

Audio Title: Tasha Hunter
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Transcript

Rebekah Borucki: Hello, friend! I heard you were looking for our spot. I got 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 the stoop.

Amanda, Amanda Lytle, she will be there to welcome you to the conversation. *The Book Stoop*, that's the name of the spot. We got the hottest takes on book culture, nerd culture, current events, with best-selling authors, change-makers, and risk-takers, the best kinds of folks.

Oh, me? I'm Rebekah Borucki, President of Row House Publishing, and this is our podcast. I am so glad you're here.

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 that you're here.

Today on *The Book Stoop*, I'm speaking with Tasha Hunter. Tasha is a licensed clinical social worker, an author, and a podcast host. She's a heart-forward friend and leader who is open and honest about her own healing journey in order to help others feel more connected and less alone.

In this conversation, Tasha opens up about realizing the ways that she has silenced her own voice primarily after having read *Women Who Run with the Wolves*. We talk about the importance of turning inward and the fact that it is OK to do so.

We talk about naming and acknowledging our stories and the power of friendship and love. We also hear about how Tasha calls a white supremacy and patriarchy as she sees it and she shares how she does so in her daily life.

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

Tasha Hunter: I'm reading *Dance of the Dissident Daughters* by Sue Monk Kidd. I'm also reading *Women Who Run with the Wolves* by Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés and I am reading *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz.

Amanda Lytle: With *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, I remember seeing a post on Instagram about that. What was it about that book that you just maybe weren't ready to pick up yet?

Tasha Hunter: Her discussions about naivety, how we abandon our intuition.

Amanda Lytle: Yes.

Tasha Hunter: Our own internal knowing and we do so from a very young age. Abandoning our intuition. This is what I know to be true, but this is what others have told me or this is what I want, or this is what society says that I should have and so that book, I'm only like in the sixth chapter. So, I'm still reading it. But it's speaking to me in ways that I just never – I wasn't prepared for it.

Amanda Lytle: And you had an idea that it was going to be a super powerful read and maybe you just kept it at bay for that reason.

Tasha Hunter: I did. It was a recommendation by a close friend of mine, and I read it. I started reading and I said, "Oh my god. Wow!" and then I started thinking about the ways in which I had silenced my own voice. I started thinking about my own intuition and the years. I'm 42 now but years ago when I didn't even know or recognize that I had a voice, that I had intuition, that I had internal knowing and really trusted other people's opinions and beliefs more so than my own.

Now at the age of 42, I'm – and going through so many things in my life, I'm thinking, "How do I return to my own knowing?" because it's there and I recognize it now. How do I rebirth myself? How do I get to know myself? How will I continue to consistently value and empower my own knowing, my own voice, my own internal dialogue? How do I honor myself?

Amanda Lytle: OK. Now can you answer that? I'm just sitting here and I'm wondering. I'm like, "Can you answer that? Have you been able to catch yourself in a moment and really assess your patterning?"

Tasha Hunter: Yes, yes. A prime example is because of early trauma, I really struggle with saying no. I really struggle with disappointing others because I don't want to ruin relationships. I don't want people angry or disappointed in me. So, if I'm honoring myself, is it OK if I honor myself by just saying this is not what I wanted this time or by saying no or taking time for myself?

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. You and I were talking, pre-recording about codependency and about how that starts so early and about the self-abandonment that takes place in that and how we really tune out and away from our intuition in that process.

Tasha Hunter: Yeah, and it could be Amanda something as simple as someone that I don't want to hear from or don't want to talk to messaging me, but me feeling pressure to respond to that person or someone asking to spend time with me and me struggling to say, "No!"

Amanda Lytle: Right.

Tasha Hunter: No, I don't want to have a conversation. No, I don't want a text. No, I don't want to hang out. You know, I don't want to meet you. It's very difficult and in years past, I would say yes to everything. Yes, yes, yes. I will do it and what was happening, thanks to Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés is that now I'm realizing the ways in which I literally buried my own intuition, my own self, my own interest, all the things that were good for me, to me, the good within me. I buried that because I was so focused on pleasing other people and that didn't leap to success.

So now I'm rebirthing myself and finding my own voice and saying, "You know what? Yeah, I did struggle with people-pleasing. Yes, I did struggle with difficulty with saying no and all of these things. But I can do that now. I can hold space for myself."

When I do that, I always bring it back to younger Tasha, little Tasha, that just needed family and belonging and love. So, every time that I use my voice, even when I'm afraid, even when I'm wrecked with anxiety and all the things, even when I'm fearful, I felt like a little part of me is also speaking for younger Tasha.

So now at 42, I'm looking over at my younger self and saying, "Girl, I got you." This is for you. This is for the times when you couldn't say no. When you didn't have a voice, I get to be her voice and rebirth myself. You know, the highest birth of myself at the same time.

Amanda Lytle: Interesting that you just mentioned that younger self because in a conversation with people that might not understand how important the inner child work is, is if you can just bring some other kid into the situation, you would be like, "Do you see that little kid? Can you imagine saying that to this person?" That little person, can you imagine speaking to that person that way or having that little person experience what you did?

Then as soon as there's a visual, it's like, "No. Oh my gosh." Well, this is what's going on internally within you. So, I wanted that to actually segue into something that I had said pre-recording, when we were just shooting this [0:07:54] [*Indiscernible*] and I said, "We are allowed to turn inward. Can you speak to that a bit?"

Tasha Hunter: I could literally cry at that statement. No shit. I could literally cry. I am allowed to turn inward because in relationships, sometimes what happens is it has been my experience in relationships that I've not been allowed to be silent. I've not been allowed to take time for myself, to get away, to think, to recharge. I am allowed to go through areas of my life that I need to go through, to experience. I need to figure out answers. I need to strategize. I need some self-care, some self-love or I'm just spending my time – sometimes I just need time to breathe.

So, when I think about – you know, when you say it, I'm allowed to turn inward. I thought about the times and I'm thinking about another close friend of mine who said to me recently. She said, "Tasha," she said, "you're the one person that does not punish me for not being available."

How often – and when she said that, I said, “Damn it. That’s so true.” How often we punish people, and we hold grudges, and we get angry, and we create these narratives around someone, you know, because maybe we’ve not talked in a while. Maybe we’ve not hung out in a while. Maybe, you know, we’ve not been there for each other to listen to our problems and to lament and do all the things. So, we create these stories of oh, they’re too busy or they’re – you know, oh now that they’re in this relationship or now that they’ve got this new job or this new thing, they don’t have time for me.

What if that’s not even freaking true? Can I turn inward without having to carry all of your stuff, your story, your resentment, your anger, your codependency, your neediness, your childhood stuff that’s even bringing up the issues, your abandonment issues? Can I turn inward and save myself? Because right now there’s a lot of us and that’s me included that’s going through some stuff where I am literally every day trying to save myself and that means that right now, I can love you. I can care about you. I respect you. You’re important to me. But I’ve got to focus on me.

Can I turn inward? And I don’t think that in a lot of families, in a lot of platonic and romantic relationships people allow us to do that without punishing. Like they don’t allow it, they’re going to punish. Did that make sense, Amanda?

Amanda Lytle: Yes, it did because there is that expectation that in a relationship of any sort, like you said platonic or intimate, even work relationships too.

Tasha Hunter: Yeah.

Amanda Lytle: Is that you are always available. It’s just that expectation. Well, expectations are heavy. Then I was also thinking when you were sharing that. In my mind I have another question that I was kind of linking something that you said earlier about just a fear of hurting relationships. You know, doing anything to not hurt relationships but I also know something that you are really working on and are super intentional about now is naming white supremacy and the patriarchy as you see it. So, when it comes to relationships, I’m super interested in knowing what that looks like in practice.

Tasha Hunter: Oh my god. This is such a fun question because let me tell you what it looks like, Amanda.

Amanda Lytle: I’m ready.

Tasha Hunter: Every single day or I would say most days, I am naming white supremacy in every regard even whether we are talking about pumpkin spice or we’re talking about decolonizing faith or we’re talking about a violence against Haitians or immigration issues or what’s going on in Afghanistan or white Jesus or whatever. I am naming white supremacy in every way.

If I'm talking about the military, you better damn bet I'm going to talk about racism. I'm going to talk about white supremacy in practice in terms of how, you know, black or brown military members are impacted and treated differently, how queer people are treated differently. You know, in the military and in the world and it's rooted in all things. Everything evil is rooted in white supremacy.

Let me go back to pumpkin spice. I am convinced – you know, every year for maybe the last 20 years or so, pumpkin spice is a thing. It's a whole fucking thing. You go in the grocery store, they've got all the beautiful sections of every pumpkin spice coffee, doughnut, cereal, muffins, you name it. Everything is fucking pumpkin spice setters, socks, headbands, earrings. The pumpkin fucking spice.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah.

Tasha Hunter: And I'm like white people are making billions of dollars off of pumpkin fucking spice. But pumpkin spice I just really believe came from black and brown communities, the indigenous community. Come on!

If you've eaten any kind of ethnic food, those spices, you can't tell me that some white person made – no! I believe that they got that from our Native American brothers and sisters, our ancestors, that they got that from our African ancestors, that they got that from the Hispanic and Latino community.

Any black and brown community. We could be talking about – I mean anybody in the Middle East anywhere. Black and brown communities, you name it. I believe that every culture has their version of pumpkin fucking spice and I believe that white people took that shit from somebody and was like, "Let's make a brand out of this."

Amanda Lytle: Yeah.

Tasha Hunter: Let's get rich off of this when really they should be probably calling it sweet potato pie or something like that.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah.

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

Amanda Lytle: You've nailed that. It's so true. Like I love you. Billions of dollars.

Tasha Hunter: Billions of dollars.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah.

Tasha Hunter: Yeah. Every store, every restaurant, every coffee shop, they're going to have something about pumpkin spice. So where did they get that from? Because in my experience, white people are typically pretty bland, pretty [0:14:28] [Indiscernible]. You know, not a whole lot in the cupboard, not a whole lot on the seasoning rack in terms of cumin and curries and just coriander and all the things. I'm saying all the seeds but that's just what's in my head right now. But white folks are typically not the ones leaving the seasoning department.

Amanda Lytle: That's true.

Tasha Hunter: Whether we're talking about pumpkin fucking spice or we're talking about Haitians being beaten or we're talking about white Jesus, no matter what we are talking about, I mean it's everywhere and it impacts everything, housing, education, you name it. It's all rooted.

Body positivity, the issues with – you know, with disordered eating. It's steeped in white supremacy and patriarchy and so every day, I just see ways in which white supremacy is ruling and so if anybody just – to put it out there, if you're looking for this therapist that's not – that's saying, "No, we don't talk about that," I'm not the therapist because I'm going to talk about it every day because I'm a black woman. I'm a queer woman and I just get to talk about it. I just do.

Amanda Lytle: I love that about you. I love our conversations. But I do want to link that back now because in the work that you do and in what you're navigating right now even in life, when you think about not hurting that relationship with another person, ultimately naming things as you see it, which is what you should be doing, but it is going to impact relationships. So yeah, what does that look like?

Tasha Hunter: Yeah. You know, years ago, when I was in predominantly white spaces, when I was around people who were absolutely unsafe, I attended predominantly white churches, non-denominational, supposedly non-denominational churches but whatever. They were denominational. They were conservative, Southern Baptist, Pentecostal churches at their root oftentimes speaking about things. What would happen is people would say, "You're not supposed to talk about that," or, you know, "That's not right," or would just kind of shame me for wanting to speak about these things.

Sometimes that was even in black people who were afraid of talking about race issues. What I've discovered just through living and maturity and what not and really rebirthing myself as I spoke about earlier is I get to talk about the things that impact me and I'm allowed to talk about these things that have previously been uncomfortable and while we're talking about it, I also think that silencing people is a tactic of white supremacy, of whiteness, and it's whiteness that said to us we're not allowed to talk about race issues. We're not allowed to talk about money. You know, we're not allowed to talk about all of these politics. Whiteness set the rule on what we are allowed to talk about and what we're not allowed to talk about.

But being a black woman means that I get to talk about whatever the hell I want to talk about and the people who are for me and with me and who are supposed to be in my life will understand and probably will even agree.

Amanda Lytle: Oh, yeah.

Tasha Hunter: So, years ago I remember being – I thought we were friends until I brought up the issue of – this is just one example of the Confederate flag. That was one of the issues and the person said, “Well, there’s nothing wrong with Confederate flags. My family, they’ve got Confederate flags and it’s just a personal choice.”

I said, “Your family is racist as fuck,” and that is racist. It was in that moment that I understood that this white woman, she didn’t see me the way that I saw her. We’re living on two different planets because if my family had anything that was – you know, like anti whatever that was against any group of people or was steeped in the oppression and the murders of other people, I wouldn’t associate with them. So, her saying, “Well, there’s nothing wrong with that. You know, it’s just a personal choice,” I thought, “Oh.”

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. We’re not on the same page here.

Tasha Hunter: Right. We’re not on the same page. So yes, I’m going to speak out and that also gives other people – here’s the other thing Amanda. As a therapist, as a podcaster, as an author, it lets people know early to be in community with me or be in relationship with me and what I have discovered, which has been really a beautiful journey is that once I started speaking out and just being really true to what I believe in and stand for, I’m in community with more people and they’re not just black people. They’re not just brown people.

There are some white people who believe the way that I believe, right? We’re on the same side of this thing in wanting to build community, build relationships and to build a – I guess what I would call as a collective liberation. We want to build together. We want to love each other. We want to put positivity out in the world. We want to heal.

Amanda Lytle: Yes.

Tasha Hunter: Let me heal myself and if I heal myself, I’m going to say something or do something and that’s going to be very healing to the next person as well. So now I’m in community with way more people than I ever imagined and we all – it’s not a coincidence but coincidentally, think of the world similarly and you and I have talked about this heart talk, and I feel like my heart is literally tethered to all of these beautiful people all across the world.

So, in speaking out and owning my own truth, it connected me with others who were doing the same thing. In my opinion, it’s like maybe being what we all need to be in the world. You know, creating that better world by just doing the work internally. So, I don’t know. There’s a better way that I can say that. But yeah, that’s what I’m doing.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. I wholeheartedly believe that is that if we're all doing the internal healing and healing the wounds internally and then acting and modeling that for other people, like that's where people also see the courage to do it themselves.

Tasha Hunter: Yes, and it just came to me. It's that old Gandhi quote. I don't know if Gandhi said it or not, but it has been on plenty of things. Be the change that you want to see.

Amanda Lytle: Yes.

Tasha Hunter: So – and I feel like I'm in community with people who are changemakers, who are healers. We're not just out here creating content and creating businesses. We're trying to have a positive impact. We're trying to leave a legacy. We're trying to do the real work, the real heart-centered work.

Amanda Lytle: So, speaking of creation work and healing, you wrote an incredible book called "What Children Remember". I would love for you to tell us about that journey.

Tasha Hunter: So, I wrote "What Children Remember". It's my memoir and I wanted a book that really delved into my trauma in every possible aspect of how my childhood trauma and parental abandonment impacted me and not just that but how it impacted my relationships, platonic and romantic, how it impacted my relationship with myself and how it impacted my relationship with God and all the things that I wanted to say back then but didn't have the words, didn't have the language as a child.

Amanda, I wrote this book really literally just for me and I just figured if I can just get it out for me, I know that there's at least 10 people in the world. I just manifested – you know, if just 10 people will – that's how low my belief – I was like I'm going to write this book and if 10 people will read it, then those 10 people, maybe they will tell another 10 and then it will just keep going from there.

But to just let others know that you can go through insurmountable circumstances and that's actually kind of pulled from a quote in my book. You can go through these really difficult things, unimaginable experiences and still give the world the best of who you are and what you've got.

That it doesn't have to stop you. The trauma that you've experienced does not have to be the end of your purpose, the end of your journey. Yeah. Anything else you want me to say on that? I could go on and on.

Amanda Lytle: I was going to ask about the healing process of that too.

Tasha Hunter: Yeah.

Amanda Lytle: Just the healing that would have taken place in the writing because a lot of what you're writing about, like it's painful stuff to recall.

Tasha Hunter: Yeah.

Amanda Lytle: Even just nourishing yourself throughout that process, what did that look like?

Tasha Hunter: So first one I say Amanda that when I write, I really do write for me. I just believe that there are some things that we never truly 100 percent completely heal from. You just have to learn to kind of go along to name it, to acknowledge it, to feel it, but not let it stop you.

So, when I write, when I wrote my book, *What Children Remember*, I wrote it because it was everything that I needed to hear, that I needed to know about myself and having these pages, these black and white pages as a – this is proof that I made it, that I got through it, that I evolved. I didn't just stay stagnant in my pain.

So, I wrote it for me. That's my proof forever and ever that I did this thing. That I chose me. And I don't know what anybody else would call this. I don't have a name for it. But everything that I put my hands on, it's for me. The things that I'm writing right now, I'm working on two different projects and I'm writing for Tasha. What does Tasha need to hear?

If I stay true to that, would have I always needed for my own soul? I know for a fact that it's going to help heal, encourage, inspire others because I owned my truth. But there's a thing that we often say. You know, we – that I can only take you as far as I've already been. So, I have to continue healing. I have to continue speaking. I have to continue writing and doing my work so that I can bring others along, into this collective healing.

That's the only – you know, if I tell my story and I say, "OK, this is what I've learned," anything that I write on Instagram, it's coming from a place – it's personal. It's things that I've gone through, things that I've experienced. So, none of it is just made up out of the blue. Then through that – and you're a content creator. You're out here in these streets doing all kinds of things. You know it. When you put out podcasts, when you write things, when you write your story, when you start speaking, you will always hear from people who say, "Oh my goodness. I resonated with what you wrote, with what you said so much," and that's where it's at.

Amanda Lytle: But that's also – it's so interesting that you say that when – as much as it is for you and that's where it's coming from. I think that that's what makes it so valuable is because the consumer can tell that it comes from a place of knowing and then that relatability is what other people in the healing journey need the most.

Tasha Hunter: Yes, yes. I started on Instagram. I'm kind of old-fashioned so I wasn't on Instagram for a really long time. I only got on there last year. So, I'm late. But not really. What I've noticed over time is there's a lot of people creating content on Instagram. Millions and millions of people are on Instagram creating stuff, reels, and different things.

A lot of it is so redundant and so as a creative, what works for me is my process is to just get really still. I don't want to create something or put something out or speak on something if 5000 other people are speaking on the same damn thing.

You're allowed to love yourself. I could see that. You're allowed to love yourself. This is just an example. I could see that 100 times a day. Somebody is posting something about that and I'm like, "But what does that really ...?"

But people can tell if it's coming from your heart if it's authentic, right?

Amanda Lytle: Yeah.

Tasha Hunter: So, I'm not trying to put out what other people are putting out. I'm letting the spirit. I'm letting God speak to me. What do I need to say? And typically, the things that I need to say are the things that I need to hear, I need to know for myself.

Amanda Lytle: I'm curious about the inspiration in this process. Like when you are creating and that inspiration and getting still, where do you find your biggest sources of inspiration or what do you feel that they are?

Tasha Hunter: I think my relationships, the ones that – you know, there are so many people in my life right now that just love me so well, so fully, so completely. They love me good, Amanda. So, having these conversations, you and I, when we have our car talks, I'm – for some reason, always in the car when I'm talking to you, right?

Then no matter where – you know, what we're talking about for – you know, this is just an example. You might say just a word. You might say something and it's so small, you won't even think that you're inspiring me and it's like, "Wow. I didn't even think about that."

So, my greatest inspiration, it comes from my pain, my trauma, my successes in my life, my healing. But also, a major source right in this stage of my life right now is my relationships and I think it's my relationships because I'm in these relationships today where I can show up fully and completely myself. I have people in my life who are showing up fully and completely themselves and we're having real conversations.

Amanda Lytle: That's the connection, right? That real, true connection. We need that.

Tasha Hunter: That's it. That's it. And there are so many times – you know my sister, my friend, you know Courtney Napier and you also Lettie, Lettie Elizabeth.

Amanda Lytle: Yes, yeah.

Tasha Hunter: Two of my very, very good friends and there are oftentimes when they will say something. I will say, "Oh my god. I need to write about that. I need to talk about that. I need to think about that." I said it to you earlier.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah.

Tasha Hunter: You all so inspire me. It's having these real vulnerable conversations and I will say, "Lettie, I'm going to put that on Instagram just so you know. But I will quote you." She's like, "Oh, go ahead, go ahead."

Amanda Lytle: She's the best ...

Tasha Hunter: Yeah, yeah, go ahead, you know. Like I'm just letting you know I'm going to put it out there because you said it in this phone conversation or whatever. So, there you go.

Amanda Lytle: Quote, unquote.

Tasha Hunter: Yeah.

Amanda Lytle: Oh, so good. Tasha, well obviously, you know, I could talk to you all day about this stuff. Being respectful of your time, I have one last question for you and that is, "If there was an account, a person, an organization, a disruptor, an activist or a change agent that you would like to give a shoutout to, who would it be?"

Tasha Hunter: Oh, wow. Let me name my friends. Lettie obviously. I love what Courtney Napier is putting out into the world. I love what Marcie Alvis-Walker of Black Coffee with White Friends is putting out into the world. I love what my friend Andrea Kingsley Miller of the Her Story Speaks Podcast is putting out into the world. I told her she's a white woman who is out here saving other white women from their racism and shit. I mean she's just every day speaking about racism and the atrocities that are happening in the world. Also, my friend Monica. You didn't ask for all these people, but these are all my friends.

Amanda Lytle: I love it.

Tasha Hunter: My friend Monica of the Still Becoming Podcast, Monica DiCristina and then my friend Cha Sears-Barefield of The Cha Show. These are people who every single day, you know, when we think about being the good, doing the good, living out all of the goodness, the love and the hope and the inspiration, they're depositing it into all of their areas of the world and it just – it inspires me to keep going.

The last organization that I will name, I don't know if they're an organization but it's The Ancestor Project. Charlotte and Undrea of The Ancestor Project were doing the good work of collective liberation and psychedelic – in the psychedelic world, psychedelic therapy, and all of that kind of stuff.

I shouldn't say therapy but healing. Plant medicine healing. There are just so many people Amanda. I mean and these are all people that are like my family. Like, you know, my closest friends, they keep me going, and you. Look at what you're doing! Look at what you're doing. The Safe Haven Podcast, this podcast Row House. I just got familiar with Row House and before you asked me on this show and before that, they're already on my list of I want to invest in Row House and believing wholeheartedly in what Row House is doing.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. It's incredible, isn't it?

Tasha Hunter: It is so incredible.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah.

Tasha Hunter: So that's my very long answer that I just kind of ran off with. So, I apologize for that.

Amanda Lytle: I love it. You have nothing to apologize for. Tasha, thank you so much for being a guest on *The Book Stoop*.

Tasha Hunter: Thank you. I loved it, every bit of it.

Amanda Lytle: Thank you so much for being with us. We hope you loved the conversation, and we will be back again soon. Please be sure to follow us on your podcast app and leave a rating where you're able to do so. Writing a written review helps reach more listeners too. Check out all of the show notes for the links and share *The Book Stoop* with your friends. Talk soon.

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