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Working in Theatre Workshop
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>> LJ: Hello everyone! Welcome to the Working in Theatre Series, co-hosted—I mean co-produced by Maroon Arts and Culture and Center Theatre Group. I'm so excited to be here with you all this wonderful morning/afternoon depending on where you are. I'd like to—we're going to start this session off, start this series off with what we all have in common, which is that we are artists. So the Working in Theatre Series is all about how to create meaningful creative careers for ourselves and how we can be successful, get those bills paid, but also stay true to our artistic practice. And so it's only appropriate that we take that by focusing on the art, and the theme for this week's panel is "What's Your Story?" We will spend time identifying our artistic point of view and we're going to talk a little bit about how that artistic point of view can influence your creative career. So before we get all the way into the swing of things, just a couple of things, my name is L.J. I think I forgot to tell you all that, and I am the Founder and Executive Producer at Maroon Arts and Culture, a brand new arts organization. I've been doing theatre for a while but I'm starting an arts org and I'm here to learn with all of you and see how I can take these weekly sessions and apply them to my own experience as I grow my own organization, and I'm really excited about that.

I'm coming to you live from the ancestral lands of the Tongva people here in Southern California. And whenever there's a beginning of a gathering, I like to begin by calling on at least one ancestor whose shoulder I stand. So today I call on Zora Neale Hurston playwright, cultural anthropologist, and journalist. And if you are joining us in the chat, I encourage you to tell us where you are joining us from and if you want to shout out an ancestor, I encourage you to do that as well, on whose shoulders do you stand, on whose legacy is influencing your own legacy today, so share that in the comments.

And I am going to bring on our panelist. I'm so excited. So today we will be joined by two amazing artists with two distinctive points of view, our first guest is Sophina Brown and she is joining us here and then we are also joined today by Hana Kim. Sophina is an actress and she is so much more, of course, like the rest of us artist, you know, slash slash slash. And Hana is a projectionist—we were talking before we came on, there is no point to categorize things into genres because we all just do so much. And I will give

you guys a chance to introduce yourselves. So Sophina, you want to go first? Tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do and your background.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Okay, yes, Sophina Brown. I am an actor, and I'm also a theatre producer here in Los Angeles. I've committed to producing the full 'American Century Cycle' by August Wilson for the Los Angeles area, and I am also the Founder of a new grassroots multi-generational organization launching in a few weeks called 'Support Black Theatre.' And yeah, I'm just really excited to be here and have this conversation because it's all about story, right? All about story and voice, so I'm excited.

>> LJ: Absolutely. And then, Hana, can you tell us a little bit about yourself? Make sure you are unmuted.

>> HANA KIM: Yeah. My name is Hana Kim, I'm a senior and projection designer based in LA and, yeah.

>> LJ: All right, so. That is all we really need to know. And just so everyone knows, both of our panelists' bios are available in the Padlet which everyone should have received in the e-mails. And if you want to know about them, they're both on the Padlet, they both have websites, and Sophina also sent us links that will help us as we go through our panel of the day. Before we get all the way started, I need to make one quick announcement. Sorry, I'm not as prepared. Forgive me, today is our first week and we have a few glitches and things happening. But I want to make sure that we are as inclusive as possible and I want to let everyone know that we are offering live open-captioning for the webinar today. Super important folks. So if you need to access that, I believe that Camille will put that in the chat. I will make sure that is all together. Okay, y'all, bare with us. I just want to make sure that we are getting everything. Sorry.

Camille, can you tell me, okay, so Camille added it to the chat. There is—the captioning is provided through a grant that I need to acknowledge. But I—don't have my copy so y'all remember Camille from the Summer, she is in the background helping me out. she can tell me that I make sure to mention that. All right, cool.

So I'll come back to that in a minute but hopefully at very least you have the links to get access to that. So, coming back to the guests, I will start off by asking you both, what is artistic point of view, what is it that drives you when you make art?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Okay, I can go first. I can actually honestly say that I—it hasn't been until recently that I can say that—that I can say I had an artistic point of view. I will confess that, it's been in the last 6 or 7 years that I feel like I'm really grounded in the truth of what that is. I came out of an environment, BFA Theatre program at the University of Michigan, and I really didn't know my voice, I really didn't, you know. I was kind of stuck in the idea of who I thought I should be and wasn't really secure in my identity in what I had to say as an artist.

And, it's kind of crazy because it's almost like, it was more in when I left school I was more in the mentality of careerism and kind of like being able to check off boxes, right? So I came out and I was like okay, what do I want it do? I want to get cast in a

show and become equity, okay, check. Now what do I want to do? I want to do Broadway, okay, check, now what do? I want to do TV, film, check, and I went through years checking off boxes right? And there was no true fulfillment that came when the boxes got checked and it wasn't until I was a series regular on a television show and this is what I said I wanted to be doing, why do I not have the stuff that I thought would come with it? And so it wasn't until I realized that it was like no amount of money, no amount of position or fame, or what have you, even though, you know, it felt like when I was doing what I said I wanted to do, I could have been doing anything, I could have been pumping gas and it would have felt exactly the same way. So no amount of money or fame or whatever was able to fill that void. And it wasn't until I tapped into what was truly fulfilling and sustaining, which was mission and it's all about mission, knowing what that is and that, finding my mission is how I found my voice.

>> LJ: Yes! Can you summarize your mission for us real quick?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Well, you know, it's funny, the link, I know you said it wasn't working but there is a part in that Cornel West and Steve McQueen when they talk about Paul Robeson, and Cornel West mentions, he says that, "We're all poets, right? And poet, you know, a poet doesn't mean diversifiers, it means those of us who use imagination and empathy to enter an alternate world. And when we do that, we become "we" conscious instead of "I" conscious." So part of what I was saying exactly when I left school was, I was very "I" conscious. And now stepping into the almost like the poetry of mission as artists, and now being "we" conscious, at the end of the day through story is about transforming and healing, and comparable potential of story to heal and ultimately to liberate. So my mission as an artist, every time I step into the story as an actor or producer, so what have you, that I am aware that through the story, somebody will recognize themselves and be changed. And hopefully changed for the better and because that exists. Every single time, every single time, I pick up scripted material, we are—my mission is to always have no less than that impact. To be shooting for that. Where I'm like, there is somebody out here that needs to hear this story and by doing so will be changed by it.

>> LJ: Yes, that is beautiful. I think it was Barbara and Carlton that said "Black theatre is a theatre with purpose, it doesn't do nothing. It's designed to transform and to call attention to things." What about you, Hana, what drives you artistically?

>> HANA KIM: I think what Sophina said rang a lot of bells for me in terms of like, I think the first time...so my dad say film director in Seoul, South Korea so I grew up with it and environment-wise, I feel like, oh, like maybe—I felt like I was like without really being an artist, I kind of had a false conception and I was like oh, I guess I'm an artist because I feel like I was always surrounded by arts all the time and a natural thing for me but I don't think I was an artist back then for me truly, it was a similar trajectory where you think you are one thing but looking back, you are not really.

I think for me like more of that constant arose when I came to the States to study. When I was growing up Seoul was pretty homogenized society, it's a little bit different now but I think coming here and then just like just learning about how I'm perceived in the States and just like the diverse—like the beautiful diversity that I experienced here that kind of like made myself search a little bit deeper into my identity and what it means

to be and also what it means to be truly us because I think it's easier to—I mean, you know, it is easier to experience the division. It's like in Seoul, like even though the same social problems exist, like classism and racism and everything exists in Seoul as well, but the degree of it and the history of it and the context of it is vastly different and it is so much more complicated here. And, I think, diving deep into it I think made me search like a little bit deeper into what it means to be really us together. Even though we look so different.

>> LJ: Mmm-hmm.

>> HANA KIM: That is the thing about the homogenized society, it's a little bit—still people still discriminate against each other but it's not like...here some people can be so terrible so easily. I think there is some sort of mechanism about that as well. Like, so I think, yeah, anyways, so like I think going through that trajectory, I think for me, it was also a journey about learning who you are. Really, first. And then, that leads you to learning how to be truly us all together. So.

>> LJ: I love that point. You know, one of my mentors is Korean, shout out to Dr. Ah-Jeong Kim, I love her so much. But as I worked through my thesis, I had this conversation about Black theatre in particular and she was talking to me about her journey as an mentor and as an academic and how she had to understand that there is a need for different categories of expression because we are such a diverse community here in America.

>> HANA KIM: Right and that really needs to be celebrated. You know.

>> LJ: Mmm-hmm. Yes! And I think it's so interesting that you both said that because—

>> HANA KIM: Oh, no!

>> LJ: Uh-oh, what happened? Somebody said oh, no, did something happen? Is it me?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Oh, I think Hana is frozen.

>> LJ: She can come back to the link if something happens.

>> LJ: But what you were saying about the, you know, understanding that you are a part of a larger community, that is definitely something that I, you know, study in the Black aesthetic. That is something that is pretty consistent within the way that we traditionally have done theatre historically. Hi, Hana, welcome back, no big deal.

>> HANA KIM: Oh...

>> LJ: That's okay.

>> HANA KIM: I'm so crazy.

>> LJ: That's all right, we're all still here. I'm saying being influenced by this idea that we are all together in the service of the community, and then Hana talking about the way that her experience in Korea has kind of shaped the way she approaches doing art and I just really feel as we expand our acceptance of a variety of backgrounds and aesthetics, then we can really start to make more room for more people to follow their artistic point of view into seeing it. And I really appreciate both of you bringing that into the conversation.

I kind of want today go back a little bit in terms of your background, and I wanted to ask, like when did you realize that you were artist? And I know Hana, you talked a little bit about it and you were like “oh, I guess I'm an artist” one day. And did anything change for you? Or was it like you just continued to live—you're like, “I have been an artist this whole time, I will keep doing what I do,” and then were you like, “oh my goodness I'm an artist, I guess I will live the artist life now?”

>> HANA KIM: Umm... no. [Laughing] It's like yeah...I think it was more internal. And I also, personally, I don't think there's like a shape to the life of artists. I think like it's to me more of an internal—also like I think value system as well, I think it really shifts your priority order. And I think that was the big thing about it and also more of an attitude toward what you are doing and what are you choosing to do.

>> LJ: What about you, Sophina? Did you—have you always been an artist or do you realize one day “oh my goodness, I'm serving this purpose?”

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Yeah, I think it's interesting, because I don't remember ever consciously being separate from that definition of myself, you know what I mean? Even when I was really really young, I knew what I wanted to do. There was—I can't remember ever consciously going like, “oh, I think I want to be an actor.” Like it just was, you know what I mean? Like things were just, I mean, you know, 4 or 5, I just kind of knew. However, I will say that there was definitely a moment where I understood the connection between artist and activist. And that was very much like, “poof!” That opened up my artistry in a completely different way because that is so free in what is going on and in what we talked about earlier. And there was definitely an awareness there but I think I always felt pulled and called really to this.

>> LJ: Yes, that's beautiful. So my follow-up question is like, have you ever—have you ever experienced that tug, that push and pull between “I'm an artist and I want to pursue this art but we live in a capitalist society” and “should I just get a full time job?” I call my mom like every three days to tell her I'm about to quit the Maroon Arts and Culture Center and this is just too stressful. Have you experienced that and how do you get through it?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: I just have to say to piggy back on something that you said a couple of minutes ago. I would not be the artist that I am today, the activist, the friend, the mother, the wife, nothing, without mentorship in my life. There are so many times where I have been in a place where I'm like, “Lord, okay. I guess this is the last day. You about to close the door on this chapter because I don't know how”—you know, there have been times you know what I'm saying where you're like, “okay, can I still, you know, do you think maybe I could, uh, I don't know, go back to working at the restaurant

or go back to working, maybe doing something that I never tried before because this right here has been a journey, and it's been a hard journey.” But I will say in terms of the mentors that have been in my life, two in particular, Michelle Shay and Diana Castles, I have to give shoutouts to them because not only have they been key for me in terms of thought and developing my artistic points of view, but if you have people in your life that can speak truth to that moment you are describing right there, to encourage you and to remind you what it is in terms of like that internal thing inside of you that keeps you coming back to Maroon Arts, you know what I’m saying, that knows you can't sit it down, it's like that letter, that ‘Letters To A Young Poet’ that I put the link in for. The letter says you are looking for external, you are looking outside of yourself. You have to look inside of yourself and get real real quiet and ask yourself, he is talking about poetry, ask, “must I write?” And coming back to that moment of like, “must I act? Or must I create?”

And if you know that the answer to that is a resounding, "I must." You will keep on doing it. It doesn't matter how many times you hit against that wall, you will keep coming to it because that is who you are, that is your identity.

>> LJ: You right, you ain't never lie, because I try to quit and I be like, “I can't quit.” And my bank account be like, “Quit!” And I can't. I want Hana to answer this question too, but real quick, everybody is lifting their mentors on the chat so we will put some of them on the screen so we can shout them out and really—I believe in calling out names, calling out my ancestors and calling out mentors. Disney in the chat, somebody put voice coach director and professor Christy Mendez, she is my mentor too and she yells at me in rehearsal and holds me accountable and she is one of my mentors as well and I love her so much. So we will put some mentors on the screen. And Hana, do you ever feel that push and pull between being an artist and be like, I need a real job?

>> HANA KIM: Always. I feel like in general, keeping the freelancing career is pretty challenging because you are also, you know, if you don't quit, you will be blessed with choices as well, but then what choices are the right ones to make? I think that would be another difficult chapter. But for me... like as everyone, of course mentors, but also colleagues, I feel like the big reason for me. Also like especially in LA, sticking to theatre, I think, requires like even greater love in a way because like it's such a city that different areas compete in live theatre. And I feel like it definitely, I think it's a lie if we say like our atmosphere is the same as New York or another city. Each city has a different kind of culture and environment.

And the fact that we like the committing to theatre means something different in LA as well, it means something different in different locations too. And I think for me is really the people who, like, the team and people I work with, like colleagues, fellow designers, directors. I think those are really the strongest threads for me to not be quitting, really.

>> LJ: Yeah. What I'm hearing is that it's community. You almost have to get yourself into a community of fellow artists so that you can keep the hope alive.

>> HANA KIM: Right.

>> LJ: Remind yourself and you can remind one another that you are here for the greater purpose, which is like Sophina said, the story. You are here to tell a story.

>> HANA KIM: Also for the story, what I have been feeling is also how you make art together because art we make together is a collective art, even though art, everything is the same but if we get into the specific logistics of it, then all we do collaboration with other people rather than me trying to pull out my own sole vision.

>> LJ: Yes, yes.

>> HANA KIM: And I think that's really important to me. The fact that when I say I love storytelling, not only the story, but that we are presenting to other people that are here. But also like the journey of making something together. That is a story to me as well. And I feel like that's a big kind of like a really big holding block tore me as well, that changes my life as well. The collaboration process I have with my fellow artists changes my own life and hopefully people involved in the production also change for the better. So I try to find the right environment to make art if that makes sense as well.

>> LJ: Yeah, yeah, it does. I think that especially since we're living in this moment where there is a reckoning in the theatre world and so many industries, I feel like coming back to the idea of theatre and art and performance is supposed to be in the service of the community, it should not be isolated or insulated. I feel like that is really at the crux of the current event stuff is that these larger institutions have built around walls around themselves where the question has to be asked, "who are they serving?" If the tickets are \$200 and the same people are making all the decisions, who are you really serving? Because as a person that loves theatre and loves performance, you are not serving me, because I don't have \$200 to see 'Hamilton.' I just don't. So that is really important, this idea of building an artistic community, remembering that you are here to serve and to serve the story and to tell the story.

And then, I think, also, why this story, you know, and why are you the person to tell it? Do you guys have any advice for our viewers on how—why the story and why the person to tell it? How do you pick your projects and how do you decide whether or not they will appropriately serve your mission? You just go with the pace of the moment? I'm just kidding, nobody makes decisions like that in our field.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: I will say that as a producer, I definitely, you know, am pulled toward Black narratives. It is so, you know, how can I say? There is a quote by August Wilson, he talks about, for so long that we as Black creators have not been the stewards and custodians of our own narratives, of our own stories. So I'm very called to the mission, and he talks about the speech he gave, 'The Ground On Which I Stand On,' which we talked about earlier, which, you know, has been essential in terms of how I pursue projects that had a great impact on me and how I pursue the projects I would like to produce. And also, how it relates to and you are talking about creating more space, you know? Someone once gave me really good advice—look for the sciences and make sure that you are amplifying those voices and those stories. And so, I think about that a lot when choosing stories. And I wanted to also—can I go back to a second?

>> LJ: Yeah, go for it.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: I'm sorry, I can do it later while we're on this, but Hana said something that set off some bells for me in terms of environment and I have been thinking so much about that and as it relates to us as artists, right? And thinking if we all think of ourselves as seeds, right? You know, I think about what does it take for a seed to be able to grow? Not only just to grow but to be developed and then to sustain growth, right? And I feel that about what light, water, and soil represent, you know? And we touched on so many of those here and I am just thinking to myself, "Yeah, we all need light and the sun." And to me, that is a spirit center, whatever that is for you, it is the spiritual center that gives off that light that we need. The water is what we're talking about in terms of mentorship and community. We need people to pour into us. And then I'm thinking of the ground and the soil, how that is, what you mentioned right off the top, the ancestors and the people that have gone before and sacrificed and have come before us and knocked down walls, and knocked down barriers, and broken ceilings and the nutrients of the actual soil and all of us as seeds are growing are taking root right? And there is an interlocking stabilization that happens with that, in terms of support what Hana was talking about in terms of like, what she gets through collaboration. And I'm thinking out loud a little bit in terms of my metaphor, but it's a beautiful thing in thinking about the root system and then thinking about the fruit that is produced, you know what I'm saying? And it's all due to environment, and due to what you guys have been talking about and I want to say something about that, I was set off.

>> LJ: I think that is really beautiful and the road map going forward, what about you, Hana? How do you prioritize and say, "this is the project that will best serve my mission?"

>> HANA KIM: So if I am to be completely honest with you, before, pre-pandemic, I don't think I really really really thought about it. I think, I mean, I always had my priority which was like, I had a gut feeling that if it's something that I like, I would go for it, you know—"I like." that is what I think more of. Post-pandemic with like the everything, a lot of deep reckoning in, you know, everything that we all know. I think I'm more in tune. I've always loved theatre because I think we tend to be a little bit freer in terms of like we—you know, being nonprofit is very very hard but at the same time, I think that allows some, allows some opportunity to tell stories that don't necessarily have to be popular, right? I think which is very important. I mean, you know, I'm very in tune with everything and at the same time, my heart is in more marginalized stories and stories that don't often get told. And also, I am increasingly very much—very very interested in telling Asian American stories. Going back to my root a little bit more, but those are very very very rare. Like, there's only really a handful like David Henry Hwang, and now, it's a pretty exciting time right now. We have [inaudible] Park and so many other voices, like other younger Asian writers who are like giving us different types of narratives, rather than onw person's perspective. Like it's not anyone's fault really, but. So in terms of making a choice, it's like a little trickier, right? You know, it's not common to be coming across those opportunities and a lot of them, sometimes, like they also, like, producing a side of it will not be so particularly aware of whom they are hiring.

I think there's like both sides are kind of dangerous. Like one side would be

completely oblivious, to, you know, not aware of like basically, you know, point in telling other people, of course, I don't know.

Like, that is one extreme and another extreme is also cornering like, if we get into the race talk that becomes a much bigger conversation. I think there's also a danger in that this is a story that is happening in China, let's hire, like, some East Asian person because East Asia is East Asia. There is a danger in that in stereotyping people. And it's like Asian story, so she is Asian, and of course she should tell it. And that is also dry. There is a certain that we just have to be, I think, much more sensitive about everything. Moving forward, I think, but anyways, why, I think in terms of like where my heart is, I think it was an interesting year to really like dive in deeper in reckoning what that means.

>> LJ: Yes, you know, you are right about that. It can get tricky. But that is why I think it's so important for people to be like Sophina on the producing side. I know for me when I started Maroon Arts and Culture, because I wanted to produce work that I don't see done in the field and being a person that come from a more marginalized perspective within this field, I feel like I have the ability to discern, you know, and it's—for somebody like me or Sophina to go in and produce black work, it's not going to be a simple matter of oh, we will hire the only black set director we know, you get a little bit more nuance but then that is what it means to like spread the love, like, we have to be able to -- we have open up doors all the way up just to make sure that it's not for sure. You know, because nobody has times for that. Excuse me, I know for me that working with my artistic point of view, our organization is called Maroon Arts and Culture and we are named after people who ran from bondage, even without nowhere to go. Everywhere in the world where there was slavery. You have Maroon societies in South America, and Haiti, and New Orleans, and there was slavery all over the North and the South and in the UK, and there are people that are like “nope, I can't do it,” and they ran to the wilderness and survived and built communities. And some of them are still thriving to this day. And that is my mission and my perspective—we will go into the wilderness and come up with our own stuff and partner with our fellow people that are in this wilderness and create our own thing. With that said, I'm still sitting up here in this webinar with Center Theatre Group, a very large arts organization so there is, when you are an artist, there is kind of that little line like, “this is my mission and this is what I'm about,” but then also, “this is what I need to do in order to get the mission out there.” So yeah, it's kind of like you do have to go back and forth.

I've seen some really good comments in the chat about making the arts more accessible. This is a soap box I can stand on all day long. I think I actually touched on it when I talked about the price of theatre tickets. But what do you guys think about this? Do you think that the pandemic has made the arts more accessible? Or less accessible?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: I mean we are still in the process of trying to reimagine, you know, pandemic art. You know what I'm saying? And what it even is, what this time...has kind of allowed us to...do you know what I'm trying to say? We are still trying to define where we are. A friend of mine who, I loved this quote, he always says this, “you can't redline the internet.” You know, there is definitely something that this time has done in terms of opening things up for everybody. And for, you know, to maybe people

who wouldn't necessarily feel as though they can't due to the finances or the invitation to walk into a physical theatre, so I think that there is something to be said about that. However, as it relates to what you were talking about. Kind of being in two places, you know, of partnering with a very large institution but then also coming—I think that, you know, just to speak to that point a little bit, it all comes down to autonomy, right?

>> LJ: Yeah.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Talking about equity, it comes down to the autonomy. But autonomy doesn't negate partnerships because we still need to have that. We need both of those things. And I think as long as we can fully pursue both simultaneously, truly and be—I don't even want to use the word allow, because I don't think we need permission for autonomy—I believe that is a given right. But there definitely are systems of which, you know, we have operated in for a very very long time that have not been necessarily supportive of each marginalized voices' autonomy. You know? And that is a fact.

So you start then saying okay, well I know that I want to obtain both of these things and that they absolutely can—that can be achieved, right? But how do I do that? And I think it speaks to not just reforming current systems but creating new ones.

>> LJ: Mmm-hmm. Yes. Somebody in the chat says speaking on autonomy, a favorite quote of mine is “independence is being in dependence of each other.”

>> SOPHINA BROWN: It's all about interdependence. Whoever that is, yes, yes, and amen.

>> LJ: That was from Veronica.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Love it.

>> LJ: What do you think? Do you have thoughts on it?

>> HANA KIM: Yes, I do think that some aspects have been opened up to the current situation. So I work in video, essentially, so a lot of video tools or video tutorials and some of the organizations had a really deep discount at the beginning of the pandemic and all of that. So I would say, like, things opened up a little, and things opened up certainly for some respect, but at the same time, like, there are—there is a community where like the internet is not there, really. You know? Like, I think everyone has internet but like the quality of the internet is different. Like everybody might have a computer but the quality of computer is different in terms of digital art-making. It is so bound to the material to a degree, like what tool do you have, and what kind of spec of computer do you have. That part I still think is, you know...

>> LJ: That's an excellent point. That is an excellent point that I don't think people really talk about. Even though it's more accessible that you can log on and watch things, not everybody can log on. And in terms of making art, like actually making the work, it's not necessarily become more accessible. I mean there are more classes and things out there but they do depend on a certain level of technological access, and

a certain learning style too, I can watch a Youtube video and learn some things but I can't learn everything online through video. But that is a good point, I have not thought about the access to technology.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: I didn't either, that is a good point.

>> LJ: Now I gotta broaden my scope in my plots. Yeah, so some people in the chat, they are talking about whether or not they feel like it's more accessible. Mostly, I think that it is, some people are saying that it's not. But the pandemic has made the importance of art obvious for our survival. Yes, different internet speeds and lost audience interactions and certain design elements. And I think also, too, some jobs have become redundant within this pandemic. Some jobs in the theater, I think people are starting to realize like maybe we don't even need that job at all, you know?

So that is another way that things have kind of been changed. Yeah, I think that—but if we are realizing that the arts are really critical to our survival, people have really depended on artists for a couple of different things, not just for entertainment, not just for, you know, verses, you know, on Saturday night on Instagram live. But even for programming, I seen the Kennedy Center had calls out for teaching artists for curriculum, and that kind of thing. And the arts are clearly important, but how do you convince—well, let me—I'm about to get back on one of my soap boxes, but let me just calm down. But you know what? Here, somebody in the chat said, “is there an imbalance of financial distribution in theatre we need to address?” That is such a more put together way of saying exactly what I was about to say, so thank you for that. Is there an imbalance of financial distribution and how do we fix that? Because I know I got the mission and the passion and I got the credential but like, who do I ask for the funding from? I don't know, what do you guys think?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Oh, God, how long we got?

>> LJ: I know.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: I mean the short answer is yes, a resounding yes, there is absolutely an imbalance. (Sigh) This is just my opinion in terms of my perspective and where I'm coming from right now. This is all I can offer because this has long been as we mentioned, 'The Ground On Which I Stand On.' August Wilson talks about this in length, in terms of, he says that, “Black theatre is alive and it's vital. It's just not funded.” So I will come from the place of being a Black woman, a Black actor, and a Black theatre producer. That's where I'm coming from. So this is going to be just a part, but I will say, as it relates to this topic, the current system as we mentioned before, you know, it has the majority of the funding out there going to mainstream institutions. And then you have other smaller theatres and smaller theatre organizations who are pretty much duking it out for about, I can't remember what the exact numbers are but it's a fraction.

>> LJ: It's like 1 to \$5,000.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: What did you say?

>> LJ: 1 to \$5,000.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: It's like the fraction of the funding, is a whole bunch of minority/BIPOC institutions are trying to get that very small piece. And you look at that and say, "something is wrong here." And I think what happened is that during the pandemic, there have been some excellent initiatives that have been put together. One is the Black Seed, I don't know if you know about this, you heard about it?

>> LJ: Yeah, I heard about it a little bit

>> SOPHINA BROWN: It just hit, but it's one of these things where people are trying to speak to this issue because it is very prevalent—it is a very real issue. Where I'm coming from is that I definitely also feel like there needs to be some attention that can be devoted, not just to external sources for funding, but internal sources for funding. And what I mean by that is that instead of waiting for something to trickle down, right, from somewhere else, how can we generate some things, how can we generate partnerships, equitable partnerships that then things bubble up from within our community. And for example, I'm always looking for ways to generate cultural capital. Right?

So how can I as a Black theatre producer knowing that I am producing, very specifically, I'm thinking very specifically about the stories and the people that I want to represent and serve, right? So how can I then go into the very community that I am representing or serving as a curator or as an artist and say "okay, let's getting together and let's strengthen." Because the numbers—sheer building in terms of numbers, build strength, right?

>> LJ: Mmm-hmm.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: So reaching out and trying to have relationships with restaurants, with hair salons, and with book shops, or fashion designers, or whatever, so that we can say as a community, we have very similar missions in goals in terms of widening the space and in terms of amplifying our voices. How do we then support one another in a way with not only our words, not only our presence, but our dollars and our cents. So that we are doing just that—we are generating cultural capital. So then I know that if I have a program for a production that I'm doing, I'm going to go to you and say, "okay, do you want to advertise in here? Do you want to do something where, okay, so blessings, I will tell you what. You give people 10 percent off for mentioning that I'm doing 'Two Trains Running,' right? And then I will send people to you, and you send people to me and I will give you these discounted tickets, you know what I'm saying? Figuring out how to partner with different types of people—am I making sense?

>> LJ: You are talking about collective economics, which is, that's a very important aspect of a lot of different cultural traditions. But it's not really something that we put a lot of emphasis on here in the US. Collective economics, that is basically what you are saying.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Okay, I don't know it had a name for it. So what does it looks like to support each other artistically? So that the ecosystem. And like Hana said,

Los Angeles has an ecosystem that is so unique and so diverse. How can we make sure that each part is healthy so we have a healthy whole? And we really have to think about that when it comes to funding. Because that is a vital part of health for the institutions. It is key, it is not the only thing, I think a relationship is our greatest resource but funding is definitely key.

>> LJ: Yes, yes. Did you have anything to add, Hana?

>> HANA KIM: Umm, I am a little bit—I think I'm in a little bit different position because I don't have like—I don't organize the full picture myself. You know? But I guess like for my perspective, I tried to balance, you know, things that I try to utilize, like the kind of hard skill that is a little bit more capitalist-driven economy that I can actually like make resource for myself that like my equipment and my stuff like that are usually from like, maybe not the art that I'm proud of the most. But then I have kind of a base equipment that I—because I think for me, it's also like I'm a visual artist and I think for me, like one of the quotes I love is...I mean, I'm not using it in the very correct context, I don't think, but how I interpreted it is like “the job role of an artist is to make the revolution irresistible” That's kind of what I would like to do. So I don't devalue something looking beautiful. Like I mean that is kind of my job.

Like making something attractive so like unless otherwise, you probably might have passed it by, but you want to stop and listen to it. You want to stop and look at it because it draws your attention. I feel like that is my job, instead of like, we are saying like art is art but I'm a little bit, I think I know my limit in a sense that I'm not a writer.

>> LJ: Yes.

>> HANA KIM: Like I directed some videos but I'm not really a director-director for a feature-length storytelling arc but I can support it visually.

>> LJ: Yes.

>> HANA KIM: And I define myself to be that way.

>> LJ: Yes, I think that is so important, I mean, there is a level of aesthetics, right? That comes into play for the art form, you can't forget it. There are performance studies instead of theatre, just kidding. No shade to my performance study friends. So I think I probably got us off track. Y'all, please forgive me. I have been fighting this good fight all week long for Maroon Arts & Culture and I think I got us off topic and that is what I'm going through right now. But before we move into this next activity, I just want to put it to our panelists and see if you have any advice for our viewers and participants on how to stay true, like how do they stay true to the course? How do they stay true to the mission, stay true to the artistic point of view and push through the capitalism and push through, you know, the doubt, people being like, oh, you're an artist, that is not a true job, how do you stay true to the mission?

>> HANA KIM: I'm not sure if I'm answering this correctly but in practicality, whenever I'm feeling like I'm kind of going to not a great place, I feel like being disciplined always really helped me out. And being like, I mean personally, I don't think

being an artist is like being aloof, right? Like we are, I think being an artist actually, is the very opposite of that like being more listening to your own life and then daily practice and not disregarding like, you know. I don't have to do these trivial things because it's not high art, like, I don't think that way. So I think coming back to yourself and then trying to like live a life with the correct value, for me.

>> LJ: Mmm-hmm.

>> HANA KIM: So I'm trying to forge on.

>> LJ: That's great advice, what about you, Sophina, what do you think?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Yeah, I think she said something that is very key for me as an actor, for sure. Which goes back to daily practice and being disciplined and, you know, staying focused on the right thing, I think, helps because oftentimes we focused on product and that ritual doesn't hold a high place in value, you know?

>> LJ: Right.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: So, you know, cultivating things like what we talked about earlier, in terms of cultivating your imagination and cultivating empathy. And I mentioned Diana Castles earlier and imagine her studio was like, what that woman has given in terms of the ability to having a daily practice, cultivate, and deepen and widen my capacity as an artist, and knowing every single day that I'm in it because it's not just about me. Being an artist, you know people always once said oh, so actors are so self absorbed and they're so, you know, me, me, me, me, or aloof like Hana said or whatever. That is so the opposite. That is antithetical to anything about what artistry is. Because like you said, it is all mission-based, it is all about service, it is all about others. And constantly saying that, not only daily practice of your discipline but daily practice of that mentality.

>> LJ: Mmm-hmm. Yes, you know that's so great because I'm hearing going inside and coming back to your mission, but I'm also hearing discipline and I'm hearing mental focus, I'm hearing consistency, and so these are all things that we would have to remember that as artists, we have to do these things too. If we were basketball players, we would be in the gym practicing every day, so part of what I think is critical to staying true to your mission in seeing your art through, is that daily discipline and making sure you are consuming as much as you can, and staying up to date in your industry, and asking yourself, "how can I add to it?" And what Sophina said earlier, where is there silence, and how I can fill it? So I think that is definitely a critical aspect, just the life of the artist, what is it called? 'The Artist Way' or something like that, that book, if you guys have any resource, drop in the chat that can help artist stay focus day-to-day.

So the reason I wanted to start this conversation for this series is because as we go through these next 9 weeks, we will talk more about the practical aspects of being a creative and creating a career that reflects your identity as an artist. So we'll talk about budgets, and how to market your work and the structure of an arts organization and we will talk to some producers, we're going to have a Producers Panel. But I really feel like it's important and I really encourage our participants to let your artistic point of view be

your North star. Figure out what you want to say, what are you about. Who do you represent and what do you represent? And let that be your guide as you figure out what you want your career to look like.

Because like Sophina said at the top of the conversation, sometimes it feels like, “oh, this is everything I wanted.” And then you get there and you look around and you're like, “this is not actually what I wanted.” But if you start, especially since most of our participants are early in their career, if you start now figuring out your artistic point of view, then you can really start to create something that, you know, a career and a lifestyle for yourself that is in service to that.

So okay, somebody is sharing some great practices, that is a great segue. At the end of the summer session, Camille walked us through slides of how to develop your artistic manifesto and express your artistic view and I think that is important, as we go through this process and I am a big advocate of producing your own work and people will ask why you? And the more familiar you are with that answer, the more they will be inclined to listen to you.

So we're going to revisit that activity, we are going to talk—we are going to spend a little time now, these last 30 minutes talking about artistic perspective. We're gonna put up some prompts, and I encourage you all to answer in the chat so we can put them up on the screen. But before we do that, we do have to say goodbye to Hana. So say goodbye to Hana, thank you so much for your perspective and your insight and for your expert opinion, we really appreciate you. Thank you so much.

And I'm going to pull up this slide show, bye, Hana. I will pull up the slide show and share my screen with you all. And me and Sophina are gonna through and see if we can get some artistic perspective going. Y'all gotta bare with me now, hold on now. Let's see.

I literally told myself, let me practice the sharing the screen part before we get started because...all right. So, career advocacy, defining what you want and identifying proactive ways to help you achieve it. The main takeaway for me here is defining what you want. And then over the next 9 weeks, we will talk even more about how to achieve it and turn it into your creative career. So we will start off with, I want to build my brand and establish myself in the professional world. If you did this with us over the summer, I would really encourage you to maybe even revisit what you wrote over the summer and decide, and see if it's changed at all. Especially in, you know, with some people, we just found out Broadway is not coming back until next May. I don't know if that will affect anybody's vision so I would definitely encourage you to revisit this.

So how do I identify professionally, what is important to you and what do you value and what is your skill set? These are things that I would like for everybody to kind of reflect on. You can reflect on this later. We will go through something together. But these are things that you may want to reflect on later. And I think also, I'm going to link this to the Padlet so that you can revisit it.

And then Camille, she is so jolly on the spot, she's putting some of the words in the chat too so you can keep up. But what I really want it do together is this next one. So this is Camille's, if you remember it. So we are going to start with these stems: I am, I value, I

want, I fight for, I enjoy, I can.

So I'll start. I would love for Sophina to share her responses to these stems. If you can, but I will start, so that she can have some time to think and marinate on what she wants to say. So for me, I am a dramaturg, producer, and educator. I value arts education, cultural programming, and I value the amplification of marginalized voices. I want to support my fellow artists in the production of their work. And I fight for accessibility within arts and theatre spaces. I enjoy connecting with communities and making partnerships with people. And I can, the last one is I can. And I can not wait until I get this Maroon Arts and Culture rolling so that I can put all my friends on. That is not really official but that is how I feel. I can do anything that I set my mind to but what I really want to do is amplify marginalized voices, produce the work of independent artists, and support other people in creating their art. And then, that's for Maroon Arts and Culture. For me personally when people ask me what I do, I'm a dramaturg and my specialization is Black performance heritage—connecting past performances to contemporary experiences. I had to edit that statement five times before I was comfortable saying it to people.

So what do you think, Sophina? And to the people in the chat—hold on. So I am, I value, I fight for, I enjoy, I can—and the people that are in the chat, feel free to share your responses to these stems in the chat and we will put them up on the screen and we will share them with the group. What do you think, Sophina? Among these topics? Oh, hold on one second. Let me -- that was my bad, okay, go ahead.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: No, okay, talking to my head, I want to see even more later but I would say that I am an artist, an activist, a builder. I value relationship, I value connection with other people. I want —oh, I want—my goodness. I want all of us. I want us all to have autonomy, to have equity. I want us all to be whole and healed. I fight for artistic well-being, I fight for like you said, L.J., for marginalized voices to be amplified, I fight for autonomy, again, for those who feel as though they are powerless to affect change to know that they have value and that they are essential to our community as a whole. I enjoy...Prince, I'm sorry—no, that's not right, but I do. I enjoy, I enjoy this work that we do, you know? I enjoy just like conversations like these, I really do. And building relationship. And I can...I can...I can affect change. I can influence. I can use, you know, everything that I have been given and have been blessed with to help others and to build other people up.

>> LJ: That's beautiful. Yeah, you know, I should have did the professional thing and wrote all of this stuff out ahead of time, but to be honest with you, it's still something that I'm still reflecting on. You know, in my day-to-day. Especially the part what I value, and what I fight for, and what I enjoy. Because everything I value I cannot necessarily fight for, I would be fighting all day, I would be exhausted and passed out from fighting so much. And then what I value, I think is actually slowly changing because I'm a person that's always been fiercely independent. I've always been a person that really values their independence and values my freedom, but I'm realizing more and more that if I want to do what it is that I want to do then I have to be— I have to be able to depend on the community like we said earlier in the conversation. So these are just currently things that I'm still reflecting on now. Let's put up some...let's see. Okay.

Let's put up some of the, yes, some of the responses that we got in the chat. I am an artist, a creator, a storyteller, I want to represent my culture and fight the system, showing that we can make it. Yes! Send me more things. Oh, I just have little note of encouragement to everyone out there: if you put that you are an aspiring something in your statement, I will encourage you to remove aspiring out of the sentence. You are what you are, like we talked about earlier. You don't wake up one day and be like, you know what? I'm an artist now. You kind of know. So you ain't no aspiring, you already do it. Are you here and in the series with us and so you are clearly dedicated to your craft. I see so many people that want to put on for their culture and that are wanting to tell untold stories, that are valuing their families and their communities, and so this is beautiful to me because art is—

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Woo!

>> LJ: Yes, inclusivity and honesty and restorative justice, a fight for a safe world for my brothers. Ain't that true. Nobody can tell your story like you and the people that are a part of your community will be so grateful to see themselves represented, you know? And so that is why, before we start talking about anything else, how to be a producer, how to start a theatre company, you have to start with what the story that you are trying to tell. If we were in a production meeting that would be the first question, right? What story are we trying to tell here? Let me see some more.

Writer, director, producer, yes, working with actors. Next week, I will have my poll game ready. This week I didn't have my poll game ready, but I'm curious to know how many of our participants are actors, singers, artists...you know like, mostly we cater to theatre people but everybody does more than one thing and it's exciting to see that people are also comedians and also craftsmen, making things and producing. And shoutout to the dramaturges, nobody ever does that but me. No, yes. Dramaturgy is so critical because we are experiencing and people are wanting to tell diverse stories, but when you get into the production room for some of these stories, it's very homogenized. And my personal opinion is that dramaturgy is a way to bring more voices into the room. When I get into the room, you have my voice, but you also have the voices of the all the theorists and the historians that I have read. And you may not know how Langston Hughes feels about the piece, but you bring in a Black dramaturg, I will tell you how he felt. And I think it's important and multi-journey of the collective. Yes. This is beautiful, I'm happy to see what everybody is into and I hope we can support you all over the next few weeks to bring these missions to fruition, I really do.

I would encourage you all to, I will make sure that I put the link to this in the Padlet, but please come back, because as we go through this series, we will come back to that frequently. You know, we may be talking about Marketing and you will need to know, like I said what it is and what your artistic point of view is. So before we hang up for today, we have a few more minutes left. So I wanted to ask something that Sophina, if there was like, I wanted to ask if you feel like you could complete your mission in any other field? I know that sounds like a really—I feel like that is a really weird question, but sometimes when I feel overwhelmed by what it is that I decided to dedicate my life to, I do ask myself like, is there another way I could be doing this and doing this outside of the arts? Do you feel like your mission is dependent on this artistic endeavor?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: That is a really interesting question because the first thing I thought of is what would be the other thing, what would be another career path? And I would be like minister, but I don't think what we do is different than ministry, you

know what I'm saying? Because story is at the root of what, you know, story is creation, right? And regardless of whether we are a teacher, or whether we are an astronaut, or a physicist, whatever, we are all creating and making discoveries and building story so it's like a yes and a no.

>> LJ: It's a real question because I know several people who may have started off as artists, actors, writers, this kind of thing, but they found real purpose on the administrative side of our field and so they feel like they are able to fulfill their mission in their day-to-day jobs at the office. I have no shade on that, I say more power to them because we need them.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: They are creatives too, it's kind of like all the same, like, yes. Because God bless administrators, you know what I'm saying?

>> LJ: I know that's light. I know that's right and our friend Camille is an administrator and I see her working her mission in her day-to-day job as well. And I wanted to put that out to people, you know. Don't feel that you have to be some kind of performance artist in order to tell the story that you want to tell. If you do feel drawn to a 9 to 5, this conversation is still just as important for you, you know, because you might get, you know, you might get the opportunity dangled in front of you where you need to come back to ask yourself, does this fulfill the mission that I identify for myself? So that was a real question. You know maybe not, I have a hard time working for other people and working traditional hours on the job, so for me, this is what works best but yes, everybody does not have to take the same path. And that is going to be something that we will talk about quite a bit during this series, there is no one path to a creative career for yourself.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: That's right. That's right.

>> LJ: You kind of have to test the waters to see what is what and then you decide what is what, but if you have your mission and your point of view and you are clear about it then you can have that help decide the path you want to take. What was your path, Sophina, was it nontraditional or did you go through theatre programs?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Yeah, I would say mine was pretty traditional but I think that, and this is no shade to the University of Michigan because I go blue all day long, but I do think that there is part of me, and it's a large part of me, that understands and realizes and is trying to come out of some of the things that were ingrained in me by going into an institution that early in my life because it did shape me in a way that I'm trying to break out of the confines of that, if that makes sense. But my trajectory was pretty traditional, yeah.

>> LJ: What is that, just to put it out there, I told Camille, my whole point with this series, I'm like the Scooby Doo kids, revealing the mission. Can you help us what that is putting it out?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Like how I broke out of it?

>> LJ: Yes, what was your path?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: It was very specific, when I was younger, I had an opportunity to go to my middle school and high school. I did half a day of academics and half a day was theatre, so that was rare. And, I realize and do you want the tea of tea? Like you want some real tea-tea? Okay, we will do this. So I realize that, you know, I tell this story about how—I told this to a few people but it's like, I was in this educational program and we would do performances. We would do like 2 productions a year and it wasn't until I thought back to this recently, and I thought about the junk that was coming up for me later in life, and I thought back to these moments where we would do these plays in high school. And in this program we would have like this theatre makeup that they would bring out, right? And I remember always having to search a really long time for anything that was really close to my shade so I had a lot of colleagues, you know my classmates or whatever that were white that would get being their shade right away. And their shade, this is a true story, the shade of makeup that the name of their shade was Leading Lady.

>> LJ: Oh, snap.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: That's a true story. That was the name of the shade of makeup. The name of my makeup that I was looking for and I would get it and it was Tani. And what that did for me in an educational setting, I was explicitly learning about theatre but what I implicitly learned was designing somebody's else definition of theatre. For me I was implicitly learning how to be a white lead. So if I want to be a lead, I have to look and sound a certain way and that happens a lot of the time in institutions, I will have to say. And I one time went to college, and I am not saying this is anybody's fault or anything like that, but what I am saying is that there was something implicit in that instruction and I internalized that and it took root and it was a faulty narrative that took root as truth, and that influenced a lot of my early years. And it wasn't until I started realizing the value of my blackness, the value of me stepping into who I actually was, my real identity, not a bunch of should-haves, not other people's perception of what they expected out of me when I stepped into a room or whatever, but it is that kind of stuff. That is the work I have been doing lately in terms of really making sure that I'm living from my truth.

>> LJ: Yes, yes. But you know, to—I mean, yeah, that is real trash. Leading Lady. Like I want to be leading lady. You really have to desire that white makeup. That is the crazy, and I don't know who makes that makeup but I will Google them as soon as we get off the call to tell them to make sure they don't do it anymore.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: They don't do it anymore.

>> LJ: Oh, don't make me use my dramaturgy, I can do the research. But it's one of those hard things you had to learn because if you had not been in that environment you would have not asked yourself that question. But there was a better way, like surely I could have learned this without feeling this way.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: That's right.

>> LJ: My path is super untraditional. I only did theatre stuff and I came out of

high school and I assumed I will do theatre and get treated the same as everybody else and be on Broadway by the time I'm 25, and it will be no problem. And I realized other factors at play that I was not aware of. People going to performing arts schools their whole life. I'm a public school kid from the rural, right up to my master's program, and I was behind and I didn't even know it. And the fact that I could be behind by the time I'm 19/20 years old—I'm already behind and didn't even realize it and that kind of really set me outside of the mainstream from the very beginning because I didn't go to the performing high school or the fancy undergrad. I don't have the BFA. I have the BA, and that kind of thing, and I started to teach and maybe one of these weeks I can get into that, but that was one of the most educational experiences of my life. I was seeing Black and Brown students learning theatre and telling their stories—telling the stories of their families. You know, we always do a unit on world tradition, on folklore, and seeing them get excited and share their culture with the class, that is when I really looked around and I said, you know what, this this is not a me problem, this is not a me problem. This is an other people problem because the kids, you know, kids know, they know what's real and they know how things should be.

And so I was able to look at my students and know that that is the model right there that we should follow. That is the model that we should follow, and I think not some of these other things and my experience is real nontraditional, but I wouldn't change it for the world. When I was younger, I thought, “man I wish I can go back in time and do the research and go to a fancy school and do it all over again,” but because I'm happy where I am, I wouldn't change it because I wouldn't be where I am if it wasn't for that. And it comes back for our Working in Theatre participants out there. Don't doubt yourself. If there is an experience out there, give it a try. I mean, especially since, we're all young, you know, you got time to explore things. And don't feel that there is any one way to do this theatre thing or this creative thing or this art thing. There is no one way to do any of it.

So discovering a path that works for you is going to be for you and then, one day you will look back and be like, “man that was crazy. But thank goodness that is the path I chose.” So hopefully.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: That is what I say, you can always see the value at the mountain top but there is value in that valley too.

>> LJ: That is true, there is value in the valley. That is the take away for y'all—there is value in the valley. And especially during this weird unprecedented time we are living in, it's so easy that I spent all this money on a theatre degree and now we have no theatre left. But as we discussed earlier, it's not that the field is gone, it's just changing.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Changing.

>> LJ: It's just changing. And in some ways it becomes more accessible and in some ways there are still more challenges, and we will learn from this moment in time. And the theater that happens on the other side of this moment in time is, I think will be very inspiring and I'm looking forward to that.

>> SOPHINA BROWN: On the other side of your greatest obstacle is your

greatest opportunity.

>> LJ: That is true. A nugget. On the other side of your greatest obstacle is your greatest opportunity. So I'm looking for the artists of tomorrow. What the people will come up with. So you don't have to be here, but you are here because you are trying to get knowledge and you have a story to tell, and I'm here to encourage you to tell it and I cannot wait to see what our future artists come up with.

We have a few minutes and if anybody has any questions for Sophina, we can put it up on the screen. It could be about your artistic point of view or about her journey and I'm following along on Youtube here but, yes. And you know what, it's never too late for your dreams. I want you to know that I went to grad school and I was post-20s. I won't say how old but I was post-20s when I decided to go and I taught for years and I needed something different, so it's never too late. And we have a couple of questions. Sophina, what is one thing that you would tell your younger self in hindsight of your creative journey?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: Oh my goodness...you know, I would probably, I mean, it's such a collection of everything that we just talked about, right? But I think I would add to that saying, you know, other people's successes are not your failures. That there is no timeline that you need to kind of be attached to, because I got into a state of mind where I was like, I was qualifying everything based on the age that I was and where I wanted to be by the time I was—kind of what you were talking about before. And if I didn't obtain that thing at that particular time, then that was the "failure." There are things that are seasonal and I would tell my younger self that everything was going to come in exactly when it was supposed to at exactly the right time, because hindsight 2020 if that gone the way it did, I wouldn't have been ready. So everything is in preparation. And in terms of discipline, I would tell myself as a youngster, just like, "stay on track, discipline and daily practice and don't get caught looking to the left and the right, just stay focused on the truth."

>> LJ: That is the truth. My mama called me and said "I'm tired, just focus on what you have to do today."

>> SOPHINA BROWN: That is right, if have you to brush your teeth, just brush with a toothbrush, right there.

>> LJ: Another question, in COVID times, how has it changed you and how have you adapted to it as an artist?

>> SOPHINA BROWN: In COVID times, what has changed? A lot has changed. I feel like I'm on a constant swivel because there is always a pivot and I'm sure you know about this, being a Founder of an organization. You know, there is so much happening and you can get easily caught up in the wait of things. You know, in the heaviness that is kind of happening. But as we said before, you know, there is a lot of opportunity in this moment but I have had to just really stay flexible and, you know, adaptability is key, and I think I've learned about adaptability the most during this time because you can make a plan and then God says, oh, that's cute but here's what's going on, you know what I mean? And you have to adjust. And I will say, you know,

there's been a lot of—there's a lot of quiet in the midst of noise. During COVID there is time to reflect and to really get kind of attuned to what is really important and what is really priority and to never—to not lose sight. For me, this is always a challenge in COVID times, to help with this not losing sight. There are things that are urgent and there are things that are important. And to not conflate the two, you know?

>> LJ: Yes, yes, making priorities. Well thank you so much Sophina for joining us today. You have really dropped some wonderful nuggets for me and our participants in this Working in Theatre series, I really appreciate you taking the time.