



Hummingbird Humanity

an LGBTQ+ owned business

LGBTQxBLM

with Brian McComak, Rana Reeves, Sean Coleman, and Peppermint

This episode was originally recorded on June 23, 2020

-Brian: Before I go take off the screen share, first of all, I want to say, hello, everyone and happy pride. Although pride isn't a celebratory this year. And we'll talk about that in a few minutes. It still is pride. And so we can say happy pride. I just want to encourage everyone, if you haven't already had a chance to consider making a donation to Destination Tomorrow, I just realized it looks like we may have an extra M in the word tomorrow there. We missed that in our editing process. So, but DestinationTomorrow.org. So please, please consider making a donation. I'm excited to be able to support this organization, which came on my radar a couple of years ago. And we'll talk a little bit more about the work that Destination Tomorrow does here in a couple of minutes as well. So I will, I'm gonna stop sharing. It looks like we have quite a few people in the group, so we can, we can go ahead and get started. So hello everyone. Welcome to our special event, centered around the intersection of pride, which is honoring the LGBTQ plus community and Black Lives Matter conversations and actions that are happening today. I'm really delighted to have a really phenomenal group of panelists with us. There's Sean Coleman, who is the executive director of Destination Tomorrow, Ronna Reeves, who's the founder of Ronnaverse, and then Peppermint will be joining us. So I promise that she'll be here. For those of you who came just to see Peppermint, she is making a guest appearance, so she should be joining us sometime here in the next 10 or 15 minutes. And then she'll be with us for a little bit. So we'll get to hear from her as well. So before we kick into some more formal introductions from the panelists, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, I, you know, the pride feels different this year. And I think that's a good thing. And actually is hopefully a moment for us to just take a step back and think about the origin of pride and the purpose of pride and what happens in pride. Pride has wonderfully in many ways, become very celebratory in recent years. And while there is a lot to celebrate and we have made progress, there is still a lot of work to be doing. Oh, it looks like Peppermint may be here. So we may need to make Peppermint... I'm going to promote her to panelists. Look at that. She's like, "I'm here," . Hopefully Peppermint, I see Peppermint's there. So we'll put her on panels. So maybe she'll come online with, as soon as she, there she is. Thanks for raising your hand.

-Peppermint: I was I doing the wrong thing, but I obviously raised my hand afterwards.

-Brian: Amazing. Well, Peppermint so glad you could be with us. Thanks for, thanks for joining early. I'm so glad you could join. So, so I'll, we'll come back to the panelists again in a minute. So Peppermint and excited you're here. The, so pride feels, different this year and not as celebratory, but I think it's, it's a good, a good reminder that pride really started as a, as a riot, as a true protest. And it was actually started by and many, one of the key individuals who started the pride movement, it was a black trans

woman, Marsha P Johnson, and so I think we're personalizing her name everywhere. And I love the reminder that these members of the community that are still marginalized in so many ways. And I happen to be as a gay white man, very privileged. You know, this is a time for us to remember where pride started and to honor the other members of the community that we want to assist and elevate those voices and stories. So I'm so delighted that Sean and Peppermint have joined to share their stories as members of the black trans community. And then of course, my friend, Ronna, who has shares this passion for elevating voices of color and members of the LGBTQ plus community. So, so let's dive in to some introductions. I'll invite you each to share a little bit more about why you're here and who you are. And Sean, I want to start with you because this event is benefiting Destination, why we're all here and as to support the, the black community, the communities of color. And I know that that, that intersection of your work is every day. So welcome.

-Sean: Thank you. And thank you so much for having me and giving me an opportunity to speak on this platform. A little bit about Destination Tomorrow with the Bronx LGBT center, which in and of itself is historical because it's the first time an LGBT center in New York state has been run by black and brown trans people. We became the center and like we started the organization in 2009, but we became the actual physical LGBT center in 2017. So it's a testament to the work that we do, that we continued to get the support of our elected officials, so we can continue to do the work. I started it really out of, I didn't see myself in a lot of these spaces, so it's after hours, so we can just be as honest and real as possible. I didn't see myself. I didn't, I wasn't represented in a lot of the spaces that folks deemed these safe, affirming community centers. And when I first came out and first started doing the work, there wasn't a space for black trans people period. There wasn't a space for trans people period. when I first came out. Trans women were still being mis-gendered. They were still being captured in the data as men who sleep with men. So there was a lot of work that needed to be done. And there wasn't a lot of organizations that were doing that work. So I felt that it was incredibly important that we had that representation from the top. So we started Destination Tomorrow as a volunteer-led organization. And we've since been able to grow into a multimillion dollar organization and provide services for not just trans members of the community, but all LGBTQ members. We're also a housing provider. We do emergency housing for trans formal or current sex workers, 25 or older. And we're a grant manager. We manage a grant called the Transcend Community Impact Fund. It's a million dollar fund with the support of Gilliad. We go back and we find grassroots agencies on a national level. We provide small grants. I'm not going to say small, the range from 15 to \$30,000 per cycle for those grassroots-led organizations. And lastly, I make it sound like I do a lot, but lastly, I also run a consultanting company, Sean Ebony Coleman Consulting. And I started the consulting company because folks are always talking about diversity and inclusion, right. And I didn't think that they were being honest in how they were presenting those things, right? So I wanted to include equity because you can speak about diversity and inclusion all you want, but if we're not coming to the table with equitable solutions, then your work can possibly be in vain. So I started the consulting company this year, and we're doing some amazing things to make sure that the organizations and companies we work with are inclusive of all communities.

-Brian: Awesome. Well, do you sleep is really the question I have right now.

-**Sean:** No, that's why I'm in therapy so long.

-**Brian:** I love it, I think if you're not a New Yorker if you're not in therapy.

-**Sean:** Right, right.

-**Brian:** Well, Sean, thank you for being here. And actually I should share it. Sean and I had a chance to meet two years ago through a partnership that we worked on together at Coach, the Coach brand. And it was really, and actually Ronna was the person who made that introduction and connection. So we've just recently reconnected, so glad that we reconnected. And hopefully we can do more work together.

-**Sean:** Yes, I hope so as well.

-**Peppermint:** So next I want to go to Peppermint who I've also had a chance to do work with also at the same company. She joined us last year, so just a year ago for our pride event of tapestry, where we talked about gender representation in fashion, and was one of those panelists that just, she told it like it is. And so when I was doing this event, I'm like Peppermint has to be here. So Peppermint, we all know you, but feel free to share why you said yes to today. And I know this is such an important conversation to you. So just to kick things off, we'd love to hear from you a little bit. There we go. Oh. You look beautiful though. No. And this is the joy of live events. Okay, we're gonna let Peppermint have a moment and we'll, switch over to Ronna for a second while Peppermint does the tech, no. Okay, well, so the eyes aren't on Peppermint, We'll switch to Ronna. So I want to talk about Ronna for just a minute. Ronna and I worked together two years ago. So we also met two years ago, and Ronna works helping companies with PR and marketing efforts that center around a variety of programs that sort of connect with current pop culture and what's happening in our world today. And a lot of his work centers around the communities of color and the LGBTQ plus community. So that intersection is one area that Ronna really specializes in. And I love the work that he does and helping companies think about their representation externally. But how we got to work together is, as Ronna will I'm sure, echo, is we can't do the external branding and marketing unless the internal actually matches that work. So we have a chance to do that a couple of years in a row working on those programs. And so now we're finding new ways to partner now that I'm in this new venture. So Rana I'm so glad that you're here, and we'd love for the group to hear a little bit more about what you do.

- **Rana:** Can you hear me?

- **Brian:** We can hear you.

-Rana: So yeah, thanks for having me, Brian, Sean, it's always good to be on a panel with you. So I own an agency called Ronnaverse, and literally what we do is we look at the intersection between commerce and culture in some sort of way. And I think that more and more, what we're looking at is kind of how human rights intersects within commerce and culture, in some sort of ways. We work with a range of different brands. We do a lot of Unilever work. We got the Equinox, we work for Coach, for General Motors. And I think even three or four years ago, I worked very different. It was very much about how interacting fashion, art design and music, and human rights forseen is very much like a political thing. Like you had to stay apolitical, right, as Coach kind of shifted, so has the viewpoint of the cultural world and also the client base. I think the other thing that is really important, a part of the reason that I moved to America is that American culture is a melting pot of kind of global activity like Me Too, Black Lives Matter, these sorts of things, they kind of like the contemporary Western view of queer culture. It bubbles up from America and hates globally. So I think for me, it is critical to open an agency here where I could see what was going on and how brands should integrate that both internally and externally in terms of the way that they do their coms. I think, you know, what I'll end with is that we're in a unique moment where the days of sitting on the fence have gone. Right, and I think you're either with it or you're not. And I love that because I think it's really making people have to look, it's like, this is a crazy time, but I don't know. Like I'm also so excited because you know, nothing changes if nothing changes, right?

-Brian: I love that, that's right. Nothing changes if nothing changes. So one of the other things I'll just highlight there and we'll talk more about this as well as we move forward is, there is not only what, I'm sensing real conversation that's happening now, but there are real intense, there's a real intentionality around action. I'm hoping that that action is sustained, but I'm really excited to see that there's finally some, there are people who are waking up paying attention and saying, we have to do better.

-Rana: Cause people have publicly saying stuff. Once you say it publicly, you're on the hook. So part of me doesn't care if you dig it for the right reasons. It's just get it done. Let's open doors, let's empower communities. You know, Sean has been fundamental to my approach in moving away from this idea of acceptance through to respect, right? I don't need your acceptance. Queer communities don't, trans communities don't, people of color. We don't need your permission to exist to be, to live, to thrive. What we deserve and is our right, is that is a seat at the table. And what I'm seeing now is if you're not going to give us a seat at the table, we'll build our own, and it's going to be better, bigger, badder, and it's gonna sell more. And that's why brands are there.

- Brian: I love that, I love that. I actually, I love both of those things that there's work. We're going to make it like we're not waiting anymore. And I say, we in the broader sense of marginalized communities, but you know, I think right now the focus is on the black community and rightly so, and we have to do better. And so there's that. And then if you've said it out loud, if you put out that public statement, your CEO has said something that you're gonna, there are gonna be people that are gonna come back and

hold you accountable one way or the other. So it gives us, it gives us the room to make change in a new way. Peppermint you're back. I'm hoping we can hear you.

-Rana: I hope so too.

-Brian: We can you hear you! Joy, that lovely voice Well, Peppermint, I actually, I said we all know you and I'm fairly confident that everyone on this call knows Peppermint, but you know, I know Peppermint, you were a contestant on RuPaul's drag race, and then came out publicly with your identity during that time, which I think was really powerful and really inspirational to so many people. And certainly to me and I love when people share their stories. 'Cause I know the importance of being able to see myself in the story of others or the success of someone else. So thank you for doing that and having that bravery and courage, so welcome today. And I'll let you share what you'd like to, as we open and then we'll dive into some more of the conversation with the group.

-Peppermint: Yeah, I'm really happy to be here. Thank you very much. I guess it's very refreshing. I was able to hear some of what you all were talking about before I barged in again. And yeah. I just think that we are in a different era and a different time. I certainly remember as Sean was talking about moments and exchanges and experiences, whether they were work related or on television or socially, where it was obvious that the plan that the intention was not to consider me as a black person or a trans person or a black trans person. And, and it's really refreshing that, that sort of changing. And, then I know that there's so many people like instantly were able to, I think, rightfully so, connect themselves with the online activism that was happening around and the speaking out and the protesting that was happening in the past like month or so. And I think that's great, but obviously it's just like just the very beginning. And I know that I even saw some, some posts online that were saying something like, even though your social media feed has returned back to normal, we're still in this fight. We're still in this conversation. And it really does seem like we are on the precipice of something great. We're making a, like it seems like we're making the biggest paradigm shift that I've ever seen across the board. And I'm hopeful that it really encompasses sort of these intersectional identities that will bring along with it. Not only anti-racism that we're seeing with many companies, corporations and individuals. I want to speak out publicly in support or acknowledge anyway, NASCAR, which I, you know, I don't know that it's the biggest change that anyone's ever had to personally sacrifice saying no flags, but I do acknowledge that it is something that I would have never expected and something that goes above and beyond what I think that their fans and supporters were expecting as well. And so we have those moments, but I'm also hopeful that we'll be able to bring in continuing the conversation and bring into the future into this new age of accountability. Not only, anti-racism not only reorganizing and defunding police forces, but also the Me Too movement also, you know, just mantling patriarchy and taking a new look at how we, you know, relate to all those ideals and obviously the LGBTQ equality and efforts to kind of inform people and bring them into the fold. These things are all related. They're, I don't know. And someone who's anti-trans or LG, I really do, I can't say that I don't know, but I really do think that the people who are anti-trans and anti LGBT overall have probably said some racist things as well, and the misogynists are generally anti-trans, and you know, so like all these things intersect and I feel I think it's important

that we try to bring them all along with us and continue those conversations. And when we talk about Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd, we continue to talk about Breonna Taylor because of we're not uplifting the women that are involved in this conversation, which shows that the disparate nature that we're dealing with, men versus women, and how we focus on the men, but not focusing on the women. And then when we talk about women, we have to include the trans women that are being murdered. We have to, you know, like all these things are connected. And so I'm happy to continue the conversation. Thanks for having me.

-Brian: I love that. I have like 700 questions. So what I want to go next though, is I want, I just want to go back to the personal stories here, and, for those of you who are watching, I'm sure you'll have your questions as well. Feel free to put questions in Q and A. I did see that there's one there and we'll come to that in a couple minutes, but I, you know, I want to start with Sean. And Sean, before we came on today, you were sharing. And I know you, you have, you have come out openly as a black trans man, and you've chosen to do work to support communities of color and the LGBTQ plus community. I also know that that can be exhausting. And you were sharing that like right now, even you were always using your voice to help others. And now there's a world coming to you and others that share your identities like yours for help and understanding. So I'd love to, just for all us to understand what that's been like for you and how do you find sort of peace on that journey along the way?

-Sean: It's been exhausting, right? Because I already give so much to do the work. And then when you look at the, those intersections, like being a black man, cause you don't know that I'm a trans man upon initially meeting me, right? So it's that whole presenting as black and being perceived as a threat and what that actually means. And then recognizing that if something were to happen to my black trans body, that most black men wouldn't show up because they don't either understand and or support. So I'm being perceived as something that's not even accepted within the space that I'm being perceived as. So it gets incredibly complicated, right? And I've always shown up. So the Black Lives Matter movement and marches and rallies, when one of my trans sisters is hurt and it becomes exhausting because it's like, who would show up for me in the event that something ultimately were to happen to me? And how do I make, how do I make them understand that until we all fight for each other, no one's ever going to receive the equity or freedom or liberation that we're looking for? So it's incredibly exhausting because you have to deal with some that toxic masculinity and that fragile masculinity, that folks are still afraid for whatever reason to have discussions around the exclusion. Sometimes even in the LGBT spaces, this is like, well, it's pride. So why do we have to, we talk about race and I'm like, you didn't really ask me that. Did you like them not being able to connect it and wanting me to just show up with my rainbow flag or my trans flag, and then like put all of those other things behind me, knowing that I can leave at any moment and be hurt. So, and then constantly being expected to teach, like folks that I get the strangest questions and it's like, you can Google some of this, like this, like there's Google for that. Like I wish they didn't want so much free labor, right? Like we're experts in our own lives yet. We are unpaid experts. Folks come to us immediately. They'll drain us and tap us dry. Co-op everything we just gave them. And then we presented as their own. And now they have these multimillion dollar contracts or they're running these multimillion dollar organizations and then possibly give me a portion of a, even though it was my labor. So, and that's increased, right. So it's just incredibly, incredibly exhausting. How

do I manage it? Cigars. I smoke a lot of cigars, but seriously, that is why me doing the work of my consulting work is so important, right? Because even in my role, as the ED of Destination Tomorrow, there's still some things that I don't, or won't say as the primary consultant at desk, Sean Ebony Coleman, I'm going to tell you exactly what you need to do to get this, right. Oh, this is, it's not PG, right?

-Brian: You just be you.

-Sean: Okay. So I'm going to tell you exactly what's necessary to get it right. And something you guys were speaking about earlier and it's like, action, action, action. Who defines what that action is, right? Because it's the same folks that I've held up. These systems of oppression and erasure, it's up to you to decide what the action is. And you're still not coming to community or inviting those most, the most marginalized folks to the table to help you decide what action looks like. Is it still a win because you can do the bare minimums and then cloaking in this, Oh, but Black Lives Matter. We understand that we're with you and here's what we've done. And it wasn't what we asked you to do. So I think what I'm really trying to say is the narrative has to come from us. And if you don't understand what that means, then rather than asking for free labor, hire a black trans person, black, trans, I know I'm wholesome, you can hire me, but I know a host of folks that you can hire that will help you construct your policies, a new agenda, a social media campaign. There's so many things that you can do to make sure you get it right. This moment is vital. We have to make sure we get it right.

-Brian: Yeah. Thank you, Sean. And I think that that's, I mean, that's just something that I remember Ronna and I talking about a lot when we started working together of you know, and I, in that role, I was in a corporate entity and were we asked for favors, we're asking often asking for favors, and help from the most marginalized communities. And we should pay them just like we would pay anyone else.

-Sean: And if I may ask for favors from the most marginalized, but when it's time to like start an aggressive campaign of giving you oftentimes overlooked, those same marginalized communities and go to larger well-funded organizations to support, especially during pride, you see them popping up these organizations that have been dominant funds and multimillion dollars in the bank. Yet when you want that free labor, you still come back to marginalized communities and ask us to give them to give to you.

-Brian: Yeah, it's a good reminder for all of us in those corporate roles. And fortunately I can say for the, for the company I previously worked for did, right. I think, and really tried to do right. And sometimes it takes some honest conversations, but through work with Ronna and others, I believe that that organization does the right thing. So it's sometimes we have to do some work to get people there, Peppermint, I have a feeling that you probably have some of the same feelings and experiences. You are a, surprising then what as what Sean's just shared. Cause you're, you're a voice, that, for this community that you're, you're an activist as well, and you have a public stage. So, you know, I'm curious what it,

what it's been like for you recently and to be, to see what's happening and what that, how that's impacted you personally.

-Peppermint: Well, it's been, this has been, I thought last June was really overwhelming in New York city, celebrating WorldPride having the world pride and the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising, having the opportunity to talk a lot and really acknowledge Marsha P Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, Stormy, and really like engaging like nonstop for a whole month last year. And, and I was thinking to myself, when, you know, at the beginning of this year, Oh, when June runs around, it'll just be, it's going to be very different because it's not going to be so crazy. And we won't, it's just going to be a typical June as we've had before, which, you know, at least on, at that speed. Right, and it definitely has been quite very different. And like I said, if the world is making a paradigm shift, that includes me, I'm involved in that I'm changing how I connect to all of these things. And I think one of the things, one of the reasons why, there's two reasons why we can't immediately follow the impulse necessary. Well, I won't, when I choose not to follow the impulse to take a break and just like, say, I'm done other people can do that obviously. But the reason why I choose not to follow that impulse is because I think that obviously there's so much, there's 450 more years of work that has to be done, that's the first thing. And then the second thing is, you know, I don't think we're going to all get to that area, that finish line. Some of us may not get to that area. We may never all be on the same page with relation, in relation to all these topics we've been talking about, but it's important that we all not only hold each other accountable for and keeping them up to speed and making sure that we're using the right language and making sure that we have the proper initiatives and including the right voices. But I also think we have to sort of interrogate ourselves and our relationship to all of these different things. What I said and done that has maybe come off a certain way or been viewed a certain way. Not only am I past, but also currently, and we all have a relationship to misogyny, racism, transphobia, sexism, xenophobia, you know, we all have a relationship to those things in one way or another. I'm not, it's not binary. Like they're either a perpetrator or you're not for me. I try to think of it in term and in more nuanced terms. And so I think in that way, there's always more work to be done.

-Brian: Absolutely, absolutely, thank you. Well, I think what Sean and Peppermint, have both shared, I think is a nice lead in to this question for Rana, but I think all of you will have a point of view on this, which is know when it comes to brands, taking political stances on issues, what is your recommendation on how to showcase that they're following up with actions as well?

-Rana: I think, look, for me, there's a difference between a political issue and human rights, right? Human rights are unequivocal. There's no gray area for me. And that's the first thing that I look at and I talk to brands about, cause I think that's a copout. That's like saying it's just a copout. And so I'm having these uncomfortable conversations with brands at the moment is, you know, would you treat trans' rights in the same way as abortion rights? All of these sorts of things that you're just like, yeah, fine. We'll talk about that. The other thing is that, you know, human rights and not philanthropy, right? That's the other thing that I kind of talked to them about that the people die, right? They are marginalized, they're terrorized, right. It's just not the same conversation. So that's the first thing that I talk to brands

about. Then it's always about, look, where do I step aside? So I will go into these spaces, which are still predominantly white and the clients are white. They'll be 30 of them in there. They're all white. And you know, I'll talk, I'm not going to have a conversation with you about Black Lives Matter because I'm not black. What I'm going to do is tell you, you're going to meet with these people who are black, and they're going to tell you what's up, right? I'm not going to have a conversation with you about the Latin X community. I'm going to say you hire some Latin X people and let's look at it. So a lot of what I've had to deal with is, it's like a structural racism inside brands where, you know, I can give you some examples of the things, you know, creative directors that are, we can't find any one black, or we can't find anyone trans to make a film. We can only find people in front of the camera. We will only pay you 90 days payment, which excludes people that can't afford to not get a check in 90 days. Another one of my favorites is, if you look at marginalized communities, people have to do what they have to do to get the money they have to get. So you're either with them or you're not. So I'm not down for casting trans women of color. And then you have an issue with how they've had to support themselves when they're marginalized. You're either in or you're out. And so I'm very up front with peak brands about that. And then it's about creating a structure and an environment where as Sean talked about where the table is set, right. I think that a lot of what I've had to look at is, you know, Brian, you know, this, I may be more on the flight than the flight side of things. So I kind of, I've had to look at this idea as well of like teachable moments. Because I want to go in and I want to take all of my homophobia and racism. I've experienced and beat you with it. You know, white girl called Chelsea. Who's not understand, but that's not what I'm here to do. I'm here to, as you know, other people I've talked to, I'm here to open a door, right. And make sure that those doors are not just kept open, but it's every aspect of that journey, right? It's not hiring black faces or brown faces or trans faces or queer faces, right. It's behind the camera. How is that working? It's the production company. How is that working? It's the ad agency. How is that working? And a lot of these conversations are really uncomfortable, but the bottom line is as then I'll keep coming back to commerce, right, which is the thing that will move these businesses is shifting 50% of gen Z in this country, nonwhite, and out of 20 major cities in the US, I think 17 of them are majority black and brown population. The times are changing whether people want to or not. And it's the figures that speak, right? So it's commerce that is changing. And if commerce, if black and brown people, queer people, women are driving commercial change and that's why brands have to change and let's do it. And that's the key for me is I'm doing that. And I think, I think we're in such a, an exciting time in the, this is a C suite conversation. I'm not dealing with the black junior account exec at the agency. I'm not dealing with that. I'm dealing with like, you know, the CMO, the CEO, because on the one side, things are changing. On the other side if you don't change, they will take your business down. So it's up to you. And quite frankly, I'm all for it. So I think the doors are opening. And I think that it's about understanding where I start and where I stop. And it's my job to use my privilege that I have to open those other doors. Because for decades, the brown world, the creative world has stripped these communities of creative equity, right? The look, the lexicon, the visual style, the creativity, all of it, right. Without any assurance, it's payback. So, you know, I won't do it now, Brian, because then I know who's on the line, but you know, I can name names still this year pride. I will come out and say this, that it took me like, I'm so in love with the Coach campaign that we've just done. Because it shows queer people kissing. I'm so sick of seeing prior campaigns that don't put anyone together. That everything is so like, you know, let's just have it so natural. Let's like, let's not offend any straight people. Every single pride campaign I've done this year. And to it, the brands have agreed with me that this is pride's a queer moment. It's not a moment to educate new straight person about it right. It's for queer people by queer people, cast by

queer people, all of that. And every single campaign this year has been like that from the ones that I've done. So kudos to the brands, because they're willing to do that. But these are the shifts that are happening even a year ago. I'm not sure I could have had those conversations.

- **Brian:** Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely, well, and what I, what I have really come to learn is that we need people like Yurana, and this is true for Sean and Peppermint as well, who are activists who are pushing those of us in corporate America, who are inside as influencers and decision makers to open our eyes. I've learned so much from you Ronna, which has helped me do work better internally in support of other communities. And that's what I need to do. Well, I want to come, I'll come back to that point in a second. Pepper, I know you have to head out to your next event here in a moment, but any final words or thoughts or things you'd like to share with us before you?

-**Peppermint:** Well, I really love what what's been said in this, in this conversation around. I think that's fantastic. And I'm just really, I'm really grateful that we're just able to have these conversations that people are interested enough and listening. Cause I know that it wasn't that long ago as far, maybe even a year ago that we wouldn't have been able to have these, these sort of conversations where everyone at least sort of realized that it was important to have all the different people at the table. That there's, again, there's still very far to go, but I think we can do it. I think as long as we stay energized. And I definitely believe that the sort of partnership with, you know, folks marching in the street, how that connects to people being inspired by that on social media and then people brands and companies being inspired by that to, you know, implement these changes into their campaigns. And they're hopefully more than just their campaigns into their offices and their higher up offices. And then the world of entertainment working harder to not only tell stories and even more nuance to find point way, but also again, implementing these changes just system-wide. I know that that's a conversation that is just beginning on Broadway. And so we'll see what Broadway looks like when we come back in 2020. Anyway, it's been great to be here. Thank you all so much for having me. I'm so sorry that I have to leave so soon, but happy pride.

-**Brian:** You have lives to change. So thank you for clearing up our heads with us.

-**Peppermint:** All right, everyone, thank you, bye, bye.

-**Brian:** Thanks Peppermint. Well we'll continue the conversation from there, you know, around brands. And actually before I forget, I know we didn't get to talk about this, but Peppermint also originated the first non-binary character role on Broadway in "Head Over Heels," which was a phenomenal role and a phenomenal, "Head over Heels" was a really fantastic show that depicted diversity in ways that I can't recall seeing on Broadway. And I really loved the way that that show challenge some of our perspectives and norms cause entertainment has such power to do that. So I'm really glad that Peppermint could be with us for a few minutes. I want to go back and I actually, I want to, I know I go back and forth when I

do have conversations about whether I acknowledge the places I worked before or not. It's not a secret it's on my LinkedIn profile, but I edited out a lot because of the work I do. So as, as Ronna mentioned, you know, we've mentioned the Coach brand a couple of times and tapestry, which includes Kate Spade and Stuart Weitzman. You know, one of the things that I really appreciate about the leaders of that company is it is a place where, you know, they, the organization leaders wouldn't say that they have it perfect, but they are, they are truly trying and they do truly listen and they listen to people like Ronda and they listened to people like me and to say, how do we get this right? How do we make sure that we are representing these communities internally and externally in ways that are authentic and real, and how do, how are we continuing to foster and grow our commitment in new and different ways? So I want to just give kudos to that organization cause it's one of the places and there are others that we could highlight that I think are doing some really good work. Sean, I'm curious, you know, as you know, you have these intersections with the, with corporations every day and you've already shared some, some thoughts as well, but you know, any other, as you think about representation in, in everything companies do, whether it's internal from employee populations or what they're depicting in their content, whether they're media advertising, marketing, what's your perspective? And I also know you beyond your own perspective, you also work with the community of people that are impacted by all of these messages in very real ways or employment hiring practices as well. So I just love to hear from your thoughts of how it affects you in the community that you serve with and work with every day.

-Sean: I think we always start off hopeful and sometimes we're often disappointed because it doesn't seem that there is any intention on sustainability, right? It almost feels like whether it's pride or they're reacting to something that has actually happened. They are put together a campaign happens is gone and it's no more thought to it. I think what we would love to see is a bit more intention, particularly around representation with, within those boardrooms and within that corporate structure, because we know that that's in fact how things happen, how things are changed, right? So it has to happen on an executive level. We have to make sure that the executive, we begin to have these discussions and change hearts and minds with those executives who are then going to come down and say, this is the direction I want the company to go in. I don't know if oftentimes those executives are as connected to marginalized communities as they could or should be and figuring out ways to have discussions. And this is an excellent forum, right? I think this is the one thing that COVID provided was an opportunity for us to sit still long enough to connect and, and connect effortlessly. Whereas before I'd be like, Oh, I don't know if I want to go on the train and go downtown and I can click a button and have these discussions with you. So now folks can say, well, I don't know anyone who's black and trans, I don't know anyone who's below that, the excuses over. Because the times have changed. So I just think like really, really looking to hire and practice to make sure whether it's casting in a social media campaign or you're looking for an executive assistant or executive manager, whatever it is. I think we have to begin to diversify and like hold folks accountable for that as well, because your messaging is still going to be a little off centered if you don't have that population at the table with you while you're, creating these narratives.

-Brian: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Well, that reminds me of something that I've heard said, and I've heard it said specifically around from the disabled community, but I think it applies to every community, which is not for us without us.

-Sean: Not for us, without us?

-Brian: Yeah.

-Brian: Okay. That's okay, no, please. 'Cause it's, you know, 'cause we can create products for a specific community, but if there's no one in that key from that community and in the conversation or in the room, or if we're not inviting people from that community to be part of the work, you know, it's not authentic. And I think it has the real potential to miss the Mark.

-Sean: Yeah. Yeah.

-Brian: So I know we have, we have about 15 minutes left. There's two real questions that are on my mind that, and we may have some others from the room. So if you know, for the audience, if you have questions, feel free to drop them in the Q and A box and we'll try to make sure we cover them. You know, one question that I would like to start with is, and Sean, you you've already highlighted some of these in sort of general ways around encouraging or challenging maybe is a better word. I'll say people in the white community to understand the experiences of the black community and that there's information out there. You don't have to ask a black person to do that. I'm curious though, if you're, as you're talking with people, are there, are there resources that you suggest people to go to? Are there books or movies or are there, are there things that you're saying, Hey, this is where you could go get that in a specific way? And I know "White Fragility," the book has come up a lot in recent conversations. That's the one I keep going to, but I'm guessing there may be some others that come to mind for you.

-Sean: The short answer is no. And I think I don't do that because I'm still a bit tired. Right, and it's like, I feel like if you search it out yourself, because you had the intention of trying to do the research on your own, it means more to you once you found those answers that you're looking for. But I'm often at, I don't often supply that information. What I will say is that I'll have a discussion with you after you've done some research and then we can kind of explore. So based on what you've learned, what are your other questions now and what do you want to know? And then I'm a bit more receptive. I just, it feels ingenuous if you wanna come to me and ask me to give you the answers when it's so easy to find them for yourself, but "White Fragility" is the good book. And I just ordered it, but again, really, really not trying to, I just really want people to like begin those difficult conversations right? And then I'll also tell folks like talk amongst yourselves. These are discussions you should be having with your white counterparts and colleagues and neighbors and relatives, figuring out what their thought process is,

what are they reading and figuring if you can educate each other as well. So those are some of the things that some of the ways I'll try to shift from like offering up what you should be reading more or who you should be listening to.

-Brian: Sure, and the reality is, and in case anyone's looking for these resources, assuming an email, I can, I can send you so many documents that have lists of resources and movies and things you can read and watch. But I love, I really love that, that perspective, Sean, and that's if you do the work and you, you have some other questions or want to add additional context from someone in your community, I love that idea of, but let's start with doing some work yourself. Yes, Rana, yeah, I was like, Rana is going to have a point of view, he always has point of views.

-Rana: I mean, if you're talking about RuPaul's drag race, But I think that I'm really pragmatic about how popular culture can educate and be used as a tool to educate. So, you know, a show that's really, really emotionally affected me and I wasn't expecting it to is that there's an HBO, a series called "We're Here," Eureka, Bob the drag queen, and Shangela, and they go to small towns in America and they basically explore different queer narratives, and just the effect that it has on those people. And they kind of, I think it's a very human approach. And I think that, you know, part of the reason, the lobby's love with you so heavily during the fight for marriage equality was that everyone could understand it. And when to Sean's point, which is correct when you bring it down to a family level, When you can think, what would I do if X was trans or X was gay or whatever, It really shows you that emotions I would really, I recommended it to all my clients, particularly around queer narratives. It's a really interesting one because it kind of looks at the effect on queer members of the community, but also the family, right? The family structure, it looks at allyship, all of these sorts of areas that float around, but it does it in a very human way. I'm not one to read like a really intense kind of like book about it. I want to, I want to feel it. So that's certainly, if you're looking specifically this conversation around pride and intersection with Black Lives Matter, that would be a great introduction. It's five shows long. And it just, it really like, I'm not a crier, but every single episode, like really got me.

-Brian: I have only watched the first episode of "We're Here," and it got me too, I need to watch the rest of the series and that's very powerful. That's a great reminder. And I think it just, it exemplifies what Sean shared as well, which is there is content out there find something that speaks to you. If it's reading a book or if it's watching a short series, like "We're Here," if it's watching a mini documentary, like when you see us or "When They See Us," you know, there are movies and film and shows and books out there to help expand your perspective. I actually started "When They See Us" the other day, and I had to stop because it was bothering me so much. I'm going to go back and I will finish it because I'm committed to finishing it, but it was so uncomfortable and it just made me sad.

-Sean: It was incredibly difficult to watch because I was growing up in that era. So I remembered it. And I remember it being a black child and how, how fearful I was that something like that could have happened to me and how that, I just didn't feel like they were protected at all and still not being

protected. It was really, really difficult to watch. And I've also shared in the chat I'm going against what I just said, but I also shared in the chat, a book I've just started reading, it's called "Black On Both Sides of Issue: History of Trans Identity." So I share the link in case anyone else wants to share the link and the author in case anyone else wants to grab it.

-Brian: Thanks, Sean. Yeah, and one thing that as, as a white person in this, in this conversation, I'll share, one of the commitments I've made is I'm taking a group of people through the book, "White Fragility." It's a group of predominantly white people. We've had a few people of color who chose to join us. So there's a group of 25 of us in two different conversations. And we're going to go through that book and have those conversations together. And, you know, and what I've shared with the groups that we started with this week is we have to start somewhere. It can be scary. It can be, you can be, you can have lots of feelings around it, but the, and that's okay to work through those feelings, but we need to work through them and we need to move forward and we need to learn and understand the experiences of others. And specifically we need to understand experience of the black community so we can do better for them. So I wanna just ask a final question, which might lead us in a variety of directions. And certainly if there's any other questions that come up from the group, I think everyone may just be enamored. And I know one of the things that I've discovered in these forums when we're having these conversations is sometimes it's hard to ask questions cause you're afraid of getting it wrong. What I'd also just offer is you have to be afraid of getting it wrong and then step into it and step into the uncomfot because that's the only way you move forward, move through it to the other side. So if there are questions out there, don't hesitate, send them my way and we'll see if we can get them in before we wrap up. But what I want to ask both of you, and I'll start with you, Ronna is, you know, is, you and I both work in this, in this space where we work every day with corporations and try to influence what their, with what actions they take and the decisions they're making. I know right now, and we're all doing this each in our own ways with our own communities is all of us speaking right now of helping others through this work and helping to move things, move the conversation forward and helping decision makers, make decisions that move the conversation forward. What worries me the most is that this will be a spike in activity, and that activity will die six months from now. That's that's the phrase. That's what keeps me up at night. That's what this keeping me up at night is, is that this won't last, but I'm really hopeful. It does. So, you know, as you think about the future, you know, what are you hopeful for? What, are you concerned about? What are your, how are you leaning into that as you move forward? And as you talk with the corporations, you have a chance to influence?

-Rana: Well firstly, it's an election year, right? So it's gonna last, it's gonna last till at least November. We just started work on an initiative with LeBron Morgan a vote, which is about kind of voter suppression, kind of getting out the vote of people, of color, the barriers that they face. So, you know, the entire, fashion, music, sports world, Will in some sort of way, coalesce around the election, And so if you're a brand and you have your brand ambassadors, and they're saying, if you're going to have to like move, et cetera, et cetera. et cetera. So I feel like where it's like a perfect storm coming up to the election, where again, you're just going to have to get off the fence because your consumers are gonna want to know in some sort of way. I think that a good way for brands to do that is just about, look, let's have a fair race, right? If you can't come out and say, I want this candidate or that candidate, at least let's look for equity

and fairness and everyone having the actual ability to vote as well as the right to vote. You know, in the medium term, I feel good. I feel hopeful. I feel positive, it has assurances about its ups and downs, but the curve is upwards. The curve is not downwards year on year. The shifts are huge. I, you know, I won't name them, but some of the more conservative, like what I'll call middle America brands I've worked with, you know, where it's all kind of like dudes in like cocky slacks that don't really like, they're like, what is this queer Indian kid talking about? Which was a kid still actually, but like they're having these conversations and like you say Brain, it's uncomfortable, but I think that you made the point and I'm having to learn this, that we have to create a space where there can be a dialogue. And it's one of the things often do. It seems I can bring Sean into a client, we have like, almost like a closed door where people can, you know, ask a questions they want to ask, once he's on the payroll, ask the questions they want to ask. So that we have this dialogue because, you know, as you know, I used to work for Dylan and he would always talk about that. One of the biggest things that we have to look at is our lexicon around stuff. There's this whole language of stuff that I didn't have when I was kind of like growing up like white privilege, unconscious bias, microaggression, you know, it's crazy, right. There's this whole new language. And like, if I don't know it and I work in it, then how is like Bill in Detroit, who's like an auto marketeer meant to know about it. So we have to have these conversations. People could know. It's like, sometimes I'll look at these, like I'm looking at Instagram posts for pride. And at the moment it's like Bi Talk, LGBTQ. Like, it's like, you know, we gotta talk about it. Cause if we talk about it, we humanize it. And the thing is that we're all people okay. We're living, breathing people that deserve equality, respect, and to live our lives. And at the end of the day, that's what most of this marketing is about. And it would be great if we didn't have to do that, but we are having to do it. So the more we can bring into this kind of like humanization the better, and that takes both sides. That's what my biggest thing that I wouldn't take away is that it's not just about the white people coming forward or the straight people coming forward. It's also me being open to listening in my paid role to hold some of that. Even if people get it wrong, which is, you know, my natural thing is I will be talking about like, that's not productive, right? Because at the end of the day, we all need to move forward. And like people have said, this isn't, this isn't black or brown people against white people. It's black and brown people against racism. It's not trans people against straight people. It's trans people against transphobia. On and on and on. So how are we going to do that if we don't come together? Like if you're willing as a white person to open the door, it's also up to me as a person of color or a queer person of color to be willing to walk through that door and engage. So that's what I was.

-Brian: Absolutely, thanks, Ronna. And there's so many things I could, I could comment on there and amplify in my, in the spirit of just saying, please listen to this. But one of those messages of, you know, there is so much language that is unfamiliar or uncomfortable or new for us. And one of those is just acknowledging identities and using words like the black community. So we're taught to not do that so much. And when we grow, as we grow up in this country and it's intentional, the intentionality behind it, I like to believe is good, but it actually erases some of the conversations that we need to have. And so I'm continuing to get my, develop my own comfort and confidence with using some of the language and words. And I suspect that that will continue. So you, you have, you don't develop the confidence unless you start somewhere. It's really important, Sean thoughts from you about this time, and where we're going and hopes and fears. And I, you know, that's an hour question, but what, I'll let you synthesize of your thoughts there as we wrap up.

-Sean: Thank you. I would say that there's comfort in being uncomfortable. And that we have to begin to have these challenging conversations, regardless of how uncomfortable we are. I'd say that there is no wrong question. You should be, we should make space or create spaces where folks are comfortable asking questions, but that's after you've done some research. Don't approach me, just like right off and ask me to be that bridge for you. But I'm incredibly optimistic. You couldn't do this work and not be optimistic. So I'm incredibly optimistic about what the future holds for my trans community and my black trans community and for my black community. Because again, it's so layered, it layered in nuance. So I'm incredibly hopeful that this isn't like just some fly by night thing that's going to pass over, that doesn't go away with pride, or it doesn't go away when pride month is over. It doesn't go away. When the folks that are on tap, taken to the street decided to go home. But that we recognize that these systems have to be dismantled and we have the momentum to dismantle them. And that when we're creating spaces, like why don't you spoke about doing this voter drive with LeBron and, and I'm hoping that we're amplifying black trans voices in those spaces as well. And not just utilizing those voices when it's pride, because oftentimes that's one of the things that happens when we get pigeonholed. And you're, you're good for a prior campaign, but you can't work here or we won't, we don't want to use you when we have a normal campaign. So just making sure that we're having those difficult conversations too, and just continuing to challenge ourselves. I'm a firm believer. You can get it right. As long as number one, you tried and number two, you learn from it. So let's give folks the opportunity to at least try and, you know, some feedback, some, some healthy critique, whatever, but create spaces that are safe and comfortable enough for folks that they would be willing to try and get it right or wrong.

-Brian: Creating spaces for dialogue, I think is so, so important. Thank you, Sean. Well, I realize we're just a couple minutes past the hour. I know that Ronna and Sean, a lot of people are asking for your time these days, and I'm grateful that you shared an hour with us and shared your words of wisdom and your experiences. So thank you as we wrap up, I, you know, one thing I know that people will ask is, are there ways to follow you or are there ways to reach out to you acknowledging that you have a lot on your plate? So feel free to you, Sean, I'll let you go first.

-Sean: You can follow me on all social media as Sean Ebony Coleman or Sean E Coleman. You can follow Destination Tomorrow, Destination Tomorrow four 452, I'll drop it in the box as well. And of course you can send me an email, sean@Destinationtomorrow.org.

-Rana: Great. Thanks, Sean. And Rana. Yeah, I put it in the agency. Ronnaverse.com. So the agency's in the feed, and then also you can follow me on Instagram, but it's just pictures of my dog, really. It's at the official Ronna. And then you can link to me on LinkedIn.

-Brian: Awesome, thanks Ronna and Raja, the dog is so cute. So it's worth following, right? So, I'll add my email address in here as well. If there are other questions that you have that we didn't get to cover

today, or you think of afterwards, feel free to email me. I will hope try to do my best to help point you in the right direction. And if I need to reach out to someone, I have a community beyond Ronna and Sean as well. So I try to spread the wealth with the questions that I have. Well, I think this has been an important conversation, Ronna and Sean. Thank you again, everyone with us. I wish you a happy pride and let's all go change the world because we are better together. Thanks everyone.