

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS SERIES

THE  
DEADLIEST  
DISEASE IN  
AMERICA

# DIRECTOR 2 DIRECTOR

Sunday, August 22 at 5 pm (PST) 8 pm (EST) • Virtual Event



## PROGRAM

Presented on the StreamYard Platform

**URU**

THE RIGHT TO BE. INC

# THE PROGRAM

## WELCOME

Lisa Cortes, *Award winning filmmaker*

## DIRECTOR 2 DIRECTOR

A conversation with Crystal R. Emery  
and Salli Richardson- Whitfield

## Q&A

Moderated by Lisa Cortes

## VIDEO PRESENTATION

Trailer of *The Deadliest Disease  
in America*

## CLOSING

A call to action and invitation  
by Crystal R. Emery

# WELCOME MESSAGE

What does **courage** look like to you?

**How many times have you been called to step into your bravery because of your gender, the color of your skin, or the culture you belong to?**

Each of us has our own definition and experiences that have inspired us to act with courage or to be braver than we think we could ever be. When life throws us curve balls, or presents us with the darkest shadows of humanity, we can do nothing else but embrace our courage and act with authenticity and integrity to our roots, our ancestors and our spirits.

By showing up today, you too are showing up with courage.

To have and be part of conversations around race and racism in today's climate is not only necessary, but urgent. To create safe spaces that are healing and foster honest, vulnerable, and inspiring moments of humanity is our responsibility.

URU, The Right to Be, is hosting Courageous Conversations to shift the narrative on inequity by bringing together pioneers who themselves have triumphed over barriers in their industry to share personal perspectives.

Courageous Conversations are virtual brave spaces for candid conversations that inspire change and action. Courageous Conversations is a program that is a part of the Deadliest Disease in America movement inspired by the film of the same name.

We kick off our series with an intimate conversation between three forces of nature: beautiful Black female directors, producers and storytellers who have forged the way beyond breaking down doors. Lisa Cortés, Salli Richardson-Whitfield and I have worked to pave the way for future generations of filmmakers. Today, we hear the truth of our stories in this inaugural Courageous Conversation.

As we move through the conversation, please think of questions that arise and save them for the end when we will open up for an audience Q&A. We welcome and encourage your questions and thoughts. Welcome to the conversations that will spark a movement.

Namaskar,  
Crystal R. Emery

# LISA CORTÉS

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Lisa Cortés is an Academy Award® nominated and Emmy-winning producer and director. She is renowned for creating challenging, visionary stories and empowering inclusive voices. In 2020, Cortés co-directed *All In: The Fight For Democracy*, which the Hollywood Reporter calls “engaging and intensely relevant.”

The film *Precious* (2009), which she executive produced, received the Sundance Audience Award and Grand Jury Prize for best drama. Marking the acting debut of Gabourey Sidibe, *Precious* was nominated for six Academy Awards® and won two. Cortés’s directorial debut, *The Remix: Hip Hop X Fashion* (2019), now on Netflix, traces the impact of street fashion and African American creativity on global cultural trends. 2019’s Emmy-winning HBO documentary, *The Apollo*, which Cortés produced, explores African American cultural and political history through the story of the legendary Apollo Theater. Amazon Studios release, *All In: The Fight For Democracy*, which she co-directed with Liz Garbus, chronicles the battle against voter suppression waged by Stacey Abrams. In addition to appearing on the Oscar documentary short-list, *All In* was nominated for BAFTA, WGA, and NAACP awards.

Her film productions have received over 80 international awards and nominations. In 2021, she is directing *Little Richard: I Am Everything*, a documentary about the transgressive rock ‘n’ roll icon, and *The Empire of Ebony*, which explores the Black publishing powerhouse that forever changed American culture.

Cortés is a member of the Producers Branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. She serves on the Boards of Film at Lincoln Center; Independent Television Services (ITVS); Yaddo, the celebrated artists’ community in Saratoga Springs; the Trajal Harrell Dance Company; and the DGA Focus on Women Committee. She is a graduate of Yale University.

# SALLI RICHARDSON-WHITFIELD



Salli Richardson-Whitfield is a 30-year industry veteran. She has been featured in over 20 major motion pictures and has starred opposite a number of Hollywood's top actors, including Samuel L. Jackson in *The Great White Hype*, Denzel Washington in *Antwone Fisher*, and Will Smith in *I Am Legend*.

On television, Salli starred in the long running Syfy network hit series, *Eureka* as well as three seasons of *Stitchers* on Freeform.

Changing gears to a role behind the camera, Salli has burst onto the scene as a director and producer. Ava DuVernay was one of the first to recognize Salli's skill as a director, offering her two back-to-back episodes in the first season of *Queen Sugar*. Her now incredibly extensive directing resume includes such shows as Amazon's *Wheel of Time*, Hulu's *Reprisal*, Apples's *See*, Netflix's *Altered Carbon*, Starz' *American Gods* and *Survivor's Remorse*, Showtime's *The Chi*, ABC's *Scandal*, Fox's *Lethal Weapon*, Freeform's *Shadowhunters*, Netflix's *Dear White People*, *Luke Cage*, and *The Punisher*, BET's *Rebel*, Syfy's *The Magicians* and *Eureka*, *Blacklightning*, *All American* for *The CW* and ABC's *Blackish*. Salli's work on *Luke Cage* was nominated for a NAACP Award for Outstanding Directing In A Drama Series. She currently has a series in development as a director/producer at Apple and Netflix.

Her incredible run was punctuated by the recent announcement of an Overall Deal with HBO, stating that she would be Directing and Executive Producing Julian Fellowes' upcoming drama series *The Gilded Age*. She will also be directing two episodes of Adam McKay's UNT. *Lakers Series*.

In her spare time, Salli is a wife and mother who participates in countless charitable and philanthropic events, including The K.I.S. Foundation.

# CRYSTAL R. EMERY

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Crystal R. Emery is known for producing narratives aimed at creating a more equitable society. She is the Founder and CEO of URU The Right to Be, Inc., a nonprofit content production company that addresses issues at the intersection of humanities, arts, and sciences.

A director, author, and STEM advocate, Emery is a member of the Producers Guild of America and New York Women in Film and Television, and an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) IF/THEN Ambassador.

Hailed as “inspiring” by the Los Angeles Times and as a “leader in science and technology” by Good Housekeeping in its feature story “50 over 50: Women Who Are Changing the World,” Emery has a body of work that spans a broad range of topics, from diversity, inclusion, and equity to children’s literature, socio-political issues, and STEM. Emery’s legacy extends beyond her presence in literature. She has presented, moderated, and produced numerous panels and events, including a symposium on Black Creatives for Google Brand Studio and “Race and Ableism: The Unspoken Intersectionality of Diversity in Film” for the SlamDance Film Festival. She has been a keynote speaker at distinguished institutions including the National Academy of Science, National Institute of Health, the National Organization on Disability, RespectAbility, TEDx Beacon Street, the National Security Agency, and Kaiser Permanente.

Emery is the recipient of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust Leadership in Journalism Award, and the BronzeLens Film Festival Spirit Award.

Emery’s film *Black Women in Medicine* had its theatrical run in 2016 and later aired on American Public Television. It was screened in Ethiopia and Germany in 2018 as part of the American Film Showcase, which is considered the premier American film diplomacy program in the world.

# DDIA & DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

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It is imperative that we illuminate disparate treatment based on racial, ethnic, and economic differences. These conversations are challenging and often uncomfortable, but they must be had if we hope to achieve a healthcare system and a society that is equitable for all. *The Deadliest Disease in America*, a documentary film produced and directed by Crystal R. Emery, traces the history of racism in American healthcare, beginning with the brutal medical experimentation that enslaved people were forced to undergo. As this story unfolds over our nation's history, the very same inequalities and biases continue to plague our healthcare system, creating disparities in the quality of care that Black, Brown, and Indigenous people receive.

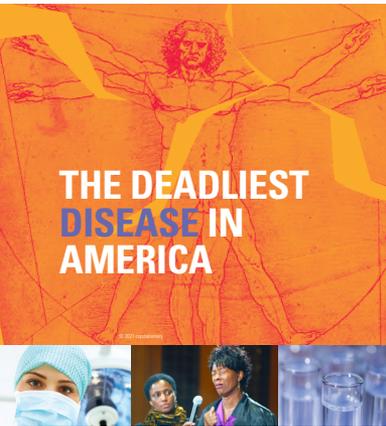
*The Deadliest Disease in America* features commentary from medical and public health experts including: Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, MD, MHS, Senior Advisor to the White House COVID-19 Response Team; Dr. Bert Petersen, MD, Director of Division of Breast Surgery at SBH Health System; Dr. Camara Jones, MD, MPH, PhD, epidemiologist, Past President of American Public Health Association; Dr. Vivek Murthy, MD, MBA, Surgeon General of the United States; and Dr. Harlan Krumholz, MD, SM, Director of the Yale School of Medicine Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation (CORE).

Interwoven with these expert testimonies are the personal stories of patients who have been victimized by healthcare inequities, including the filmmaker's own experiences as a quadriplegic African American woman.

# CALL TO ACTION

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Today's discussion is a part of a movement to transform the systems of oppression that have kept Black, Brown and Indigenous people from prospering. Through our collective action, we take on the legacies of injustice that have failed us to create a future where we can truly thrive. Follow @CrystalREmy and @URUtheRightToBe to learn more about ways to get involved and join us for future **Courageous Conversations**.



Join us in New York City on  
September 10th for the premiere of  
**The Deadliest Disease in America.**  
RSVP to join us at <http://bit.ly/ddafilm>

Visit our website:  
[www.urutherighttobe.org](http://www.urutherighttobe.org)

Take the pledge to join the movement to  
end racism.

## OUR THANKS

**URU the Right to Be, Inc gives its sincerest thanks to the following for making today's Courageous Conversation possible:**

Cheryl Duncan  
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Kate Capossela  
Kelly Davidson  
Lisa Cortes  
Natalie Conneely  
Salli Richardson-Whitfield

## Our Partners:

Black Women in Film! Canada  
Black Women Directors  
New York Women In Film  
and Television  
Women and Hollywood  
Women In Film

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