

Courageous Conversations Free Live Virtual Series Kicks Off With Directors Salli Richardson-Whitfield & Lisa Cortés This Sunday

On Sunday August 22nd the Courageous Conversations series starts with a rountable of three of the most successful Black women directors. Lisa Cortés will moderate the Director 2 Director live virtual conversation with actress and director Salli Richardson-Whitfield and filmmaker-producer Crystal R. Emery. URU, The Right To be, Inc. is a New Haven-based multimedia nonprofit started by Emery is presenting the series. Courageous Conversations will feature Emery an American Association for the Advancement of Science AAAS IF/THEN Ambassador, who is also triumphing over quadriplegia and two serious diseases “ in honest discussions with trailblazers in a variety of fields on the fearless moments that shaped their careers. The event, which is free and open to the public, will also feature an audience Q&A session followed by a preview of Emery’s latest work, *The Deadliest Disease in America*.

“As Black women in entertainment, we have had to navigate the often rocky roads of the industry just to be able to stake our claim to telling our stories,” said Emery, founder and executive director of URU. “Lisa and Salli have been bringing audiences important work for years and I’m looking forward to our conversation about staring down adversity and how we have opened doors for diverse voices to come.”

Cortés’s documentary *All In: The Fight for Democracy*, featuring Stacey Abrams, was nominated for Outstanding

Documentary Feature at the 2021 NAACP Image Awards and made the Academy Awards shortlist for Best Documentary Feature. She also produced the Emmy-nominated HBO documentary *The Apollo* about the legendary Harlem performing arts venue and executive produced the Academy Award-winning film *Precious*.

A 30-year industry veteran, Richardson-Whitfield has starred alongside movie titans including Denzel Washington (*Antwone Fisher*), Samuel L. Jackson (*The Great White Hype*) and Will Smith (*I Am Legend*). On television, she is known for her work in the hit SyFy series *Eureka*. Behind the camera, she has helmed episodes of hit series including *Queen Sugar* on OWN, ABC's *Scandal*, *Dear White People* and *Altered Carbon* on Netflix, Showtime's *The Chi* and Netflix's *Luke Cage*, for which she was nominated for a NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Directing in a Drama Series. Richardson-Whitfield recently struck a two-year overall deal with HBO to develop projects. She has also come on board to direct and executive produce a handful of major titles for the WarnerMedia-owned company. She will be an executive producer on Julian Fellowes' upcoming drama series *The Gilded Age*, in addition to directing four episodes, and will also direct two episodes of Adam McKay's upcoming untitled Lakers project, which is based on Jeff Pearlman's book *Showtime: Magic, Kareem, Riley, and the Los Angeles Lakers Dynasty of the 1980s*.

A gifted director, writer and producer as well as a STEM advocate, Emery's work stands at the nexus of entertainment and education. With a career that began under the tutelage of entertainment leaders Lloyd Richards and Bill Duke, Emery has gone on to direct numerous plays and films, including her most recent documentary, *The Deadliest Disease in America*, which exposes the history of racism in American healthcare and its many ramifications in modern-day science and medical treatment for people of color. The film opens on September 10 for a week-long run at Cinema Village in Manhattan. For tickets,

visit <https://bit.ly/3f0fK6A>.

To learn more about *Courageous Conversations* or to register for the free “Director 2 Director” event, visit <https://bit.ly/D2DTalk>.

For more information on URU, please visit <https://www.urutherighttobe.org/> or follow the organization on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at @urutherighttobe.

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Crystal R. Emery