

Thank you so much Ellen for that wonderful introduction. And Primary Stages! Thank you for acknowledging me in this way and thank you for your terrific advocacy when it comes to education in every way. And you, my babies!, I am overwhelmed - holding you all close, watching you rise up and stake your claim- gives me more than you can possibly imagine.

I had the good fortune to spend some time , FaceTime, last week with Ellen. I ask her about Annie and Marvin Einhorn. She says "I was so lucky to have them as parents." Tears start rolling down my face. An hour passes, in her virtual company, and I know that I am the lucky one. Through Ellen, I get a window into two people who valued lifting people up, helping people to reach their potential. I am inspired and also incredibly furious that I don't get to spend time in their company. There is a kindred spirit there and, now, i too deeply feel their loss. I am honored to participate in their legacy.

I am passionate about my work as a director. I am even more passionate about the longevity of our field, our ability to tell stories that reflect the ever changing world around us. Although mentorship can be seen as an act of kindness or generosity, I view it as a necessity, a responsibility. If we are to continue to make work, to tell stories, or even survive another 50, 100, 1000 years, we need to raise up this next generation. So how do we do this?

We hold open doors. Doors can be heavy and unwieldy. Some doors are closed due to impossible entry fees, some are closed by gender barriers, racial prejudices. Some are so tightly shut by an older generation so afraid of what these brilliant young people have to say. We must kick these doors down, pry them open.

Primary Stages and I are deeply in alignment on this matter. Do you know about the amazing programs they offer? How many tickets they make available to students and teens and artists? Primary Stages believes in creating access where there wasn't access before. They are some of the best door holders I know.

What else can we do? We can bear witness. Mentorship, for me, is about seeing. It is not an Act of Doing, but an Act of Seeing. Seeing you. I see you there. In the shadows, in the wings, in the back of the classroom. It is my job as a mentor to shine a light and hold the mirror up. To see the potential and the possibility. To hold some of their burden, to free up their hands for the doing.

What else? On days where it feels like too much work, where I work twice as hard for half as much, where I feel like making art, raising kids, earning a living, being a friend daughter sister parent athlete artist teacher director is just too much...Days where I want to lie down, pull the covers over my head and wait for the storm to pass...I stand back up. I stand up because they are all watching. I stand up for Ashley and Kristi. Kate and Addie. Brooke and Cecelia and Emma and Marti and Keira and Nate and Skye. I stand up for Noah and Delaney. They make me stronger and better and braver. And they see me standing. And they are stronger and better and braver for it.

I spoke a moment ago about learning about Annie and Marvin Einhorn. Two people who held open doors, who beared witness, who stood up. To be honored in their name feels so immense. Luckily, I don't feel like I receive this honor on my own. I receive it on behalf of all of you. For anyone who cheers someone on. For anyone who illuminates the potential in someone maybe not yet ready to see it in themselves. For anyone who keeps their chin up in spite of it all in order to model this perseverance for someone else. For anyone who provides opportunities, paves the way, supports educational programming, listens with an open mind, loves with their whole heart. To be a mentor we all give without expecting anything in return, so it's pretty bananas to be awarded for it. Luckily, I am only here to accept on our behalf. This is for all of us. A quiet whisper to Just. Keep. Going. To saying yes and to dreaming big. Thank you.