



**Presentation Notes**

<p><b>Presenter:</b></p>	<p>Charise Jewell</p> <p>Author of "Crazy: Memoir of a Mom Gone Mad".</p> <p>I write about people, including myself, with mental illness. It's critical to write honestly without adding to stigma.</p>
<p><b>Topic:</b></p>	<p>"Awakening to Social Sensitivity"</p> <p>Friday, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021; 4pm EST</p>
<p><b>Key Message:</b></p>	<p>This panel will discuss writing about other genders, races, classes, cultures with honesty and sensitivity. How can a writer be inclusive without appropriating or creating token characters?</p>
<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> point:</b></p>	<p>I think it's important to portray ALL of my characters honestly without adding to stereotypes, to create multi-dimensional characters and intriguing, relatable writing (i.e. this talk is not only applicable to socially sensitive characters).</p>
<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> point:</b></p>	<p>Writer needs to fully understand and be able to empathize with the character's perspective from his/her point of view for the work to be genuine.</p>
<p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> point:</b></p>	<p>If you don't have lived experience you MUST educate yourself by reading/researching/talking to experts, to develop characters that are accurate and realistic. This is true for any character if you know little about that character's job/hobby/lifestyle, but particularly true if anything about that character is sensitive.</p>
<p><b>4<sup>th</sup> point:</b></p>	<p>As well as knowing your character's perspective, you MUST know your audience. Anything sensitive that your audience might misinterpret needs further explanation.</p>

<b>5<sup>th</sup> point:</b>	Further explanation is also necessary if you choose to write about something in a way that is NOT socially sensitive or could be misunderstood even by a sympathetic audience. This explanation must be from the character's point of view, to describe what happened that led us here. This includes drawing from the character's upbringing, background, trauma, etc., so that a reader will empathize. A good example of this done well is the movie "Joker" with Joaquin Phoenix.
<b>6<sup>th</sup> point:</b>	If you explain and still can't express certain details in a sensitive way, it's better to omit those details, or perhaps that character, to avoid contributing to offensive social stereotypes. If in doubt, leave it out.
<b>7<sup>th</sup> point:</b>	Constantly ask reflection questions like "Is this realistic?" or "How would I feel if I was this character?" If you don't know the answer, admit it, and ask someone who can relate better.
<b>8<sup>th</sup> point:</b>	Ask a beta reader with similar lived experience to the character/topic you're writing about, to assess if your work is sensitive enough. This reader must be someone you trust to critique your work honestly.
<b>Important vocabulary:</b>	Stigma, appropriating, token characters, relatable writing, empathize, lived experience.
<b>Questions?</b>	charise.jewell@gmail.com charisejewell.com