

## **Why I write**

Andi Osho

When I first began writing, my relationship with it was strategic. Alongside acting and stand-up, I saw writing as a necessary tool to break into a near-impenetrable entertainment industry. However, seven years ago, a chance meeting with a studio exec not only transformed my relationship with writing but my entire creative outlook.

Early 2013 and I was feeling uninspired. I wanted to leave stand-up behind so had headed to Los Angeles. However, several months in and my creative spark had yet to be reignited.

Though I carved out space for myself in Hollywood, everything felt piecemeal and getting facetime with decision-makers was almost impossible. One evening, while brainstorming options, I remembered a studio exec I'd sold a script to years earlier. It was a long shot, but I wrote to him and was surprised but delighted when he replied, inviting me in for a meeting.

Two weeks later, in awe, I drove onto the studio lot – hallowed ground where hit shows and blockbuster movies were made.

Nicholas, the exec, greeted me warmly and soon we were navigating the usual conversational touchstones – the heat, the traffic and the peculiar absence of a city centre. We then began discussing my career, but when Nicholas asked what I hoped to achieve, the question threw me. I knew I wanted success but had never been asked what that might look like.

'Being a series regular?' I blurted, as though asking permission. 'Hmmm, that's not really interesting,' Nicholas said as he pointed across his office to a framed poster propped against his desk. It was for a hugely popular TV comedy fronted by an actress... of colour. 'This is what you should be

aiming for – using your authentic self to create something new.’ My brain whirred as I nodded, hanging on Nicholas’s every word. ‘The industry wants to change. You need to ask, *what’s your contribution to that?*’

My contribution? I had never thought of my creativity this way. Like most artists, I was focused on what I wanted rather than what I could offer. But Nicholas’s invitation was to do just that.

For days, weeks after, the conversation percolated within. Then one night, it became clear. Whilst acting and stand-up and writing were things I did, *authentic creativity* was my contribution. Be it through laughter or tears, a stage performance or the written word, that was how I could contribute. Where previously I’d thought of creativity as an end in itself, I realised it could be so much more – a chance to actively make a difference. And this allowed my art a new freedom to take any form I chose. There was, I discovered, no need to turn away from stand-up, because this too could be an expression of my contribution, just like anything else.

Nicholas has no idea the impact our conversation had. Whenever I feel lost, disillusioned or caught up in chasing dreams, I think about his insightful words and in an instant remember what I’m here to give.

## **Andi Osho**

As an award-winning comedian, Andi has featured on *Live At the Apollo*, *Mock The Week*, *Room 101*, *The Late, Late Show* and more and created and toured three sell-out Edinburgh shows. As an actor, her credits include *I May Destroy You* (BBC/HBO), *Line of Duty* (BBC), *Death in Paradise* (BBC), *Curfew* (Sky), *Kiri* (Channel 4), *Uncle* (BBC), *Psychoville* (BBC) and *Holby City* (BBC) and feature films *Shazam!* (Warner Bros), *Lights Out* (New Line) and *Swinging With The Finkels* (Kintop Pictures).

Andi has also written and starred in her own E4 sketch pilot, *The Andi O*

*Show*, Sky comedy short, *Twin Thing* and produced and performed content for numerous shows across TV and radio including *Tonightly* (Channel 4), *The Now Show* (BBC R4) and *Hot Gossip* (BBC R2). She has written for FOX US, BBC Comedy, BBC R4 and BBC R4Xtra. Andi's shorts have screened at film festivals around the world. Her debut novel, *Asking For A Friend* (HarperCollins) will be published in Feb 2021.

Andi is also a regular blogger and will soon launch her new podcast, *Creative Sauce with Andi Osho* in which she discusses all aspects of the creative process and shares advice from industry professionals on topics such as criticism, success, mental health, failure and authenticity.

A recording of this talk can be found on the WritersMosaic website at **writersmosaic.org.uk**

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