

WEBVTT

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Otherwise I'm going to turn it over to Rivera son, and while she's speaking I'm gonna. It's okay with her. I'll put in some links to her website is that I assume that's okay Rebecca right.

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That's totally fine with me. Okay, I will pop those in the chat so people can see and also pop them in the discord as well so I'm going to start recording now.

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Welcome.

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Great, thank you so much Leslie and welcome to all of you to this round table this afternoon. I hope you're ready to discuss things to bring up your thoughts and to weigh in with your ideas, your questions for one another.

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We're going to look at how many stories carve space for change. And just, you know, identify as many kinds of identities, but today as an activist and author so I write novels, like the dandy lion insurrection and my fantasy series The way between which

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deals with a fictional total fictional fantasy world but has a lot of social justice themes and features, young heroines and Shira is and heroes.

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Using nonviolent tools and waiting piece to stop or do things like stop wars and and when workers rights and women's rights. And so this is a passionate topic for me.

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How can our stories carve space for change. And you know when we look at the the genre, we have some notable examples of books that have done that, things like the Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula, when that just dropped a bombshell on the world in terms

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of gender and talking about gender and sci fi.

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Right, but we also have smaller moments within books that are in stories that are not necessarily pushing the envelope all that much impact someone mentioned one recent Lee about the smoke moment in the Harry Potter series where the dwarf grip hook, says,

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We dwarfs believe that the magical objects we make should return to the owners.

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Instead of how the wizards believe that they should be able to decide who becomes the next, the next owner a bit I'm sorry that the magical objects as returned to the maker versus being passed on by the owner.

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So these are these little moments that can just kind of blow our minds open our eyes and expand the social envelope to consider things that we haven't necessarily been considering as a society.

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So what I thought we could do to open up this conversation is to just think of a book or a movie or a metaphoric format. It could be in any medium really that had one of those moments for you.

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That portrayed a character a scene, a plot twist in a way that challenged, not just the social envelope but actually maybe touched you personally and made you go uh how wow or, gosh, that was so firming to my humanity.

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What stories come to mind for you.

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And you can do this by coming off mute and speaking you can wave your physical hand you can raise your digital hand by using your reactions tool, you can also put it in the chat box.

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Yeah, Patricia.

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I wanted to mention Jack Hagen's Health Spark, which, if you're not familiar with it is about communication between species, and

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it put across in a very powerful manner, how much of communication is visual.

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And I won't spoil it for those of you who haven't read it, but I highly recommend it.

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Yeah, Chris.

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Oh, you need to come off mute Chris unmute yourself.

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Help Spark, is that the title.

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Yes How Spark.

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Oh, I'll jump in with something from the side of a writer.

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And it wasn't so much my intention as I started working on it, but my current work in progress is not strictly speaking with opaque, but definitely influenced by talking, and that sort of stuff that I've been reading but it's.

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I'm treating the legend of Lady Godiva and the ride, as if it were history, and writing.

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These are the circumstances that went into making it. And a lot of it is about the economy of the time, and the political movements that were going on around the barrel of Mercia at the time.

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But one of the things I'm finding as I'm writing her.

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It's sort of funny because it's about the presence of a woman in that situation and what her obligations were as the lady, you know the Countess, and the situation that she is trying to assist.

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I set it up in the sense in the sense that Godiva, and Leah fridge, have joined in a political marriage.

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So she is adjusting to the situation and Mercia at the time, and trying to

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be dutiful to play the part of a partner.

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And I'm finding that interesting because it's like she's the heroine. But, you know, and a strong character but it's not about being the warrior woman or anything like that, it's about the influence.

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The Countess has over the situation, you know she's not just subservient.

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And I found it interesting that.

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Like I said, it wasn't my intention when I started the story.

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But it's coming through, and I think.

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I think that's something that myth fiction does a lot of that, it opens up our sense of possibilities in ways. You don't anticipate, you know, you go into it, and you go into the Lord of the Rings.

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And, you know, expecting a fantastic adventure. And one of the key things is the whole business about, even the smallest people can contribute to changing the world.

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And I think, I think that's something that a lot of people need and latch on to and why they keep returning to it, that

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if you're feeling insignificant.

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You're not.

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I think that goes a long way to to the idea of, you know, representation of marginalized cultures and groups as well you know like the half links were almost a write off society for, you know, the elders didn't ever think anything particularly great of

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them or anything like that, the men didn't really either it was just this group of weird little people that were off doing their own thing and ultimately ended up being ones to save the world so to speak, of course in that situation it's interesting that

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the one people that don't take them for granted. As insignificant are the amps.

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And the wizards I guess you could say, well, at least, yeah.

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Yeah, you mentioned the warrior women, I mean how many of you have read tomorrow Pierce's Ilana series.

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Right.

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Yeah. So I want to not one of the things that she did that really expanded the sense of women's rights at the time was not just having a

woman who was aware as the protagonists, but also the fact that this woman, a like to wear dresses on occasion to,

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to, that was a huge thing. I was, you know, 10 reading this big, big thing for women. And then to, you know, had extra marital relationships, right, wasn't about you just getting married was really in possession of our own sexuality even as a hetero normative

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person.

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So that, you know, the things that are groundbreaking offer them their moment in time in history and for us in our arcs as well.

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Leslie did you want to say something. Yeah, I was just gonna say I mean I read tomorrow here so I was responding to that right then. But I did want to say when you asked that question before.

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Sarah was talking I was thinking, really the the the good works the works that are really well written. Well done, they all sort of changed me. Right.

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I mean all of them so I'm just trying to think of one or two that really have changed me but it really does seem that those that mean something to me are.

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They've all changed who I am. So I think that's one of the powers of story is that when it's well done when writers are paying attention to what they're doing, when they're cognizant of the impact they have on their audience their readers.

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They really do change the world I think back and I think, oh yeah before I read such and such I used to think blah blah blah and now I don't and then before that I thought, but now I don't you know so it's interesting that way I think that ability for

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a story that you read. You know, I read for pleasure those most of the story so I teach them as well.

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But how they change who you are, I think that's really important.

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Yeah, I agree, 100%, Leslie that a well crafted story you know has that effect, but there is when I wanted to mention I know some of you know his will and tarp Ursula K.

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Le glam.

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That's a story, and I think it's back in print and new collections, but it's just kind of follows this woman's life and when she was young. She plays the harp and so she's a Harper and that's her identity.

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And I get some kind of spoiled sorry heart get smashed.

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And she gets injured but the tragedy is the heart gets imagine she doesn't know who she is now so she ends up marrying the guy who helped her through her accomplishments, like, Okay, I'm a wife and a mother.

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And then he dies because it covers her whole life. And she's like, well, crap, who am I now, and it's just very, very simple, you know, but it really follows that process of, you know, how we identify ourselves by these external roles or externally imposed

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roles even when they're not necessarily oppressive.

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And it's really, it's, I think, I think everybody should read I think it should be taught in schools and I think psychologists have recommended this a wonderful exploration of that concept of identity and how we create or recreate our own identities and

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how that is like an iterative process.

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It's amazing. I forgot all about that piece you're absolutely right. I like that one a lot. Yeah.

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Yeah.

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Christina, do you want to say more about what you just put in the chat I think that's such a great point.

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Hello. can you guys hear me.

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Yes we can. Yeah. All right, sorry.

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My voice is a little scratchy right now but what I said in the chat was, I think, as far as pushing for more representation and questioning as societal traditions we should be supporting female queer and not why authors, just supporting the works of marginalized

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marginalized people whether or not their work touches on social justice issues is in itself a way to create change, like if we look at the Hugo Awards and what happened with nk Jemison and stuff like that all the outrage and backlash and stuff like that,

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that shouldn't have happened. And if we fostered an environment where we uplifted.

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Essentially, non white not male people and fantasy and sci fi admit those spaces, then we would already be producing this change without putting the onus of writing about social justice on these people because I think that, you know, as a woman, writing

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sci fi or fantasy or whatever.

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I shouldn't have to make it, quote unquote, political, because I am a woman writing it. I should be able to create something fun, something inventive something amazing without having to also make some sort of statement.

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However, just that the act in itself of creating and producing and publishing and being a creator in this space has been so dominated by, you know, white men.

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You know like that is in itself a rebellion if we support, support more authors that that will, that is a step to creating change it's not just about writing about it it's also about supporting the people who do it.

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I started I was a little long winded but I think that was spot on. And nk Jemison is a great example video Cora for is another great example of really powerful writer who, you know, has both done so writings that are social, political critiques, and also

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has done writings that maybe are.

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I would say anchored in Nigerian American traditions and culture explorations and our mind blowing. Just because of that right the unique perspective, that's being brought in there.

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Yeah.

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Other other books or stories that people want to mention.

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Yeah, Patricia

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nettle Hopkinson, the new moons arms.

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And that one hit me, not just because of the cultural setting, but because it was about.

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Excuse me, a menopausal woman, finding our power.

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And that's a group of marginalized people that gets overlooked, a lot in fantasy.

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For those who haven't read that particular one. Imagine if hot flashes really are power searches.

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Yeah, thank you so if you guys want to annotate your, your comments, make sure that the titles get into the chat box that's sometimes helpful for our own audio auto translate mistakes.

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I guess, less specifically to say one title or another.

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There's stacks and stacks of ya tracks that I went through. And I mean that with all the love in my heart, I mean, they were fantastic books from the age range that provided easily identifiable easily relatable characters in fantasy settings.

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I mean, Brian jocks with his red wall series.

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For some parts of it. The, the inheritance series person your eldest Aragon all that.

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Garth Nix does amazing work for young adults and I really think that, particularly with the providing easily identifiable people from different backgrounds that might be a really fertile ground for authors to look at as a targeted market to continue supporting



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diversity representation, etc. Because I'm thinking about my schooling experience to.

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And until.

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That's a fair point.

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I not representation, but I'm reading the chat here Christina says Christopher falling, not do a good job was referencing.

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Excuse me representation, and that's a fair point, but he was a decently

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able to plaster yourself into the heroes role type writer, which for young adult works is fairly stereotypical.

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But then, for my schooling experience until I had very socially conscious teachers in high school, working really hard to make sure that I got it first reading background.

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It was kind of the space dominated by white men. I mean, the the people I just listed off pretty much white men.

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And it took that kind of concerted effort to then branch out and read authors from different nationalities, different ethnic backgrounds encounter the Harlem Renaissance at all.

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You know, things like that. And so I think it's not only what people we choose to read ourselves but also what young people are encountering and how we can work to kind of make that space more inclusive too.

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Yeah.

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Yeah.

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So, Christina brought up the the comment about, you know, we shouldn't expect writers pretty much writers have any background identity to put forward a social justice message it shouldn't be like a burden that certain people are expected to carry.

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But what happens when we do use fantasy and science fiction, to advance social justice goals. What, what happens in our society when we use the elbow room that these two genres can afford us to to open space for changing the morals values the ways that

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that our societies, cc our world and ourselves.

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Does anyone have a good example or an experience with that happening.

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I can talk about one thing that

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illustrates what can happen. Perhaps humorous way.

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And this was a kitties book that I remember from kindergarten or first grade, with whole flock of white bird rabbits and Blackford rabbits, and what are the white food rabbits falls in love with a Blackford rabbit and they have a great big wedding.

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that I read like 1948 in the 50s when school desegregation was a big issue.

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I remember somebody getting up in front of a microphone and making an extreme fuss about this book, the horrible nasty subversive message.

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And my first thought was, she's reading something there that isn't there.

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And after a while I realized she's reading something there that was there.

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She wasn't reading. Right.

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But she was reading it.

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Yeah, I mean that that is the the other side of the coin right and we can talk about that too is you know what happens when our society, isn't ready for the change proposed in the fiction.

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Right.

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You know, when.

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Lieutenant, I think, Lieutenant. Guru came on to Star Trek, public on it right away just about to say that that interracial kiss.

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King. Do you guys know that story right some heads nodding but for those who don't know, Star Trek was the only show that Dr. King would let his children watch and when the actress who played who wanted to quit.

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He actually called her up and said no, this is the only show, I let my kids watch because this is the only show where black people are shown right now is having power skill intelligence and dignity.

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And so, you know, having that kind of a diversity, kind of, outlook on a show now wouldn't be enough right it's not enough.

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At that moment in history, it was a breakthrough. And so, you know, we're always trying to push these edges.

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Other thoughts thoughts from folks, especially if you haven't spoken yet if you have something you want to share Don't be shy. Just come off mute and let us know.

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I was gonna say while you're on the topic of Star Trek, I mean, Star Trek along its entire history has done amazing things in terms of pushing ideas into the wider culture and the most recent examples of that.

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I have my issues with the writing on Star Trek discovery but the way they've handled their, their gay and trans characters in particular is phenomenal in that.

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It's nothing special, they're just there, they exist, they're not making a big deal about it, they're just there and peers and, you know, equal to everybody else, you know they show them interacting and realistic ways that are intimate in ways that we

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don't often see on big network TV as well. You know, just in terms of little personal interactions and stuff like that so I love that example, in terms of normalizing those relationships.

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In, in a you know in a big sci fi franchise.

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Yeah, Christina just brought up a really important thing in the chat casino Can you, would you be willing to come up here and actually introduced that as a discussion topic, I think that's so great.

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Hi Hello again, voice is very sketchy.

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A lot of times that adaptations when you're bringing a book or novella or whatever.

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Also the pages and into film or show or some other you know adaptation.

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A lot of times it's whitewashed or watered down. A lot of the ideas and intentions behind it, are reduced so that is more quote unquote universal.

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So that a lot of mainstream audiences will feel like it is palatable. That's the whole purpose is to make it palatable and make it profitable and a lot of times you know people think that if you have some sort of so called political messaging or social

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justice in your work that a lot of people are just going to be upset not going to want to watch it, this that and the other.

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And so, like, really trying to like push back against that. Be like no, this was not how the author intended it. This was not the casting that was supposed to be done.

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This was not the place that this was supposed to be filmed it like this is, this is written in a way that is not true to this and like I'm not talking about you know like the typical things like you know you have to cut down a movie you have to make it

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more dramatic stuff like that like that, within reason is like, you know, kind of necessary when you're adapting a book into a movie or something like that you're not going to have, like, all 1000 pages of Frodo and Sam walking to Mordor the entire movie,

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like that's just too much.

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But I'm kind of rambling essentially just white washing watering down we can't find that acceptable anymore No matter how profitable, it may be.

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Yeah Can other people think of good examples of that happening and what's going on. When that happens, right so how do producers and publishers become gatekeepers for a changing or shifting society,

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all about the money doesn't it, I mean that's what it's all about. That's how they become the game first capitalism. Right.

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It happens a lot with with film and industry, the film industry where the assumption is made by money people in the studio, who are not storytellers, that, you know, oh you can't you can't cast, you know, a black actor in this part because they're not

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going to bring in the money, you know,

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up until you know the last five years, a film like Black Panther would not get me.

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Because they would say, There just aren't that many black actors that you know can carry the whole movie, and you've got the whole cast here with only two white guys in it.

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But the fact is, you know, it's not that the actors don't exist. If they're never given a chance, an opportunity to perform.

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Even just an ordinary circumstances.

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I was even happens in television, it was interesting that when this show castle was on one of the supporting actors is, Hispanic, and he's presented as very competent detective dresses well, very well educated and everything like that.

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After castle was over, he happened to show up on MCs.

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As of all things, barrio gang leader.

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Back to stereotypical casting and it's like,

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it's worth, I can see his taking it, but why does that have to be the only option for casting, you know what, there aren't quite Gangs Of course there are right yeah and I think in another session, we're in we're also talking, not just about representation

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or inclusion of actors but also in who's building the world's who setting the script to define how the projects at the studio, you know we we know that, you know, Disney got into a fear, with the Hispanic Latino community when they trademarked Dia de

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los Mark boss. Right. And that actually led to a really huge prod projects that ended up, delivering the film cocoa in a, in a much different way.

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So yeah, I want to go to Tim because I know Tim you've had your hand up for a while.

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I was just going to go I'm Sarah was just talking about the the Marvel films and I agree, you know, Black Panther was a revelation in terms of representation, but it frustrates me to no end the gay keeping and the restraint that they do particularly with

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with queer characters like the first queer character that we got in any of the movies was like an end game and it was a throwaway character in a support meeting that said, Oh, my husband or whatever got snapped right and then the and then finally we get

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one in the Loki mini series just recently, but it's so minor and inconsequential like it's it's clearly put in there to be just tokenism so that, and so that they can easily edit it out for Chinese markets basically because they know that that's such

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a part of their market. And that is one of the things that's just infuriating to me and as much as I love Disney a lot of things they do that their unwillingness to take those risks, but, you know, because they're afraid of the financial consequences

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will endlessly be frustrating to me.

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Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

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So, um, what are what are the leading edge of social change that.

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Maybe writers are already working in but they're getting it out or maybe we need more writers writing those are really publishers paying attention to them what what are the places where we need to push our society with the stories that we're telling you

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know we mentioned liquid and the funny thing about liquid to me is that you know she spent 12 years, writing, and getting nobody to publish your work.

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and are still pushing the envelope of of our times today in many ways, and she was really great about acknowledging her own failings, right. So in the tunes of at one.

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She looked back at that book and reflected. Why couldn't my hero and save herself. What on earth was I thinking, Why did my mail here I'll have to come and save her.

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Right. And it's that kind of transparency that makes her such an endearing and challenging character to our society or writer to our society Octavia Butler, I'd never like to say liquid without mentioning Octavia Butler who just exploded, the genres thinking

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and dealt with all the challenges of being a black woman writer and Jen, I see your hand going up, folks if you want to chime in. This is a round table, please do wave really dramatically.

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I just, you know, thinking about that, that idea of authors revisiting their older work especially people who've been writing for like decades right.

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I think about Tamra Pierce, who in the wake of all the bile that JK Rowling has, has put into the world and, you know, and start up camera Pierce, you know, also writing for approximately the same age level, talked a lot about how she wasn't well enough

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informed about gender issues when she wrote Ilana the Ilana series and how she.

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I can remember exactly what she put it under you guys have probably read some, some of her remarks, but like a little bit about how she doesn't know maybe Ilana would have been trans or gender queer or you know like she's so much more like.

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Now she just wasn't aware then.

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Right.

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Clearly, she's exploring gender roles.

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But she she's open to, you know, learning more about what gender really means and you know beyond the presentation and the roles and stuff and I just really admire that a person who is.

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like, it doesn't cost anything not to tweak, but she's you know she is has has kind of taken a risk and enter that conversation to say, I, I could have done more I would if I had to do again do it a little bit more and I really respect that, that willingness

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that vulnerability and that willingness to change.

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Yeah. Other thoughts on, on what what we need to push in readers and publishers and in writing, writing. One of the things that we need to work for and social justice.

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Well, again, as a writer, one of the things I would say is, It's a delicate balance between

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doing the representation fairly, and making it, organic to your storytelling.

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But it's another thing to say you're required to have X Y or Z.

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And it kind of hit me when I was in a story in a writers group.

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And I've been bringing in chapters of a fantasy novel that has been in the works for a long time.

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Because I can't work on it.

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But they were reading some of the chapters, and one of the other women in the group who is my nor the writer herself

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asked.

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Well, I have two races. There are the more tools, and then there are Immortals like elves.

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I call them Finn Lauren, but anyways.

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The difference is that the fin Lauren are immortal in the world.

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And she asked if they were the same species, you know if if they were human.

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And I went, yeah, they're just immortal.

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And, but the thing is, it also. She also asked about racial mixing it, and, and I thought about it you know because it was like, This story was born. Back when I was in high school.

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In early, undergraduate college.

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At a time when I wasn't thinking so much about that aspect in my own writing.

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I thought it was very important in the world I lived in and certainly in terms of my aspirations and writing for film and television, that I wanted the world.

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I put on the screen to reflect the world I lived in, in terms of racial mix in an interaction of that nature.

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But my fantasy world was the world I'm born. The Heritage I born into, which is pretty much exclusively Anglo Saxon with Celtic thrown in.

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And so it wasn't that I was, excluding on purpose, other races, it was not where my imagination started from.

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I was writing from my heritage not the world I experienced.

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But it wasn't impossible to make those changes into my material.

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You know, it's like, Well yeah, this is a bigger world, the fantasy world, you know, and there would be these different racial aspects, and so it's like I am adjusting certain aspects to heighten the fact that there are different, what we would call different

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racial groups.

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And that can be integrated in, in terms of how the different groups, interact with each other. I mean, they were going to have those emotional differences and how they interacted.

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It was just pretty much all basically white people have different variations.

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Right so challenging our writers and or what we're writing about how we're writing about and that's where being a reader and analyst sitting in the listening role can help us improve our ratings, especially those of us who've come closer from backgrounds

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closer to the mainstream of what our culture's become. But, Patricia also, you know, put in the chat box about seeing science fiction or fantasy address global resources Jews, you know, and I to solving problems and culturally sensitive ways sacredness

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of land and water. We know that CLI fi is erupting as a genre, most of it, apocalyptic in nature, which is not surprising given what we're living through.

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But what role do to solution airy writing writers or people who are not positing utopias but are actually trying to posit worlds in which we are responding to this climate crisis in a really different way, including some of those things that you brought

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up Patricia, what other people think what other other ideas of what we are our stories can be working on in these times.

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Well, I think what oh Sarah can you hold on one, One minute.

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I just want to make sure that other people who haven't gotten a chance to speak as much of a chance.

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Yeah, Leslie Do you want to chime in.

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Sure. Just briefly, I'd like to know how you go about it Rivera. I mean you're involved in both. Why, or is it considered children's I can't remember with the way between trying to work on those issues and then and dandelion, the dandelion books you were

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you were I it was clear you're changing as you wrote those so you're changing and higher approaching that so I'd like to know how you as a writer approach those sort of issues.

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Yeah, I personally try to read a lot watch a lot, listen a lot, especially to people who are not from my background because my blind spots are determined by that right so listening outside of my own box is really important and in that, you know, the publishing,

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particularly small press independent press publishers are really, you know, starting to really emphasize writers of color in particular queer writers, which is helpful.

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You know, I'm obviously not a writer of color, and not queer. So, you know, making sure that I'm listening really deeply is really important.

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And then also being an activist, I think, is really actually kind of helpful because you see what society is working on not just about it around identities, but also around class issues.

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The way that we kind of construct our societies the challenges that groups like indigenous peoples are raising to Western colonizer conquest mentalities are so important.

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I mean if we look at early science fiction, a lot early next decade science fiction, let's say, a lot of that is repeating colonizer tropes, and really needed the challenge that an awakened awakening society was, I say that, but I want to acknowledge

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the indigenous people going pretty work on this for a long time, a greater awareness around this has been stirring up.

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I also want to mention that, you know, I think, a mediocre for actually is really great about working in different differing abilities into her stories in a way that we need more of.

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And that comes from her direct experience of being paralyzed. After being an athlete.

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And so I think that that is a vital part of what we could be seeing more of in stories, not just racial diversity, not just sexuality diversity, but also differing abilities and not just in a written a genre that works so hard on superhero powers to like

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not acknowledge that being differently abled is its own form of power and capacity that those of us who are more abled in terms of the mainstream culture are really have a lot of blind spots to.

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Yeah, Patricia.

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Okay, I'm also neuro diverse ways of thinking and solving problems.

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We only have about two minutes left so I don't know if anybody wants to wrap up I certainly appreciate all the discussion and I certainly appreciate the issue with diversity being inclusive abilities.

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Well, I was trying to find a great t shirt I saw on internet recently with that in mind, but can't find it so oh well. Anybody want to wrap up Rivera Do you have final thoughts.

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Oh, I did want to follow up on what Rivera was saying about the ecological aspects of it, because I've been reading lately a number of things in passing and I should do more closer research about things like forest studies and finding out that trees actually

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do communicate with each other and interact and nurture saplings. In fact, and this should change how we treat our environment.

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And then another thing I was reading was actually about how whales seem to communicate to each other. What types of ships to hide.

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And there's just this ongoing growth of information about how other species, interact with each other and communicate with each other. That is growing because there's now more opportunity to record them, you know with small cameras live in the forest

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and see how they interact.

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And that nature is a lot more self activated.

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Then we've been giving it credit to especially in literature and I think with a pig fantasy is exactly the genre, to really open that door to bring it to the imaginations of readers that these things actually happen, the trees do communicate with each

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other in various ways. Now what trees are interested in is going to be different than what we're interested in, but it's still there. They're doing something.

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They're not just getting tall and putting up leaves.

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And with that we're out of time I think bringing us back to the answer is a good, good way to end it. So thank you everybody for being here. Thank you, Rebecca for doing this.

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I popped Rivera's website into the chat again for those of you who came in late, and thank you everybody for being here we're getting close to winding down Miskin oh and in case I did not mention it earlier.