

Audio Title: Lindo Yes
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Transcript

Rebekah Borucki: Hey, friend! I heard you were looking for our spot and I'm here to help you.

So, you're going to go past the corner bodega and down the block from the fresh cuts barbershop, and there you'll find a brick row house at the intersection of Literature Place and Social Justice Blvd. That's where you will find the stoop.

Our host Amanda Lytle will be there to welcome you to the conversation. *The Book Stoop* is the place for the hottest takes on book culture, nerd culture, current events, with best-selling authors, change-makers, and risk-takers, our favorite kinds of people.

I'm Rebekah Borucki, President of Row House Publishing, and this is season two of our podcast. Thank you for listening.

Now, I'm going to let you get to Amanda.

Amanda Lytle: Thanks Bex. Hey friend. Let me be the second to welcome you to our spot, *The Book Stoop*. I feel incredibly honored to be the host of this podcast and I'm so grateful to have you here.

Today on *The Book Stoop*, I'm speaking with Lindo Jones. Lindo is a spoken word artist, creator of Lindo Yes clothing line and an event host who is born and raised in Uptown Philadelphia, PA. He is an unapologetically Black fusion of theatrical, poetics and visual art, whose work addresses the constructs of love, masculinity, and social injustice.

Lindo builds curriculum to help youth express themselves through creative writing, visual arts and performing arts centered around social activism and personal development.

In the conversation today, Lindo shares some insights about a book that he's reading on apologizing. He talks about Black superheroes and his own personal superpowers.

Lindo tells us about his creative process and about how imagination has no budget. We hear about how Lindo is helping support students, offering and sharing his superpowers as tools to carry through our lives. He expands on social anxiety and how this has played into his spoken word poetry and what a flash of genius is.

Before we jump in, I want to invite you to share *The Book Stoop* with your community. If you're loving this episode, grab a screenshot and tag us on Instagram at @rowhousepub. Every share, five-star rating and written review helps support us, find more listeners, and climb the charts. So we're super grateful for your help.

We start our chats on *The Book Stoop* with a rather fitting question, “So what are you reading these days?”

Lindo Jones: I’m right now reading – I think it’s called “The Language of Apologies,” the “Five Languages of Apologies”. It’s by the same person that created “The Five Love Languages”.

Amanda Lytle: Oh, I think Gary Chapman.

Lindo Jones: OK, Chapman and then they wrote it with someone else named Jennifer – I’m blanking out on their last name too. But that’s what I’m currently reading.

Amanda Lytle: Awesome.

Lindo Jones: And I’m also reading Black AF. I’m reading that comic book.

Amanda Lytle: OK. What have been some of your biggest takeaways? The apology one actually really has me interested.

Lindo Jones: Yeah. Well, I’ve been really interested in just like – so I’m on a chapter where they talked there about like how when you say an apology, you have to appeal to at least two languages of how a person wants to receive apology, so they can validate that that’s sincere.

Sometimes that looks like body language of just like, oh, I can tell that this person was really sincere with their apology because they were looking down or they were looking away or sometimes it could be the opposite of like they were looking directly in the eye. However that person will read your body language as sincerity given your personhood with them and then also sometimes it could be just like do you just say sorry.

Some people are cool with a sorry and a body language or some people don’t care about body language. They want a sorry and an ownership of how that impacts them, of just like oh, because I was late, I have burdened you with all this idle time that you could have been doing something else with.

So that like, OK, now you understand how that would impact me. So like that speaks more to the language of how I want to receive apologies. So I’ve just been really thinking about like how to best communicate my apologies to people and grievances given that, you know, if I have offended them in any way, taking account of what that – how they want to hear that offense given to them when I admit to my fault.

Amanda Lytle: Super powerful because I guess there’s a flipside too. It’s almost understanding – it would give you a deeper understanding of how you would want to receive an apology as well.

Lindo Jones: Yeah, yeah. It definitely makes me more aware, and I think another part of it – and I’m just like only like five chapters into this book. I’ve been thinking about how just like regret is a part of apologizing. I never thought about it before just like – you know, when you state like “I’m sorry” and you admit to that, there’s something to that. Also just like you can put it in your personal feelings about it too, meaning just like this made me feel really regretful that I did this, right?

And often prior to reading this book, I always thought that takes – that puts so much center on me, on my feelings, when really it could just say like, no, I’m empathetic about this, right? That I am feeling the way you may feel that it has impacted me this way as well, without putting back fault on you because like some people will apologize. Like if this offended you, but if you didn’t do this thing ...

Amanda Lytle: Yeah, the “but”.

Lindo Jones: Yeah, yeah. It will put ownership back on you when it’s – and when – I thought that’s what I’m always doing when I admit my feelings and apologies when really it was just like, no, stating my feelings without putting fault or ownership on the other person. But to say how I’m regretful or how I feel because I did such an act to you doesn’t take away from the apology.

Amanda Lytle: No. I think language is so, so important and that acceptance and acknowledgment and taking responsibility is key.

Lindo Jones: Yeah, yeah, very much.

Amanda Lytle: I’m also curious about Black as – or I was going to say Black As Fuck, but Black AF.

Lindo Jones: No, that’s what’s cool. I wasn’t sure because I cursed on that.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah.

Lindo Jones: I was trying to figure out how I can ask you that. No. Black As Fuck is – it started off as this book called “Black” and then they expanded the world. Well, I don’t want to say they expanded the world. I think they always had the incentive to show us more of the world.

But the premise of the book is a good amount of Black people get superpowers and how the world is responding to them getting superpowers and Black As Fuck is exploring other parts of the world, other superheroes, other entities that are responding to just like Black people having superpowers and it’s really interesting because like when you think about the X-Men and you think about how Professor X is representing Martin Luther King and you think about how Magneto is representing Malcolm X, there’s a sense of just like white fragility there because it has to appeal to just like white comfort in order for these ideas of discrimination they’re displaying and these roles to be understood.

In this book, it remedies all that and then it also adds in a couple other layers too that makes it really interesting for me to just like read. But I like that because like that's my biggest grievance with X-Men is just like – well, that's my biggest grievance with like anything sci-fi or fantasy. When you're talking about just like white supremacy, they always other it by making it seem like it's not within American norm.

So just like the Nazis. Well, I'm like, well, we had Klan members. We have white supremacy. We have our right. We can't just state these things, but I think it is because of white fragility of just like, OK, we want our white readers to feel comfortable. So if we other it, it makes them feel distant from this.

Amanda Lytle: Right. So you're saying that this book *Black As Fuck* helps remedy that.

Lindo Jones: Uh-huh.

Amanda Lytle: Beautiful.

Lindo Jones: Yeah, yeah, and also just like putting a nice spin on it, you know.

Amanda Lytle: Right. Well, even – now you've got me curious about this superpowers and superheroes thing because I even noticed how you sign off on your emails, right? Like the signature of it includes Black superheroes. So tell me about that.

Lindo Jones: Well, that was just like – so my entry level to everything is through sci-fi, fantasy, comic books, nerd culture. Identify myself as a blur meaning just a Black person that's really invested into nerd culture and navigating those intersectionalities of just being race and also just everything that's nerd. Then other parts of my personhood as well.

So like when I say Black superhero, I'm talking about like really just my origin story of just like, you know, when I came into poetry, I didn't come into it just saying I want to be a poet. I really came about it because like, you know, I was that person in the classroom that at the time, I didn't know this but I was living with social anxiety and I was in these discussion-based classes where at any given moment, my teacher could call on me and ask me to just like talk about this topic or, you know, sometimes it could seem like a minor situation to you but it would be a major thing to me.

Like someone could say hi to me in the hallway and I would be like, "Should I say what's up or how are you doing, or should I just jump right into the conversation?" I'm like rehearsing these conversations in my head, so I can be better equipped to handle them and navigate them and lower this anxiety that I'm feeling all in my body, all in my mind, of thinking that I'm going to embarrass myself. I'm going to do some type of act of self-defecation and all these things.

So I'm like, "Oh, let me just rehearse these conversations already." Then after a while just having these conversations, this discussion and stuff like that, people were saying to me just like,

you know, you know what you are saying is a poem because when I rehearse these conversations in my head, I'm trying to score social currency of just like saying something that's really impactful in a conversation or something that really adds to the conversation.

So, you know, after a while, you know, I am striving to have that moment of just awe or awe-inspiring. So when people say that to me, you know, like "Oh, you know, what you're saying could be a poem," or "That's really poetic," it triggers something in me where I was like, "Oh, if that's a poem, let me go try it out," and be in this space of poetry.

After doing poetry for a while, I was like, "Oh my god, this feels like a superpower," because like I was able to navigate conversations in ways that I didn't feel as though I had the ability to do before until now and that's what just made me feel like a superhero for like, "Oh, that's my superpower."

This is the closest thing to feeling like the superheroes that I read about, that I saw on TV, all the fans seeing sci-fi that I consume. So I was like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, this is it."

Amanda Lytle: That's really cool. Thank you for sharing that. The back story behind that is super interesting and having found really a tool, right, to also help reduce anxiety at the same time.

Lindo Jones: Yeah, very much so.

Amanda Lytle: I'm curious about how consuming sci-fi and fantasy. It seems to be a big part of your life too and interest. Sci-fi and fantasy and how does that affect your poetry?

Lindo Jones: Well, I often like – well, the way I think about the difference between like sci-fi and fantasy is I think about sci-fi as something that's very concrete, something that's very possible and then explore the impossible parts of it, you know, and then fantasy is something that's impossible. But let's explore the possible parts of it, right?

So, you know, sci-fi would deal with just like folks are living longer because of surgeries, transplants and all that stuff. So we got – we get Frankenstein. You know what I'm saying? Frankenstein is based off of just like how surgeries are making people live longer and come out of comas and stuff like that.

So it was just like let's explore this idea and then fantasy is just like oh, snap, I don't think these things ever exist. But what if they did in our world? So we get dragons. We get all these other things and as I'm consuming those things, I'm often thinking to myself of just like, all right, these are some real elements that are happening in my world.

But I want to deliver it to my audience in a way that is impactful to – you know, going back to the conversation we had before, but also make them feel that wherever they're at is not where they're at right now. Meaning like I know my audience is sitting in a crowd. I know they're just looking at me.

But I know I have so much of their imagination right now. If I narrate this idea, it makes them think of just like the impossible, meaning that I forget – it makes them suspend this belief that I'm not in my seat anymore. I'm wherever the story is being told.

Then sometimes when I'm exploring more of the fantasy elements of just like my craft of writing, I'm really just exploring ideas of just like, all right, we know this can happen. But so much of this is real. So like poems like Cupid G where I talk about like Cupid becomes a deity of revenging hearts versus, you know, a deity of just putting people together.

Well, we know Cupid doesn't exist. All these things don't exist. But we do know people do get shot. We do know that people feel so emotionally devastated in a relationship. They're acting this way and they wish karma will come to kind of spite that person.

So all those feelings are real. The one thing that's not real is Cupid, you know. So I'm like, oh, I'm exploring this thing that's impossible with these possible elements and therefore you suspend your disbelief enough to just be immersed in the poem.

So that's how I'm using sci-fi, fantasy in everything that I'm consuming, to really help me navigate my poem of just like how can I make suspension of disbelief happen and also create these conversations in people's heads that is utilizing their imagination because unlike a movie or anything we see on TV as just like someone that's just being oral and just within the oral tradition, their imagination doesn't have a budget.

So this gives me the space to do these really, really incredible ideas off of just your thought of it, right? Because like when you're doing a film and when you're doing a TV show, you can be like, yo, there's a rainy sandstorm. Oh, we can't afford rain. You know what I'm saying? We can't get rain that day.

So then you got to change it. It's just like a gloomy day but like, you know, since I'm just telling people the story, it's always going to be rain. You know? It's always going to be what I'm going to tell them. I just have to convince them enough of it, so they submit and buy into the idea.

Amanda Lytle: Hey friend. We are coming straight back to *The Book Stoop* after a quick break.

OK. My jaw could have hit this desk when you said imagination doesn't have a budget.

Lindo Jones: Yeah.

Amanda Lytle: That's so powerful.

Lindo Jones: Oh, great. Thanks.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. So, OK, so now I'm curious about – I've seen some of your more recent stuff and I want you to tell me about animation and comics and how that also weaves into the work that you do as a poet.

Lindo Jones: Yeah. When I first started off my career, it was always prescribed to me that, you know, I had to be a touring poet. I had to perform well in slam. I had to garner other's attention through like doing poetry books and stuff like that.

Those things weren't the funnest to me. I don't like slam. For folks that don't understand what slam is, slam is just competitive spoken word where people compete with just like content and poems and hopefully get a prize or hopefully get recognition that helps them out in a career or just like the praise of their moment.

You know, poetry books, we all know that. Well, I'm assuming we all know that. But those things weren't fun to me. You know, I explored them, and it wasn't fun to me, and I really love poetry. I was happy with it, and I wanted to create stuff that also made me feel that way because I didn't want to fall in love with poetry.

So I had to sit back on my relationship with it and think about like, "What way could poetry work for me so I can keep this relationship that I love, that provided me such superpowers?"

After a while thinking about it, I saw that interview by David Banner and David Banner is a producer and a rapper and he was talking about how like, you know, he got tired of chasing rappers and hoping for a placement of his songs that he was producing on their CDs and stuff like that.

That was just like so exhausting to him and I think – and I'm getting the story wrong but I'm going to land in the same spot that he told the story. He turned on a TV and when the TV came on, it made a little noise like do-do-do and then he – it just hit him. He had what you call a "flash of genius", and a flash of genius is just like this moment of epiphany where a grand idea comes to you that leads to just like a lot of transformation either in a culture or sometimes it can be personal.

But a lot of times it's within like science where it's just like the windshield wipers. Like it's the movie called "Flash Of Genius" where it talked about how the windshield wiper came to the mind of the scientist. So he had like a flash of genius moment where he was like, oh man, this TV made a distinctive sound when it came on and I am a producer of sound. So anytime sound needs to be created and I have a job. So he stopped just going after rappers and other artists, musicians and just started going to other places to place his music.

It was just like microwave companies, Disney, all those things. So when I saw that interview, I sat back with it and I thought to myself "If you strip down my art to the bare minimum, what is it?" and I was like, oh, I am the producer of words that are impactful. So anytime words needed to be produced and I need to be as impactful as can be, I have a way to do it.

So I was like, “All right, cool. What does that mean? What do words need to be in?” So that just really got me exploring just like animation and using my poems in animation. You know, doing commission works where people would ask me to just like write a few lines. It would be a mantra and, you know, facilitate in classes where I’m just talking and just allowing people to explore by just impacting on my words. So it has just really opened up a whole new kind of diversity of income but also just like a sense of just like a span in my thought of what my work could be versus what I was told my work could be when I came into poetry.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah, because you’ve taken something, and you’ve completely run with it. You’ve gone all over the place with it but like with such intention and direction.

Lindo Jones: Yeah.

Amanda Lytle: I have a question about your poetry and what you’re doing with it outside of performing it. I guess that kind of lines up with your animations and comics and just what you can do with it. But you’re really on the brink of something really magical.

Lindo Jones: I feel that way every day. Well, some days, I don’t feel that way. But yeah, the comic books, the animation where I’m just really taking like a few lines of my poetry and seeing how it can serve in this platform of just like, “All right, cool. What if I limit that imagination a bit?” Because now it has to be tangible, right?

Amanda Lytle: Right.

Lindo Jones: So what do these pictures look drawn together? I mean drawn in relationship to my words. What does it look like for them to be drawn together and animate it? I really like that because so much of like my poetry is, you know, being in front of an audience and, you know, even on my worst night if I bomb and nobody is feeling my poetry, if it’s a crowd of 30 people, 3 people it might have hit for, if that’s on a night that’s not good for me.

On a good night, it can hit 20 some people, you know, and the other people may need still more convincing but it’s a good night for me. But when I’m creating my poetry for comic books and illustration, I have to serve a direct connection to the animator illustrator.

So I’m like, OK, you now have to see what is in my head when I’m performing it. So I have to even take a step back to just like, “All right, when I’m doing these lines, what do I see and then also how do I write that down for the illustrator to do?” and then sometimes when I’m working with an illustrator, I don’t want to say they take their own liberties but they also have a spin on it that I didn’t even think of that worked really well because like all art is up for interpretation and then we give it out to the audience.

So just like before it was just me thinking it and narrating it. Now it’s like me thinking it, narrating it, giving some illustration instructions. The illustrators do what they do and then we present it to the audience. So now we went from just like it being imagination to like something very tangible that you’re going to see that you didn’t have to build from.

It has been a lot of fun for me, and I like doing that a lot. I like doing that a lot and I like teaching a lot. I think one of the things that I didn't think of when I was doing poetry is like I would be able to be in classrooms talking about how words impact people because I didn't think that conversation left spaces of me talking about other people that identifies being a linguist or, you know, just poets in general but like the more and more I'm in classrooms, the more and more I'm talking to folks about how do you use your words and how do they affect you, how can create an art be a relief but also advocate for needs, for yourself, for others, for a larger sense of community.

And those things have been just like really like – really good for me. It's really good for me because like the repetition of these conversations lead to me always constantly advocating myself through the work. Also a lot of times when I'm in my teaching *bag [0:23:30] [Phonetic]*, I feel as though like I'm showing off the vehicle and then I'm allowing them to drive and I'm either sitting in the backseat or I'm sitting in on the passenger side.

I say that to say it's just like a lot of times I go to the classroom, and they ask me like, "OK. We want to do an art project on Black Lives Matter," or "We want to do an art project that's just about self-expression," or sometimes it's very concrete where it's just like, "We want you to do a poetry workshop. It's going to be a whole bunch of poets and, you know, you can help them out."

But either way, it is me just showing a vehicle, me and just like these are all the things you can use and matter of fact, you can use them. You can get in it and go where you want to go, right? And, you know, sometimes I'm in the backseat because I'm not giving them any instructions or directions. I'm just simply showing the car and they're taking me where they want to go and it's another person they know, someone that's their peer, that's on the passenger side that's being the GPS because that's the role that they want to play.

But sometimes I am in the passionate side where I'm just like, "Oh, you want to make a turn here? Do you want to make a stop here? Where do you want to put the destination at? Because I'm going to put it in and we're just going to go and I'm going to help you along the way to be here." Then the gases, the resources. What do we need to make sure this car moves?

So it is like the art supplies. It is a space. It is, you know, understanding these things first and those things are really fun because it allows me to work differently and work in ways that – you know, like when I came into poetry, no one said like, "Oh, you can be a teacher and artist." That was not something I was told about. I was either *[0:25:11] [Indiscernible]* poetry. You do well in slam. You had a poetry book. You know, but I mean like I'm teaching comic books. I'm doing an animation. I'm doing a lot of stuff that wasn't prescribed to me. So it had been a lot of fun.

Amanda Lytle: Your analogy for support with the car just makes my heart explode especially as an educator. Lindo, honestly, it's amazing and I was also thinking about how often they inform our own next step. It's such a beautiful cycle of just give and take with love and then you also

said something else about just like the fact that you are in this role and that you're offering up these tools.

But what I was thinking the whole time you were sharing that is that the level of passion that you're bringing into this space, it's showing these students that if they have an interest in poetry that they haven't spoken about or in animation or creating at all, you're now showing them. Because how do you know that you can be something if you don't see it?

So now you're walking into the room with so much love and passion for something that they may not have explored yet. I love that you're bringing that into classrooms.

Lindo Jones: Oh, great. Thanks. Yeah, it's a lot of fun and it makes me think like I'm not going to spaces like, oh, you're going to be a really dope artist or a really dope poet. I'm really going to places where just like this is a tool and I think like right now, I'm working on a curriculum about patriarchy, toxic masculinity and soft masculinity and as I work on it, I'm unpacking stuff about myself and I'm thinking to myself like yo, if I – so much about toxic masculinity is this performance of acts of like what is deemed as manhood of the sense like I have to be violent in order to be value in this moment, right?

And one of the tools that I'm hoping to lead in this curriculum and talk about them and do all these really cool art about – it's just like you don't have to be. So let's say like someone says something awful to you. Just to give a quick example. Someone says something awful to you and you feel as though, oh, I have to defend myself. Both those feelings are right.

You do need to defend yourself. But do you have to act violent? Do you have to be able to throw a punch? Do you have to be able to just like beat up this person? What if you can say to yourself, "My feelings are hurt. I can admit it. I can talk about why that makes me sad. I can identify some type of relief about it," and then how – I might not be able to communicate with that person about my hurtness. I'm not saying that's going to happen. There are societal norms.

But I don't need to be validated in a sense of being value as far as just like my personhood in order to be able to move forward because before, you feel as though the only way I'm going to be moving forward and going to be valued and everybody will validate me if I throw a punch back.

If someone says something awful about me, I throw a punch back. I beat them up. So even if they can call me a bad name, they can't beat me up in a conversation and that will validate me.

What I'm now saying is just like as you – you could just walk away and have hurt feelings. Admit them. Talk about them. Make ourselves more aware of why those things hurt and then center ourselves in our relief and also into a group that makes that possible for you just to admit our feelings. Yeah.

Amanda Lytle: I have so many feels about this one especially because I just dove into *Irregular Heartbeat*.

Lindo Jones: Yeah.

Amanda Lytle: So, so much of what you're saying, right, is so directly aligned with *Irregular Heartbeat* and the back story there. Can you just share a little bit about *Irregular Heartbeat* with us?

Lindo Jones: *Irregular Heartbeat*, it has a couple of different like facets to it or layers to it. But the most – the one that I want to highlight now is really about friendship and it's about how sometimes we don't recognize our friendships until we are in these urgent moments of loss and loss could mean like someone has transitioned. Loss could mean just like we're going to miss out on a lot of time. A loss could mean just like an opportunity to share – you know, share or express a moment and for me in this poem, it was just like I recognize someone that I was hanging out with for the longest that I just thought as my friend was really my best friend.

I didn't realize that until we were going to lose a lot of time together because they were getting locked up and I just like was looking at them getting locked up. I was like, oh my god, I never told you I love you. I never hugged you. I never told you how these moments meant a lot to me, and I never admitted to my admiration.

I'm having all these feelings and as they're handcuffed, getting into the cop car, I hugged them and I say, "Yo, I love you." That was the first time I ever said that to them. You know, since that poem, I'm like, you know, breaking some of those barriers so it can become part of a routine of my life. But I've also been a – you know, just really examining that moment of just like why did that occur. Why wasn't that regular in the first place?

Amanda Lytle: Yeah.

Lindo Jones: Yeah.

Amanda Lytle: The highlighting in it of the importance of softness and I've talked a lot about toxic masculinity and how important that softness is and how it needs to be appreciated and really accepted. So yeah, thank you for elaborating on that and the work that you're doing. It's really impactful.

Lindo Jones: Oh, thanks.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. We wrap up *The Book Stoop* podcast with the opportunity to give a shoutout to an account, a person, an organization, disruptor, activist or change agent that you would like to send some love to.

Lindo Jones: Yeah. I want to give a shoutout to Octavia Butler. They played such a great part of my career. I remember the first time I read *Wild Seed*, *Mind of My Mind*. They're just a phenomenal person and then also I really like them because like they lived with dyslexia like myself. So I remember reading their books and was like, "Not only is this person Black and

they're doing sci-fi and fantasy but also they're living with dyslexia," and I was like, "Oh my god, this means this is achievable for me."

So, you know, so I want to shout them out. I also want to just shout out Black Minds Publishing who has helped me out a lot with just like navigating the comic book world and just really got me to the point I'm at now.

If my career is all about the steps that I'm taking, they are the railing to it that I'm holding on as I climb that staircase. So I want to shout out to them, and I want to shout out all the people that are looking at their immediate circumstances saying today, "So this does not have to be normal," and pushing further than that.

I think there are so many change agents out there, so many advocates, so many people that are doing great community organizer work that I could never exhaust a list because there are so many of you. So I don't even want to list all those folks, you know.

Amanda Lytle: Lindo, this was so great. This is such a great conversation. Thank you so much for your time.

Lindo Jones: Thank you so much. I appreciate you all as well. Peace.

Amanda Lytle: Thank you so much for being with us. Please be sure to follow us on your podcast app and leave a rating where you're able. Written reviews help us reach more listeners too. Be sure to check out the show notes for all the links and share *The Book Stoop* with your community. Talk soon.

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