



## **Youspeak Radio Episode 2 – When We Come Together – With D’Lo Audio transcript**

Full audio: <https://www.onearchives.org/youspeak-radio-ep-2-when-we-come-together-with-dlo/>

Gabriel Dubransky ([00:00](#)):

This is Youspeak Radio-

Cassidy All ([00:01](#)):

Youspeak Radio-

Savi Bindass ([00:01](#)):

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Dean Campbell ([00:01](#)):

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Gabriel Dubransky ([00:01](#)):

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Jaileen Vargas- Garcia ([00:01](#)):

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Tea Wagstaff ([00:01](#)):

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Erik Adamian ([00:01](#)):

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Umi Hsu ([00:01](#)):

Youspeak Radio-

Gabriel Dubransky ([00:03](#)):

... a project by ONE Archives Foundation with generous support from the California Humanities.

Savi Bindass ([00:15](#)):

Hi. My name is Savi Bindass. My pronouns are they/them. My interview with D’Lo was very inspiring. I was very nervous before the interview, but something about D’Lo’s personality made the setting very comfortable. He was very easy to interview. His enthusiastic answers were really relatable to my life. A lot of things that he’d been through in his life were things that I experienced as well. The things that he did in his life to be who he is today were things that I was planning on doing in future. And it gave me hopes and motivation from listening to D’Lo’s journey.



D'Lo ([00:50](#)):

I want you to know that you can be everything that you desire to be. I know that that sounds kind of cliché, but I do believe in the power of dreaming. And when you said that it's your dream to do what it is that I do, that dream is already manifesting.

Savi Bindass ([01:09](#)):

I enjoyed the interview a lot, and I can't wait for you all to listen to it. Thank you so much.

Savi Bindass ([01:17](#)):

Hi, D'Lo.

D'Lo ([01:25](#)):

Hi.

Savi Bindass ([01:25](#)):

Hi. How are you?

D'Lo ([01:27](#)):

I'm good. I'm good. How are you doing?

Savi Bindass ([01:29](#)):

I'm great. My name is Savi Bindass, and my pronouns are they/them. I'm a student in Youspeak Radio, and I'm a high schooler. And before we begin this interview, I wanted to ask, what are your pronouns? What are your preferred pronouns?

D'Lo ([01:46](#)):

Yeah, thank you for asking. I go by he or they.

Savi Bindass ([01:51](#)):

Okay. That's nice to know. And I have read a little bit about you, and I wanted to ask, how does it feel to have such achievements?

D'Lo ([02:04](#)):

Oh, see, sometimes I think that I've accomplished a lot, and other days I feel like I haven't accomplished much at all. So it's kind of, it just depends on the day. But I feel blessed to be a queer and trans person who's been able to do some things that probably even people who are maybe even five or six years older to me weren't... the world wasn't ready for that. And so I feel very blessed that I could do the things that I could try and push down doors. So in those ways, I feel like the best part of the achievements is the fact that it allows more people to have access to more opportunities.

Savi Bindass ([02:54](#)):

And how was the journey to get to your professional life and before that?



D'Lo ([02:59](#)):

Yeah, the journey to my professional life started off when I was younger, I loved music, I loved comedy, and like everybody, I loved watching television, though I didn't get to watch a whole lot. But what I knew was that I wanted to be able to express myself. And I think that the first places that allowed me to feel like I could possibly express myself in a powerful way was through hip-hop. And it was because when I was younger, culturally as South Asians, we are told, "Don't speak up. Don't get into fights. Don't have these conflicts. Just stay quiet." Right? But I knew that even culturally, there was stuff happening in Sri Lanka against my people, we were living in a very White racist town, so I felt that people didn't want us there or that we were othered.

D'Lo ([04:03](#)):

And so when I saw hip-hop, I think I was too young to understand that Queen Latifah and a lot of my favorite MCs were not immigrants because I heard the word Latifah, and I heard the word queen, I was like, "Oh, she's an immigrant like me, and she's speaking about things that are important to her community." And I wanted to do that. I wanted to be a representative for my community and just be able to speak about the ignorance that was out there. So that's kind of the beginning part.

D'Lo ([04:35](#)):

And then how it morphed into what it is I'm doing now has been a series of sort of major turns in the road because I started off as a poet, and then I started doing solo-based theater, and then I started doing comedy, and then I started acting. Though I was acting in theater for throughout the time, it's just that the world wasn't ripe for trans and nonbinary actors at that point.

Savi Bindass ([05:03](#)):

Yeah, definitely. I think that's so inspiring, whatever you did in your journey and you still to continue to do. And I do know that art has a big impact towards culture and how people think, and you can express a lot of things by art. And art can be in a lot of different ways, and that's so inspiring, whenever you're doing it.

D'Lo ([05:24](#)):

Thank you.

Savi Bindass ([05:24](#)):

Yeah. And I've always even dreamt to do the same things that you are doing right now. So-

D'Lo ([05:30](#)):

Yeah, you will.

Savi Bindass ([05:31](#)):

You inspire me a lot.

D'Lo ([05:33](#)):

Oh, thank you, love. Thank you.



Savi Bindass ([05:37](#)):

And I was reading about some of the shows you did, and I read this interesting name called Private Dick. So I wanted to know, can you please tell us more about the Private Dick show and how did the name across?

D'Lo ([05:54](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. So Private Dick, back in the day, if you were a dick, then you were somebody who was a PI, a private investigator. But then the play on words is that I'm a transmasculine character who also dons disguises. So the way that I do my investigation is by disguising. And so in that way, I'm a private transmasculine person who may or may not have many dicks. You know what I'm saying? But it's a play on words to just say, this is somebody who looks as particular way, but you don't really know who they are.

Savi Bindass ([06:35](#)):

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Yeah. That happens a lot. People just don't know the story, and they just think... Some, they don't know a lot of people. Yeah. So what is your plans to do further in the professional life, if I may ask?

D'Lo ([06:53](#)):

Well, right now I have a movie that I am working on that we have completed a proof of concept for. And so that short film, we're trying to put into the festivals, etc., and we're trying to use it as a way to get funds to produce the larger feature that it is based on. It's called Ro and Shirelle, and it's a trans buddy comedy featuring myself and Shakina Nayfack of Difficult People and Transparent.

D'Lo ([07:26](#)):

And I'll be working with my longtime collaborator, Adelina Anthony. I've been working with her for over 15 years now. And I do a lot of projects with Adelina, so I'm also writing a short film called Back Door, which is based off of a bar in Lancaster, California called The BackDoor, which was a former queer bar, it was in this hick town, and one of my encounters there and what it led to. So that is commissioned through the Center Theatre Group, and we'll be creating an audio play with that piece. And then with Ro and Shirelle, I'm pitching, but that's whatever.

D'Lo ([08:06](#)):

And then I'm working on this other piece called... Well, it's not a piece, it's a proposal for a QTBIPOC collective of artists that are working in content creation and TV and film. So hopefully if that gets funded, it will be the beginning of what will be a hub. It's because it's a collective of amazing, beautiful QTBIPOC folks who can create in the same way, not by the industry standard, but in a community theater-based way, which is about love and spirituality and wellness and kind of changing the models in which we create work right now. So these are some of the things. There are some other things that I'm working on. I always have my gigs. And these days it's Zoom recordings all the time or Zoom shows. But outside of that, these are kind of my main projects that I'm excited about.

Savi Bindass ([09:13](#)):



Amazing. Awesome. That's great to hear. And going back a little bit, I wanted to know about, how did you find out that you could do acting, and you could be a poet, and you could express yourself by art?

D'Lo ([09:29](#)):

Yeah. Well, the full expression, I think, came from me writing my own poetry, being inspired by hip-hop artists. And then when I was performing the poetry, I just felt so alive. I think that, to this day, my favorite thing to do is live performance. And then when it came to acting, I knew that I could do accents and do characters from a young age. But until I actually realized like, "Oh, I could actually do this as part of my shows," so I started experimenting probably around 2003.

D'Lo ([10:09](#)):

And then I started working on different characters, different monologues. And it was mostly because I knew that I enjoyed acting so much, but any time that I would try and meet with an agent, they would be like, "You're talented, but there is no work for people like you. We don't know how to pitch you." And that's kind of a little bit still out there, though if you try and you hustle a particular way, you might be able to get something. But more than anything, I feel like it was through me doing my solo-based theater work that I understood, oh, I have exactly what it takes, if not more, to contend with the best of them. And so maybe 10 years after that, I ended up moving back to LA to pursue more industry work.

Savi Bindass ([11:04](#)):

Yeah. I'm sure that you've went through some discrimination and a lot of things from your personal journey to the professional journey. How did you cope with them?

D'Lo ([11:14](#)):

Yeah, I think that there's always going to be something out there that is trying to block you from getting to where you need to go or doing what you really desire to do. And I think that to a certain degree, I might still be in my own way. You know what I'm saying? But I think that when it comes to the outside discrimination and oppression, it's sort of, I think the only thing that helps a person get farther and farther is knowing that you have community that is with you and right beside you and/or a community that's in your heart that you know that as you excel and as you get to more and more milestones, that you are helping other people through your work. So everything that I do creatively is about uplifting QTBIPOC stories and our lives and our experiences. So I know that with that sort of responsibility and duty on my shoulders, not in a self-sacrificial way, but with that duty on my shoulders, I know that I am doing for the next generations what was done for me.

Savi Bindass ([12:31](#)):

Yeah. That's amazing. Actually, I thought about that, too. I always think that there's always generations and how the old generation did a lot of things of where we are today. And we are doing so much better for our next generation, and I just can't wait for what next generation turns out to be and how great they will be. And I think-

D'Lo ([12:53](#)):

Yeah, absolutely.



Savi Bindass ([12:53](#)):

... it's just passes generation to generation. That's an amazing way to put it, and a lot of people just don't think it that way. So yeah, that's amazing.

D'Lo ([13:04](#)):

Thank you.

Savi Bindass ([13:04](#)):

And I wanted to know if you could give us [inaudible 00:13:07] insight on your personal journey so the audiences could connect with you and find something similar.

D'Lo ([13:15](#)):

Yeah. Oh, yeah, you wanted me to talk about my personal journey as a queer person? I guess I can talk about it-

Savi Bindass ([13:24](#)):

Yeah, as a queer person. Yeah.

D'Lo ([13:27](#)):

Yeah. Well, my personal journey, I like to always contextualize it with my family's history because nothing happens inside a vacuum. So where my parents are from is Jaffna, Sri Lanka for the most part. My mother was in the capital for a little bit. And then they came to Queens where I was born. And then my father, he is a general practice doctor, and he was told by his friends that there were jobs in Lancaster, California, which is only an hour a week, but it is a world apart from Los Angeles. And so we grew up in this very hick town. And I think that all of us as human beings, we want to have a place where we belong. And so growing up, I knew, like I said, about the civil war and about the genocide against our people.

D'Lo ([14:29](#)):

And then there in Lancaster, I felt like, oh, these White peoples don't really like us if we're always feeling like we have to be quiet around them or not kick up a storm. So being that that was kind of what was going on for me as a young person, and the fact that I knew that my ass was queer, I was like, okay, you know what? I think that I'm just going to have to hold this secret in my heart until a certain age, and then I'm just going to kill myself. And it wasn't me being somebody who was trying to be tragic. It was just that I knew at such a young age that being was not accepted by my community of [inaudible 00:15:15] Sri Lankan people, by anybody really, right?

D'Lo ([15:17](#)):

So what I ended up doing was, at a certain age, because I looked like a little boy all throughout until I hit puberty, and then I knew that I'd have to start changing into looking like more of a, quote-unquote, "a girl," I guess you could say. And so what I did was I tried to be a girl, and I've got so depressed. I was just so depressed, so hurt. But I knew that being funny was a way of deflecting that own hurt inside of me, and I also knew that it made other people not try and sniff out the fact that I was queer. Being comedic



was, even though I was the weird person, nobody thought that I was queer. They just thought that I was just a funny person.

D'Lo ([16:07](#)):

Oh, and then at some point, my sister passed away, which even was worse because she was the perfect girl child. And so that was the hard part was that I felt like, oh, here I am. I'm not going to be the same way that Krishani was, my sister. And so that also played a huge role in how I was showing up for my own self. It was just so much trauma, and South Asian parents don't tell you to go to therapy. You know what I'm saying? So you're just sitting there, trying to figure out how you're going to deal with such a traumatic event. And I was young. I was 13 when that happened. So what I ended up doing was just kind of distracting myself for such a long time, distracting myself from the pain, just distracting.

D'Lo ([16:59](#)):

And I used that coping mechanism throughout until I got... Well, I kind of used it throughout my life, but when I got to college, and I met other queer people, that was probably the best thing for me as a young queer person because very quickly, I started coming back to my boy self, my more masculine self. And it was such a relief to just be free like that. And my parents didn't know what was going on. They didn't know that I was actually queer. And then finally when I came out, it was a big tear in our relationship. And I moved to New York.

D'Lo ([17:43](#)):

And it was there that I kind of understood a lot more because I was already a political organizer in a larger artistic organizing movement circle. And so by the time I got to New York, I was really only... I think what I'm trying to tell you is the story that I was queer. I knew I was queer. But my work, my artistic work was really focusing on other people's issues like police brutality, AIDS, war, anti-Muslim shit. You know what I'm saying? So finally, when I got to New York, I was like, oh, shit. I am not doing well with all of this baggage in me, and I don't even make art about it. And all my mentors were like, "You need to walk with your truth. You need to walk with your integrity. You need to learn how to be vulnerable." And I think that that was the beginning of where I was bringing my queerness, my art, my activism, all of that, together.

D'Lo ([18:52](#)):

So even though this is a queer story, what I'm trying to say is that it had everything to do with how I wanted to walk in the world as a person, as an artist, as somebody who is an activist, as somebody who believed in the movement and the struggle of so many peoples and communities. So I hope I hit your question. I know that it was kind of all the way roundabout, but that's kind of the beginnings.

Savi Bindass ([19:20](#)):

You really did answer my question. I connected with you a lot. I don't know about the audiences, but I really connected with you a lot. I'm also South Asian myself. And growing up, I grew up in a same way that you did. And yeah, we don't also get therapy. So until I came to America, and my school was the beginning point for me to get therapy, and I was able to get help. And I didn't realize until I talked to somebody that I was in depression.



Savi Bindass ([19:53](#)):

And I think that, and until today, how many arts I do is always about other things that what's going on in the world. And my mentor also tells me the same thing that is, "Speak your truth, and make your art about you, not about everything," because I think what happens is there's so much around us, and we do connect to every single thing. Being queer person [inaudible 00:20:18] that just brings a part to getting connect to every perspective and everything that's going around the world. So I think we feel so bad that we feel like, okay, forget about us, let's do something for them. But it's very necessary for us to first focus on ourselves in order to help others because yeah, so.

D'Lo ([20:41](#)):

Yeah, and also you bring up a really great point because one of my mentors said that, "Your story is only as good as the details you provide. And the more details we provide, the more universal our stories become." So honestly, the most details I know of anybody's lives is my own. So if I can speak truth to power to my own lived experiences in an artistic way, then that will automatically resonate with somebody who identifies completely different than me.

Savi Bindass ([21:19](#)):

Definitely, yeah. And it's not only about being queer or anything. I think a lot of people could, if they really tried, they could always connect to something else like eating every day. We all eat every day, so that's a connection.

D'Lo ([21:31](#)):

Yup. Exactly.

Savi Bindass ([21:32](#)):

So I think, yeah, there's always a lot of different ways to kind of use metaphors around and use figurative language to connect towards each other and feel for each other. So yeah, that's amazing. The last question I do have is, I know that you have done a lot for community, is there something you are going to do in the future? Or do you have a plan that you're going to do something for the community coming up years?

D'Lo ([21:59](#)):

I think that the thing that is most community driven is this collective that I was talking to you about because it is about me being able to center our lives, QTBIPOC. And I don't say that flippantly. Is flippantly the right word? I don't say that lightly. Black folks, indigenous folks, undocumented folks, disabled folks who are all queer and trans, these are the stories that need to be given the most shine and light on them. And I want to help, as I'm doing my work as an artist, I also want to build things to allow for other people's stories to be seen in the light as well.

Savi Bindass ([22:47](#)):

This is just an additional question. Have you had any issues in your life with labels?

D'Lo ([22:53](#)):



Labels, yeah.

Savi Bindass ([22:53](#)):

I know labels plays a lot of big things in our life.

D'Lo ([22:58](#)):

Somebody asked me, "Oh, do you feel like you enjoy the labels, or do you feel like you just want to be like, 'Look, I'm just D'Lo'?" And the truth is I've grown to accept the labels as being a part of how I walk because it's all the lenses in which I view the world through. Not just race and ethnicity and gender and sexuality, but also, I am somebody who loves people. I work for the people. I enjoy being in community with other people who are working for larger communities. And so when I think about those labels, I think about all the communities that are related to those labels, right? So in that way, I feel like, yes, I'm proud of my labels, right, because there's communities behind every single one of those labels.

D'Lo ([23:54](#)):

And then in other times, I'm like, oh, why can't I just be me? And why do I have to represent? And why do I have to speak on this all the time and all this stuff? But the truth is, if I walk down the street, I am constantly reminded that I am othered. You know what I'm saying? I mean, probably a little less so now that I pass a little bit more, but as even a masculine person of color and prior as a gender nonconforming person of color, I feel like my body was being surveilled or policed, not only by police and authority figures because that has happened definitely as well, but just by people who don't know how to respond to other queer and trans people. So it's like, sometimes I just want to be unnoticed for all the things that I am. And sometimes that might happen, but most times it doesn't. So those identities, those labels, whatever, they're kind of following you. And so I would say, everything that I just said is more the negative thing about having these labels.

Savi Bindass ([25:13](#)):

Because you can't escape the labels and because a lot of things are labels, I think, and language also plays a big part when we talk about labels, so is it more, you can't escape it so you just have to go through it?

D'Lo ([25:28](#)):

Yeah.

Savi Bindass ([25:28](#)):

Or is it more, okay, you know what, sometimes I'm okay with labels, or sometimes I'm just not okay with labels?

D'Lo ([25:35](#)):

Yeah. I think that I'm okay with labels for the most part. I think it's more about how these markers are viewed by other people. I think that's where I'm trying to get to because when I was younger and I was doing a lot of organizing work, we were all working together. And I think that what the present political world is trying to do is pit us against one another, pit one marginalized community against the other.



And I think that when that happens, they win. Capitalist, conservative politics wins because our strength as people of color, as marginalized folks, as queer and trans people, as disabled people, as etc., our strength is when we come together, when we come together under this understanding that none of us are getting even close to what these people are getting and that in order for us to... It's not even in order for us to fight. Yes, we come together to fight against shit, but in order for us to just be able to survive, we need to be able to come together.

Savi Bindass ([26:55](#)):

Yeah, accept the differences that we have from other people.

D'Lo ([26:59](#)):

And do the solidarity work to actually learn about other peoples because I think that accepting each other is one thing, but if my best friend is indigenous and Black, then I have to do that work of, how do I support your community? How do I do this outside of my friendship with you and our connection? What do you want me to know so that I can go and teach these people and my people? Things like that.

Savi Bindass ([27:28](#)):

Educating yourself. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense.

D'Lo ([27:33](#)):

Yeah, and it's so great to be in community and to learn from people. I love learning from my friends about their cultures, about their political situations, about whatever. I love it.

Savi Bindass ([27:46](#)):

Yeah, definitely. That makes a lot of sense. I ran out of questions because this is such an amazing conversation. I really loved it. I want to have this interview every day. There's a lot to learn, and it's like, you're not alone because there's somebody who just thinks exactly like you. So I really love this interview.

D'Lo ([28:07](#)):

I'm so great. I'm so grateful, Savi. And I hope that you... I just said, "I'm so great."

Savi Bindass ([28:13](#)):

[inaudible 00:28:13].

D'Lo ([28:13](#)):

But I'm so great, and you're so great, but I'm also very grateful. And yeah, I want you to know that you can be everything that you desire to be. I know that that sounds kind of cliché, but I do believe in the power of dreaming. And when you said that it's your dream to do what it is that I do, that dream is already manifesting, and it's yours for the taking. And I'm here for you and however you might want to grow or whatever questions you have on your personal journey. And best of luck to you.

Gabriel DuBransky ([28:48](#)):



This is Youspeak Radio.

Cassidy All ([28:48](#)):

Youspeak Radio.

Savi Bindass ([28:48](#)):

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Gabriel DuBransky ([28:54](#)):

We are-

Cassidy All ([28:55](#)):

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Tea Wagstaff ([29:02](#)):

Tea Wagstaff.

Erik Adamian ([29:03](#)):

Erik Adamian.

Umi Hsu ([29:05](#)):

And Umi Hsu.

Gabriel DuBransky ([29:06](#)):

... a project by ONE Archives Foundation with generous support from the California Humanities.