would you say to the arts leaders on this call maybe like your top three things that they can do to infuse disability justice at the intersection of racial justice in addition to these letters? And then we'll get into some of the Q&A questions? Each of you here are artists too so you can also speak from the perspective of trying to enter into the arts because I know, like.

>> Kameko Thomas: I would say for me, you know, as a writer, I don't feel like there are a lot of spaces for me to write about my disability it seems like it's all about fiction and fun which is gait but there's a lot of stuff going on right now and I don't think that's being addressed. So I would say first off there should be a very specific space within the arts community for people who are dealing with disabilities no matter what they are. And there should also be more opportunities created specifically for a -- people like me because my competing with others for the same kind of grant money and then it's the same people who get picked for grants and fellowships and things of that nature. I already know what that's about. So those are the only two things I can think of that come to the top of my mind or the third would be, like, I don't need you asking me a million questions about something when I already told you what it is. Like this is the sum total of my experience. So, if I'm telling you this is what it is. It's what it is and let's move forward from there. I don't need your selective interpretation of an experience that's not yours.

>> Rikki: My top 3 would be -- I was saying I think you need to do this and I think you need to ask for Blake and disabled folks. With that I think also asking for maybe one who is physically disabled and one who might be have a mental disability because those are two completely different experiences. The second one would be hiring black disabled people and being specific and being intentional about that. Black disabled person we want to see people -- you can't see everything like that. But especially seeing other black people. Being intentional and hiring that. Having someone who lives those experiences go through and point out to you all of the ableism. Because I think that they're not going to know that you know, not providing sound muting like headphones at a gallery can be really triggering to people for a variety of reasons, they can get overwhelmed. So different things like that. Not having quiet spaces. Those would be my top 3.

>> Okay

Listo: I probably have more than top three but with a background as a prior to what I do now, my associates is in fine arts I'm an actor, a dancer multi disciplinary artist and I think that one thing -- the first thing I'd say is that realizing that artists have had to have multiple means of survival. So when it comes to looking at one's portfolio, looking at it from multiple points of view a person may have been in four plays, may have drawn 12 pieces and may have been on podcasts or something along those lines. When it's narrowed down to I'm looking for an actor and that actor or actress has had to have 18 years of experience that narrows it down. And for artists with anxiety, depression and gaps in their employment because they've had to do things outside of the arts to survive, then it's like how do I put my foot back into the arts community. Coming up with ways in film, video,

music to show their talents. I read sheet music and when it comes to rote memorization, it's something I'm learning to practice now because I don't have a choice in the matter about memorizing stuff where the national boards for law and funeral directing. When it comes to playing guitar and saxophone I need to have that music in front of my and when I was in front -- matters last year when I was able to memorize two parts of the act but they let me read from my journal and that added to the piece without taking away from it. But allowed access so that I wouldn't be like dang, I forgot my lines. And lastly, I would say that there's several venues in the city that I -- that I'd recommend or model upon like the scent free ADA accessible small venue, you can have headphones we're speaking about in galleries, I've spent tons of time in galleries in art school but places like gay city, more places like that where people can brick their wheelchair in, not worry about being bombarded by scent and have a way of having a sign language interpreter or closed captioning. Because one of my worst art experiences I can think about was before I had glasses and I was in sixth grade trying to read Greek -- the English translations from a Greek opera in Chicago and I could not see the screen so I did not know what was going on aside from very muted tones of some form of act.

So those are my three things.

Making visually and sensory accommodating for viewers, making it accessible for your actors to not have to memorize and making it more accessible for people who are new or coming back into the arts world to not have anxiety or depression around how to get back into this arts world when so many of are us unemployed.

>> I was going to say top three because I think it's really important. Seniority clauses in unions. Yes. If you have a union that has lasted longer than 30 years, you're definitely going to have more people with seniority who are not going to be black and/or disabled but not likely to be black and disabled so, if they're the ones who are always going to be able to get picked first from rules and gigs you're going to be categorically leaving out people who would only have been able to have access recently. Second, moving from color blind to color conscious casting. There's no reason why you should have a script that requires people who are going to be representing certain cultures and experiences where you cannot find those people. I understand there are wonky laws around that but all those laws are able to be interpreted in order to have those roles and you do not need to have required clauses like Gerwin clause from Porgy and Bess in order to ensure an all-black cast. Third of all what's important for folks to think about is the ways in which you allow accommodations or create pipelines in order for there to be more people to bring into your to bring into your theater art house. I think that also includes looking at classism of requiring a curator or an agent or a fine arts degree M FA, BFA or that you are so-called doing things in the classical way. So as LISTO was talking about if you have a scene that can allow someone to read from a prop allow that sort of accommodation. Which leads us to you know, for time I'm going to have themes so there's a huge theme in the question and answer around how to offer accommodations. Some people ask how to offer accommodations in a way that goes above and beyond the ADA. Some people ask for

accommodations in ways that people can be allies or accomplices to you. Some people ask how can you have accommodations in ways that you can be able to bring your whole self without having to have to disclose the disability or accommodation you need. What are some suggestions you would give to the people asking about this? .

>> Kameko Thomas: For me what I realized when I kept getting fired from jobs because I number one, don't have the energetic resources to work a 9:00 to 5:00 and you know with my triggers being what they are, doesn't always make me the best coworker. I realized that I needed to just start my own business. Because that way I can work where I work best and as long as work gets done it's not like no one is going to ask me did you write this at 3 in the morning, dude, you got it by deadline, it doesn't matter. So I'm actually you know and this is what Rikki and Listo both said, I have to be my own advocate and really just study myself and think about what I need and the moment or also sometimes think about what I wish someone had been able to give to me. And just figure out a way to give it to myself. It's not always easy because I still find myself in a position where if I hit one of those spirals and I can't do anything, I'm still not comfortable talking about why I need an accommodation because I feel like it might be a different person I'm having a conversation with but it's the same conversation so sometimes I feel like I say is so much I'm sick of hearing it. And then I project that on to other people so I don't tell them what I need so I end up not getting what I need and you know it's like a feedback loop. It's still a work in progress for me so I will say for what I did is just understanding again I don't think the ADA as great as it is for a lot of people, I don't think the ADA was really written for people like me in and mine so I look at it like it's there and not there. I just do what I need to do and I have my diagnosis like what I need to, like, provide documentation. But aside of that, I just kind of -- I've been winging it actually.

>> I was given a 5 minute warning so I'm giving y'all the 5 minute warning too.

>> I would say one, if you were an employer and you're not providing benefits to your employees, then you don't get to ask them to bring documentation to you. You don't get to require that. I think another thing is I don't think people talk -- we don't talk about oh, we can't provide that without documentation because of liability. If I'm coming to you and it's a little thing you can have flexibility. If it's something like that, why do I need to go through waiting to see my doctor to get documentation and you get all these deadlines and different things like that, I think there are ways that employees can ask for things and that's also being able to bring your full self. If someone comes to you and says hey, I can't start at 7:00 but request I start at 8:30 that's easier for me to do, then I think that that should be something that you say, okay.

hey, that's great. If that can work, between everyone, so I think allowing people that space first and listening to them, when people start asking for accommodation this idea it needs to be what a business needs, like me being employed by you is suiting business needs and my accommodations are going to make me a better employee. So you know, I think the first thing that people have to do to get over that is, like, take everything out of your mind about what you think an accommodation should look like for somebody and what their disability is and just listen to what they're saying they



need because as someone who is disabled, I promise you, we're not asking for anything above or beyond what we actually need and we're probably not even asking what we for what we actually need. We're asking for something that we know will get approved. So I think once you get that out of your mind of what an accommodation is and you start listening to the people who are living those experiences, that's going to -- where you're going to get your most progress.

>> Thank you.

>> Listo: I got muted. I agree on those lines too. I didn't mention it earlier but I called myself a disabled workaholic. It's like when -- if I were to take -- if I were to fill out to try and get disability and be limited to 24 less hours of work a week, I would feel like I kind of lost a sense of myself. So I come up with my own accommodations to still work a 40-50 hour week because I feel that's how I'm useful. And I know that that's just how I feel about myself. But I appreciate what Rikki said and I think I'm seeing that as a boundary of hey I do not have to show my paperwork of my diagnoses unless you're offering to help with health care coverage, being unemployed during the pandemic has allowed me more conscientious thought about not taking any work that falls into my lap. If I walk into a place initially as a trans person with disabilities I can say I need healthcare because of these two things in my life and providing that general advocacy of how that would look and bringing one's self. There are certain things that might seem over the top to ask for but asking for two hours of trauma stewardship worked into a 40 hour week so you're working 38 hours but still being paid for 40 so you can take some self-care rest time out of the week, we're asking to come in an hour later because your arthritis or Crohn's is acting up is something that workplaces can do and should support because speaking from a deaf professional funeral director's perspective employees living, then the employee might die.

If we're not supporting it. So don't want that. And supporting -- and unless in a dark way of speaking I can say if an employee is not supported in the work they do, then you have less of an opportunity to retain that employee.

Thank you and there's questions in here and I'm open to you that if you want to I feel like your Ontario panel discussions its own panel and a lot of that is talking in the chat of things like what are some characteristics of white supremacy culture? What's the best way to elevate voices disabled folks? How can disabled white folks support BIPOC's disabled lived experience. What strategies do you use to interrupt white supremacy? There's a lot of that that I put in the chat. At the disability visibility project, which is an organization that's led by Alice Wong. They had 30 people I believe BIPOC who are disabled who wrote essays on these very topics, someone else wrote about resources, here's the thing about me, you ask me about resources during the break I got this pile of resources to talk about racialized ableism. And history of racialized ableism and I have this pile of books I could talk about how you can institute that into your business and try to learn about how to be allies and accomplices in this work. I will write this out and send this to you as a resource as well as a larger resource document that I have created and keep up about the intersection of racism and ableism. It will have some people to follow including the people here if they so are inclined. It will

also have articles, videos, book recommendations as well as reflection questions as well as reflection questions if you're interested in watching certain movies or documentaries about the history of things. If I would start with a medical apartheid by Harriett A. Washington which talks about the history of blackness being -- as well as stamped from the beginning it is a tome but I would suggest because it is aptly named in the subtitle definitive history of racialized abuse in America. Many more I will send here to read. So with that, we're out of time. And I also want to amplify in the question and answer that ask JAN.org is a good resource to talk about accommodations for things. I would also compare and contrast a Web site like ask JAN with things like the ADA30 and color just to ensure that there is that aspect of anti-racism and disability justice in the accommodations suggestions.

And that's all I have. I think we're out of time.

>> ELIZABETH RALSTON: Thank you so much. Christiana. This was such a rich conversation with all of you panelists. Thank you for your time and I want to say that as someone with an invisible disability, I'm deaf, and I'm also white. I am acutely aware of the privilege and I'm doing whatever I can to be an ally. So I'm learning so much from all of you.

>> Thank you for taking time and space to be here with us.

>> I invite you to be curious and speak up if. It he see something that doesn't sit quite right with you, the more we speak out the better it is for everyone. And we ask for grace and understanding about our limitations. For example, during the pandemic, it's difficult for me to understand people who are wearing masks and some people understand that and some people don't. I ask for everyone to be compassionate and patient with all of us.

So thank you for joining us today. We will share the recorded video on our YouTube channel. Please contact us with any questions or comments. We would love your feedback. The survey has been pasted in the chat. And I will also be sending one out in a link through Eventbrite. I would also like to make a plug for project we're working on. It's a podcast that has interviewed people with disabilities particularly BIPOC with disabilities. And I interviewed Kameko and Christiana. That should be out in September. If you like what you hear please donate to us we appreciate your support. Until next time, stay tuned. Thank you everyone for coming. Stay well.

>> Christina Obeyesumner: Thank you all of you for coming and doing this with us today.

>> Thank you for the opportunity.

>> The more we talk about this and bring light to it, the more change we can effect. So it's not easy, I know you know, I know everyone here knows. It's not always the easiest thing to talk about this. But I feel like we have to have -- we have a responsibility to do it which is why we're doing it.

>> Exactly, I'm so happy y'all could come today. These are not even all the folks that I wanted to pool. We only had two minutes during the break. So I --

>> Oh, yeah. Yeah. I -- I mean there's a Google Doc that I've been -- so I'm going to update that tonight. I'll send that to you, Elizabeth. I'll send that to all y'all too. Also, y'all who are here know where I live and also I'm opening up my library as a lending library. If you just want to borrow some

books. I even got the little cards and date stamp and everything. Oh, oh, wow.

>> Because I have two other bookcases out in my living room. So this is, like, about half of my books. And I'm a nerd.

>> Wow, you have a lot of books. It's a lifelong thing. I have a lot of books from childhood and if you know any kids. I'm in the space of -- there's some books I have too much sentimental attachment too but other than them, those are --

>> Rikki: I hear you. I have books that I will send you the link where you can buy it for yourself but you will not be taking this out of my house.

>> Kameko: I made a mistake of loaning out a couple good ones that had a lot of significance to me and have I seen them again? Nope. No more lending out books for me. If you want it, go buy it.

>> ChrisTina Obeysumner: Books I have there's a lot of things like with my experience of homelessness and stuff that I lost. So books I've been able to keep also have additional significance because I had to, like, -- there's a whole --

>> There's a whole thing. But yeah. I have these and so I wanted to offer that as well. Socially distant book lending. To anyone who can get to 145th and Aurora Avenue.

>> Thank you interpreter.

>> Yeah, thank you, interpreters.

>> ELIZABETH RALSTON: Thank you so much, everybody. It was a pleasure talking to you and hearing from you. Take care.

>> Thank you, bye.