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Mayor Emanuel Interviews Actress and Comedian Erica Watson on "Chicago Stories" Podcast

On this week's episode of "Chicago Stories," actress and comedian Erica Watson stopped by City Hall to talk to Mayor Emanuel about her roles in shows like "The Chi," her new movie "BlacKorea," and the growing strength of Chicago's film and television industry. They also shared a frank conversation about community policing—how far it's come, and where she thinks it needs to go.

Erica's visit to City Hall came on the heels of receiving "Best Actress in a Drama" from the Windy City Film Festival for her role as Pearlie Mae in the short film "BlacKorea." Her star turn was the latest in a string of screen roles, many of which were shot right here in Chicago, including "Chicago PD," and "Empire" in addition to "The Chi," along with many others.

"That would be unheard of, to be living in Chicago and working as an actor to get guest star or co-star roles on major network television shows," Erica said, "we would all have to go to New York or L.A. to have a career."

For Erica, who was raised in the Hyde Park neighborhood on the South Side, the next step is getting those shows to trust the actors here in Chicago to go beyond guest roles and become full series regulars.

"They're still outsourcing the series regulars to folks who are acting in L.A. and New York," Erica said, "I think they just don't trust Chicago actors yet that we have the ability to do it, but we do."

Erica and Mayor Emanuel also had an open and honest discussion about community policing in Chicago. It's an issue Erica has strong feelings about, not only as a South Sider but as a sister of a police officer in the department's Second District.

"People want to be treated like human beings," Erica said. "If we're going to put [officers] on the street in foot patrol, they still need to meet the community."

As Erica told Mayor Emanuel, if she were a beat officer, she would be sure to spend time stopping by local businesses, striking up conversations, and taking part in neighborhood events—not just for the sake of the community, but for the safety of the officers themselves.

“I love my city and I think there are ways we can heal the problems we are having,” Erica said. “We’re more alike than we are different.”

Be sure to listen to the entire episode as Erica and Mayor Emanuel talk about her dream role, her political “ambition,” Donald Trump, and the *real* reason this Sox fan is rooting for the Cubs.

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