



- Rickerby Hinds: Welcome to The Creator State, where we share stories of social innovation and entrepreneurship for movers, shakers, creators, and change makers. Each episode will celebrate success and failure, ingenuity, and the endless pursuit of knowledge. From education to implementation, join us as we explore everything in between. The Creator State.
- Rickerby Hinds: Today's guests, Regina Louise, never knew a normal childhood. Throughout her tumultuous youth, she was shuffled through more than 30 foster homes and psychiatric facilities, all before the age of 18. Compounding the trauma, a racially motivated ruling in 1974 prevented Regina's counselor from being able to adopt her. And yet, after aging out of the foster care system, Regina pursued her dream of higher education, built a thriving hair salon business, and became a successful author, motivational speaker, and advocate for foster youth.
- Rickerby Hinds: After nearly 30 years of separation, Regina reunited with her counselor and was adopted as an adult in the same courthouse where the pair lost their previous legal battle. For more than 16 years now, Regina has traveled the country, telling her story to bring awareness to the systemic failures that continue to affect foster youth today.
- Rickerby Hinds: In April 2019 a film based on Regina's memoirs premiered on Lifetime, along PSA's about adoption and foster care, giving voice to the more than 400,000 children currently in the US foster care system. Join us for this moving conversation with Regina Louise, about taking control of your own story, no matter the circumstances, and using your voice to become your own hope. I'm your host, Rickerby Hinds. Welcome to The Creator State.
- Rickerby Hinds: So my first official question to you is, what is your creative process? What is the creative process like for you?
- Regina Louise: Great question. I move from this place within that is very free, that is very unencumbered by should, shouldn't. And I allow whatever wants to emerge, emerge. And then I like to go and plant that. And what I mean by that is, when I want something, or when my spirit nudges me to go in a particular direction, nine out of 10 times I'm going to have to go and plant my voice, plant my intention, plant the presentation. Whatever it is I end up having to go to that place that I'm drawn to and plant my future in the moment.
- Regina Louise: And then, I work towards listening to how it pulls me back to its place. And a case in point is, I, five years ago, went to a theater in North Hollywood and planted my voice and intention in that theater. Then five years later I screened my movie at that theater.



- Rickerby Hinds: Wow.
- Regina Louise: It happened that way. So that's my creative. It's being propelled to get to the most awkward places. My spirit will say, "Okay, New York," and then somehow I'm in New York, and then I'm standing on stage at a theater. And then the next thing I know, I'm meeting with Bishop T.D. Jakes' person. And I say to him, "Oh yeah, I was at the theater, the St. Charles theater, and I watched Choirboy. Oh, and by the way, I have a one person show that could also be a five person play." And then he says, "Oh, okay, that's the theater, we'll consider putting some off-Broadway stuff in."
- Rickerby Hinds: Wow.
- Regina Louise: Yeah, and it just goes, goes, goes like that.
- Rickerby Hinds: It's such an interesting thing to hear you articulate that because just having worked with you in the past, I can see how that translates into how you approach your process. And with that, can you talk a little bit about how you decided to start writing your memoirs? Now I know there are two, but can you talk about just what that decision process was like for you?
- Regina Louise: So again, I had a, what I like to call a disorienting experience, where I had asked my muse's to send me some kind of a sign. And that writing was for me, because I hadn't ... Because of how I grew up in foster care, I finished four years of high school in a year and a half. And in that English never came up. And I don't know how, so English intimidated me. And the idea of the written word, I knew it in terms of speaking, I can be quite loquacious. But in speaking the pauses come naturally, the accentuation points come naturally.
- Rickerby Hinds: Right.
- Regina Louise: But to articulate that on paper, that's an art form in and of itself. And I didn't feel I had that. So when I had this experience where I ran into my biological father, and I thought I was going to commit suicide, but something in me said, "This is the time that you do it differently."
- Regina Louise: And I was talking to myself like, "Don't tell me what to do." And then something said, "Instead of committing suicide, go home." And I'm like, "But there's no one to go home to." And something said, "Go home." And then I go home and then I'm like, "I wish I had a mother to call." And something said, "Call your therapist, remember that agreement you had?" So I called her and I left a message, and that helped.



- Regina Louise: And I recognized at that moment that I was literally writing on the wind. I was literally, speaking internal voice mail, I was literally writing. And it's like liquid vocabulary. So then something said, "Sit down." Some said, "Find a piece of paper." And I found the Bay Times. Something said, "Get a pencil." I resisted and I fought it, and I said, "I don't want a piece of paper, I'd rather get razor blade." And it said, "We're not having that conversation anymore. Now sit down and get a pencil." And I did and I started writing. Careful not to just serve the raggedy screen door. Right?
- Rickerby Hinds: Wow.
- Regina Louise: That barely kept the man-eating mosquito's out. So that first thing that I wrote was the only thing in my book that my editor never edited. She left it in its purest state.
- Rickerby Hinds: Wow.
- Regina Louise: That's when I began to doubt myself, just why I ended up coming to get an MFA, because I would show up at places like Squaw Valley [inaudible 00:07:47] and I would be one of maybe one and a half black people, right? And I'd get these girls that would say stuff like, "your voice is like Alice Walker." And they've already done it. So you're stealing their voice. And I didn't understand, and I did not even understand that I should have been more protective of my art because I didn't even know it was an art.
- Regina Louise: I didn't have any idea of what I was doing. I was just doing it, letting spirit work. So I didn't even know that I should have said to her, "Excuse me, however you do not have permission to tell me the borders and the boundaries of what I can and cannot do." She thought that I just copied *The Bluest Eye*, and I'm thinking, I've never read *The Bluest Eye*.
- Rickerby Hinds: Having had you in a classroom, in a writing classroom, and listening to you articulate, and remembering how you would embody elements of your writing, or elements that came before the writing. And then the challenge of taking those elements and putting them down on paper. Can you talk a little bit about what role education, in that sense, has played in your life, but also what you learned about perhaps yourself, your creativity, your existence within these "educational spaces"?
- Regina Louise: What a brilliant, deep, that's a dissertation question right there. Wow. Well, I learned that linguistically I've had this romantic relationship with language, and I understand that words conjure images, which evoke feeling and emotion and



altered States. And I've learned how to occupy the context of a word in the ways that that word is meant to be explored and occupied.

Regina Louise: And I think coming into an education, it was genius and brilliant and beautiful. Partially because I knew that as an African American woman, and an autodidactic, and an other styled learner, that I would meet the credentials to back up the ways in which I might experientially present. So it's like no matter how I'm going to come at you with this, you can never take away the fact that I worked for three years to get an MFA.

Regina Louise: And that is genius in its own right. And there's just this beautiful relationship with that. It's probably one of the juiciest, most delicious accomplishments I have. And from the understanding, like I said, now I know that I could have said to those women, had I been educated, had I understood why objective, correlative and that very privileged status quo language that I encountered at Squaw Valley, that I did not even realize. This is a table that although I know they mean well and I love them, that diversity is here, but the inclusion is not. And often times that's the case.

Regina Louise: So education helped me understand how to permission myself in such a way that I could challenge structures and systems to include me.

Rickerby Hinds: Wow.

Regina Louise: To not just have me there as a politicized Black body, or a particularly gendered ethic body. But to also say, "Ah, it's my responsibility to educate myself in an effort to close the gap on my own disadvantage."

Rickerby Hinds: So then, asserting yourself in that space, that then takes us to this other space where your life is now made into a movie or, or aspects of your life. So talk about that a little bit, and what it was like to occupy that type of a space?

Regina Louise: It's, thank God for my education once again, because I was able to think like the screenwriter thought. I was able to take what was already innate. People had always said, as I began to write, that I wrote cinematically. And of course I did not understand that. But again, in my education I learned what cinematic meant, I learned what episodic meant.

Regina Louise: So once I understood these particular concepts, I was able to find ways to solve for them. And then I knew that if I could come to, if I could present in a way where I could contribute to the project while simultaneously holding a certain degree of grace, that I would be allowed, and a certain degree of decorum, I



would be allowed on the set. And as it turned out, I was on the set, I worked with the director directly, to actually rewrite scenes.

Rickerby Hinds: Wow.

Regina Louise: And if the screenwriter heard this, she would die. But it's the truth. And it's because I'm a nontraditional student. Right? I'm an adult, a serious adults. And so working with that skillset, I was able to take what I'd learned in grad school ... And I get emotional, I might get emotional. I feel like I had grad school before I went to grad school, because I had planted that a long, long, long, long time ago. And then I showed up in grad school, and I was able to pour everything I had into that mold, this opportunity to step into the next iteration of my own capacity.

Rickerby Hinds: There's so much there to that, and having been part of that process, and having had you in my classes, and having had meetings on different projects that you were working on, realizing how true it is, what you're saying, is very cool.

Rickerby Hinds: Now let's get into the creative state of mind. In each episode we asked our guests to share what's been on their minds, something they can't stop thinking about. A new challenge they're facing, or what's inspired them into action recently. We call it the creator's state of mind.

Regina Louise: So ironically I was on the press junket to promote my little movie, and I had an opportunity to go to Bishop T.D. Jakes' Potter's house. And somehow this idea of visiting his congregation, the pulpit. Right? And so the 12 year old in me ran to the center of this behemoth building, this behemoths space. And I stood at center stage, and I started with, "If anybody wants to ask me how I came to be here, I swear before God I wouldn't know what to say to him." Which is part of my one woman show.

Rickerby Hinds: Wow.

Regina Louise: And I just planted at North, East, South, West. And then out of nowhere, and I mean it, well this morning, less than an hour ago, I'm sitting at the Montage in Beverly Hills, speaking to his business partner, discussing what it would be like to partner with them on my plays, on the next iteration of my story.

Rickerby Hinds: Wow. It is always a valuable learning opportunity to take time to reflect. At the end of each interview, we like to ask our guests this. In hindsight, what is something you wish you would've known when you were starting out?



- Regina Louise: When I was in solitary confinement, if I had known then, truly known then, when I was scratching the floor light that slid through the thresholds of that closed door. If I had known then that I truly would one day stand amongst thousands and shed light on a situation, dispossessed people. If I had known then that I would be that one to do that, I would have hated myself less, doubted myself less, and loved myself completely through it.
- Rickerby Hinds: Wow. This is where we should stop. And I'm remembering the multiple meetings and sessions that we had.
- Regina Louise: I know.
- Rickerby Hinds: Discussing your work, and I remember moments in my little office where you would stand up and you would begin to become the characters. Or you would riff on verbiage, or you would say things and I would go, "That should be on a page."
- Regina Louise: I know.
- Rickerby Hinds: And we'd go [inaudible 00:18:32]. I just said it. And I'm so proud that you are finding that space where what you do in three dimensions can be translated to these other dimensions, and help other folks, because there's only one of you. But you're clearly finding ways to multiply yourself, and to translate that energy and that spirit that you always bring to the room, into other mediums. So I'm very, very, very proud of you, and what you're doing, and how you're doing it.
- Regina Louise: Oh God, thank you, wow.
- Rickerby Hinds: In our next episode of The Creator State, alumna Taylor Pollard explains what it means to be flexing in my complexion, and how she's used fashion, photography and social media to create a clothing line with her younger sister, empowering people of color to feel confident in their skin.
- Rickerby Hinds: Thanks for listening. Find more information about our guest at creatorstate.com. Do you know someone creating something great? Send us what you're creating, for a chance to be featured in an upcoming episode. Write us at creatorstate@ucr.edu. There's a team creating this podcast, help us by subscribing on iTunes, SoundCloud, or wherever you listen, and while you're there, leave us a review.
- Rickerby Hinds: Our producer for the show is Jennifer Merrett, with audio and editing by Chan Moon and Kevin Williams. Digital strategy by Kelly McGrail and Madeline Adamo, designed by Chrissy Danforth, Denise Wolf, Brad Rowe and creative



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