

Ep. 06: Second Adolescence w/ Ryan Backer (they/them)

📅 Wed, 2/16 12:43PM ⏱ 39:43

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, life, mom, adolescence, called, lesbian, ryan, hear, identity, non binary, realized, gay, idea, anarchist, happening, queer, figuring, experience, nickname, backer

SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Ryan Backer (they/them)

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 00:08

Hello, and welcome to this week's episode of the second adolescence podcast. I am your host Adam James Cohen. On this week's episode, we have Ryan backer Ryan is an ageism activist, and it's also a human who just you want to hear, talk and share stories. It was such a great time having this conversation with Ryan, I can't stress that enough. In the conversation, you'll hear Ryan share about their own journey of discovering their sexual identity and their gender identity. And we have what adolescence was like for them what coming out and post coming out was like for them. And gosh, that was just a really, really interesting conversation. And I'm excited to invite you into it. And as with every conversation, and with every guest story, I really want to invite you as the listener to listen with open curiosity, knowing that all of our stories are unique and different. You might hear guest share things that really differ from your experience, as well as share things that absolutely give voice to what you went through or are currently going through. And I really hope that all this happens and that together, we can continue growing and expanding our awareness of what life and queerness and healing can be for folks, if after the show you want to connect further, feel free to head on over to secondadolescencepod.com for show notes and more. And you can connect with us on Instagram at [@secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). Alright, that's it for me for now. Welcome to the conversation.

R Ryan Backer (they/them) 01:33

Hi, my name is Ryan Backer. My nickname is twinkle. I am originally from the United States. I'm from New Jersey, but I'm currently living in Tiohti:Å¼ke, which is historically a gathering place for many First Nations people. But today it's colonially known as Montreal, I call myself an age activist. So I'm very curious and fascinated by aging. And I do a lot of work in the anti ageism realm. I am married to a lovely partner. I have an adventurer cat named fifth, who I hike with and go on bike rides with Yeah, I mean, I could go on a lot of different avenues. But I guess like relevant to this conversation I identify as non binary trans masculine, queer person.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 02:21

Awesome. I just want to talk about every thing you just said. First, yeah, nickname. That was one of the first thing you said, could you share about your nickname?



02:35

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 02:35

R

Ryan Backer (they/them) 02:35

Well, I'll first share growing up, I had another nickname. I'm totally like, the concept of the the dead name is something that really actually upsets me, because I feel like there is so much deaths involved with being transgender, you know, with like, untimely deaths of suicide or murder. And I feel like the idea of a dead name is is for me, personally, is really discounting, like the fact that I am still the person that I was when I was born. And just because my parents named me something, I don't have a negative relationship with that name. So I'll just say that I was born Elizabeth. And that was my great grandmother's name. And so her nickname was Betsy. So ever since I was born, my family called me Bessie. It was my nickname. Throughout my entire childhood. I really liked it because it was unique. No one else had that name. Whenever I went anywhere, and people were like, oh, Bessie, like, that's you, you know, and I didn't need a last name attached to it at all. So it was just something that I was really, it was really special to my identity in a few different ways. So after I came out as trans, and I legally changed my name to Ryan Backer, which is my former last name. So my father's last name, and backer is my mom's maiden name, because my parents divorced. It's her last name. So that's how my name formed, but is a very Ryan is a very plain name. So I would go places. I lived in Europe for a few years. And when I came back to New York City where I lived for 10 years prior, I'd be texting people, you know, and I'd be like, hey, it's Ryan. I'm back in New York, I was so used to using just my first name. I remember writing something for a friend and leaving a note at their workplace and being like, hey, it's Ryan. And these people didn't know who I was. Because Ryan is such a common name. They were like trying to and I was like, oh my god, like, I have to change my identity. So instead of that, at that point in my life, I was very binary on the inside. And I was coming to a place where I realized that I was having just as much discomfort and pain and suffering being all the way on that side of the binary as I was when I was on the left side. So I realized, okay, there's a happy medium This and I was really embracing my non binary identity and twinkl came about to answer your question in very short amount of time. Now, it came about because I was on radical Fairyland in England, if you don't know what radical fairies are, they're like a community of gay, mostly sis men, who sometime in the past few decades realized that getting a connection to each other in the land, and in a way their sacred masculinity and sacred feminine. And it was a really powerful way to connect, especially throughout the AIDS crisis. So they have different what they call sanctuaries throughout the world. They're just gathering places. And so this one was a temporary one in the UK at an abandoned golf course, a reclaimed golf course, really. And it was a festival called queer spirit. And it's still happening, I think, in some way. But it was the first one, it was my first festival ever. And there were about 400 people there. And I was just blown away by how many

people were there. And, you know, a lot of people there were like, This is the smallest festival I've ever been to. And I was just like, what festival culture in Europe is just so different than it is here. So it was really beautiful to experience that. But anyway, all that to say, at Fairyland, it is pretty customary for people who show up to us names that they feel like apply to them in any given moment, to you know, one day you could be one name, one day could be another name. So it's really about reclaiming our unique identities. And so because of that, I went with twinkle mostly because I have a poet friend who always calls me Orion. And so I feel like the connection with Orion and the stars, and twinkle. And also, if you take off the L and E, you can just go by twin, which I find really appealing and endearing. And also, like I love being able to go up to people, because I use it just as much as I use Bessie, like I use it for mostly everything except for legal reasons and professional reasons, usually, but anyway, I'll go up to someone and I'll say, you know, Hi, my name's twinkle, and people become joyful when they hear yes. So it's like a life hack of getting people to smile.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 07:19

I mean, yeah, as you're talking, I'm smiling. When you first said, twinkle, it sparked that joy in me. And then hearing that story of how you found this name. Well, I'm just still so struck by kind of this idea, like you were sharing each day, each moment to having the opportunity when you're at that festival to use name as a tool of expression that can continuously shift and follow kind of where your energy is at and where you're like, I love this idea. Yeah, you gotta check out the red berries. There are many around you, I'm sure you even know red fairies, and you don't even know you know them. You know, that kind of thing. There's so many places I want to go in this conversation, bliss, positive back. So I want to like go back to the beginning of your story, like, Where did your story begin? And what was happening in that first chapter?

R

Ryan Backer (they/them) 08:04

I mean, my story definitely begins with many other stories before mine, but I will start with mine. I guess, like one key thing from my childhood that I find myself bringing up a lot, because it's really helpful to describe where I'm still at today, like something that has never changed inside of me is that when I was I think I was about four, my sister who's three years older than me, was given an American Girl doll, like, you know, my parents probably bought it for her as a gift. And around that time, my mom asked me, Do you want an American Girl doll to? Or would you want one, I must have seen it as a very big deal. And I think my mom was treating it that way too. And I said, I want to wait to see if I turn into a boy or a girl first. And you know, as a four year old, like, that's where my brain was. And I now it's still where my brain is. Just like I you know, I don't know, I haven't decided yet. And I don't think at this point, I don't think I ever will. Of course, society kind of forces me to choose in many, in many ways. And I find myself sort of dancing that dance more easily than a lot of dear friends of mine. I've heard before, like people say that for trans people on the binary gender is a prison. And for non binary people, it's a playground. And so sort of navigating that territory is a pretty interesting experience. But I tried to take up opportunities like this one, and just even coming out as trans to random strangers, because I feel like it's important work that I can emotionally handle. And so I do that. I mean, I basically spent my childhood living that reality in a lot of different ways.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 09:53

And how were the people around you responding and supporting or getting in the way of that reality?

R Ryan Backer (they/them) 09:58

I mean, I was like that tom boy in the 90s, so it wasn't that big of a deal, right? I definitely I will say I did have behavioral problems as a kid. So I was like in class and I'd be the class clown, I would like to take people's attention off of what was happening. Looking at it. Now, I think I was just trying to instill joy in a very institutional and sterile setting, which I'm like, Oh, the amount of grief that it caused at home, though, like getting report cards back that was like lack self discipline, things like that. It was just like, there were consequences. But I also think that I was seeing through the facade of institutionalized education, like why are we doing this the way that we're doing this, so I don't know if that directly relates to my gender identity, or my queerness, as a queer kid, I was I did grow up in a pretty conservative part of New Jersey. So where I'm from Sussex County, it's a very Republican county, in New Jersey, which is a blue state, but it's the countryside, you know, it's the mountains. And it's so conservative that Democrats don't even run, they don't even bother to run. There's like when you go to vote in the local elections, there's not even a Democrat to vote for, because people are like, why bother? It took me a few years after leaving to realize, oh, there were radical people where I grew up, but they were so radical that they didn't bother getting involved in local politics. You know, I think you're gonna have all different types of people everywhere. But that being said, I think I was, I was definitely made fun of as a kid for being me. Another example is the famous game of like, boys versus girls in kindergarten, and, like, playing both sides of it, of being like this game, stupid. How do I hack it? I mean, when I was seven or eight, I learned what lesbian meant. And so automatically, I was like, I spent an entire summer basically being like, unless I'm a lesbian, I'm a lesbian. I'm a lesbian. You know, the time I don't think I understood the weight of what I was saying. But I connected with it. So those are just some snippets.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 12:13

Yeah. And as you're talking I at least what I hear is this like knowing within you and kind of this unabashedly, like checked into who you are, and curiosity about who you are like, Nick, that little four year old, you who just right away answered that question of like, I don't know yet. And then thinking about Yeah, you at eight? And just kind of just hearing this, like, sure. Okay, that's me, you're just like letting yourself explore. Was there any blocks to any of that knowing because I'm hearing like, lots of younger you, even in school, when you were like trying to spark joy. I hear like a connectedness to like, who you were on the inside? And I don't know if that feels true or not? Are you aware of any blocks to that?

R Ryan Backer (they/them) 12:55

internally? I don't think so. I think my mom really wanted me to wear pink and like dresses. But that being said, like I don't think I would have been able to go to those places that you just described, if I didn't have to loving and supporting parents who really cared for me, and still care for me. So I don't think that there were that many blocks. Because also, you know, society was changing, too. You know, I grew up in a very sort of changing time where it was getting to be gender equality and stuff like that, like it was okay for me to be doing those things. For the

most part. I mean, I did get in trouble a lot, because of the acting up in school. But I don't think internally there were many blocks. I mean, not that I can think of, you know, I was still just forming the idea of who I was, I guess, and I had no idea that I would be able to live the life that I'm living now, that's for sure. At that age, it was very clear to me that there wasn't much room for as much exploration as I have now. And that's probably just because I was a kid and I didn't understand how big the world is and how much there is to offer.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 14:07

And then what happened as you got older, like what was the rest of adolescence like?

R

Ryan Backer (they/them) 14:12

okay, so this is the plot twist. Around the time I was maybe five or six or seven, my dad started getting really conservative. So I don't know exactly what his political leanings were before he met my mom. But I do know that as they stayed married, he became more and more conservative. I mean, my mom was raised Presbyterian, and my dad was raised Catholic, and my dad didn't want to raise us Catholics, so they agreed on raising us Presbyterian. And so my mom still goes to church. She's religious, but my dad got so conservative that he started like standing up in church and talking about how we need to stop abortion. And my mom didn't respond well to this. He also did stuff like Focus on the Family and Promise Keepers, pretty right wing patriarchal organizations that just so happened to be very anti gay. Essentially what he was doing, I later found out is he was bringing himself through conversion therapy. So because of this conversion therapy, before he even had a chance to come out or accept that about himself, my mom ended up divorcing. So the big moment of my child, but it was that experience for sure. So I found out that he was gay when he was coming out to himself, basically, with the help of the therapist, because what he went through was really challenging for him. It was around the time I was like, 12, or 13, he was just having a really hard time and really struggling with his own internal demons essentially, that like were instilled in him by the Catholic Church. At first, he was trying to fight the divorce, because divorce was bad, you know, in his eyes, divorce is sin. And then later on, it was like, okay, he's single. And now he's dealing with coming out. And it was hard to be entering teenagehood and having my father going through second hand, the lesson was very jarring. My reaction was to basically stay far away from even considering the idea that I might be there too, as in like, I might be anything and then heterosexual. And so I had classmates who started dating people around that time, and I was like, okay, yeah, I was approached by a boy. And I was like, Yeah, I'm gonna start dating boys. Because that looks way easier than what he's going through. So it was a big lesson for me. And you know, at the time, I wasn't doing this math and doing this equation and being like, Oh, I'm straight. Because my dad's gay. It's taken me decades to really come to terms with everything that was happening back then. So it kind of delayed my coming out process of it. I didn't really come out to myself until I was around 16. I was actually shoveling snow. Like I remember the moment really well, where I was like, you know, what, if I liked women, that would be okay. And it was like a very, it was like, maybe it was because of the physical exercise of shoveling or I think it was a snow day. So not being at school, just like there was space enough for me to be like, it's okay. And then the first thing I did was like, Okay, well, now that I'm gay, I guess I should watch The L Word.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 17:41

That's the rite of passage!

R

Ryan Backer (they/them) 17:43

Yeah, that was like, my first thing I was just like, because between that time to between when my dad came out, and when I came out to myself, I was also being exposed to a lot of the culture that he was exploring for the first time. So I had the privilege of hanging out in the West Village as a 13 year old, just seeing what that life was like, I think it was really formative for me, because his boyfriend went into the city a lot. So we would go into the city together. It was very exciting for me, because it was just everyone was just so welcoming. And kind call my dad's friends. And it was just like a really interesting experience. But I didn't let myself come to terms, I had to do it on my own time, in my own way. And I didn't actually end up coming out to my parents until I was 19, my first semester of college, I came out to them. And it was really difficult because I was trying to convince them that I was straight, or not, at least not gay. Like my mom said, one time when I was a teenager, like, you know, if you were a lesbian, it would be okay. And I'd be like, well not. And so I think watching my dad go through his second adolescence, when I did it kind of delayed me coming out as queer at the time, I guess I called myself gay or lesbian, which then delayed me coming out as trans. I feel like if it hadn't worked out that way, it's like, magically, my parents, you know, figured out whatever it was that was going on with them, and then magically stayed together, I have a feeling that I would have come out younger than I did, or at least come out to myself younger than I did. So it's a lot like kind of what you were saying at the beginning. Like with my introduction, it's like, oh, there's a lot to my identity. And then I bring up this thing and people are like, that's what, like a whole other layer to it.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 19:38

There's so many different directions that I could go in. So maybe we should just talk for 12 hours!! But so what happened in your life after first coming out as gay to your parents, like what did that next bit of time look like for you?

R

Ryan Backer (they/them) 19:49

It was a pretty turbulent time. Like I definitely faced a lot of really difficult stuff internally, which all of led to me coming out as trans. But building up to that, I was doing a lot of escaping with drugs and alcohol. And I mean, I was living in Brooklyn, I was a barista. So I was drinking, I was getting high on coffee every day, sustaining myself on pastries. My life started getting very, very, very small. I mean, I had some friends in New York City is this type of town where my only friends were really the people that I worked with, and the people that I lived with, because I didn't have time for social life outside of that. And I liked working as a barista, I should say, I did start off going to film school. That's where I went right out of high school. So I was there for a year and a half. And for various reasons I left and I've transferred to Brooklyn College where I was starting to go part time, for two semesters, I did some women's studies classes, those were really helpful for me. And then I dropped out completely, just because I was, again, sort of fighting the idea that institutionalized education is the end all and be all. My mom was really upset about that. I broke my kneecap too, when I was 21. So that definitely added a

complication to the situation. Yeah, throw that in the mix. Yeah. Oh, yeah. So that had a huge impact on me of just like, the way that I functioned and move throughout the world, and still move. I mean, it's my gait is different. When I'm sleepy, it becomes painful. When it rains, it hurts. It's still with me to this day, like the pain of that time through that injury, but also just with me emotionally, but I turned it around. I think it's a miracle that I turned it around. But I did. How did that happen? It was with the help of a lot of people like definitely my loving, caring family, friends, strangers, just a ton of people helped me along the way to see that escaping through drugs. And alcohol wasn't the only solution to things that there were other ways that I could navigate life. So it's yours. It took many years, it's not like it's like well, and then one week, it all totally. It's like it's sort of took me years to get to that point. And then it's taken years to recover. And it was definitely a wild time. But looking back, I'm really grateful for it. Because I know that I wouldn't be where I'm at today, if it wasn't for those experiences, and even the breaking the kneecap. You know, I think that experience definitely helped me inform my work that I do now. And it is one of the reasons why I went back to school to study aging was because I had had that experience of losing my physical abilities while my mental capacity was still there. I also around that time, realized that I didn't have much of a network outside of my very insular friend group. And that insular friend group was all around my age. And so I volunteered for stage services and advocacy for GLBT elders in New York. And I got a volunteer gig visiting an older lesbian. And that experience was really helpful for me, just being around someone who's older was so helpful for my mental health because, I mean, honestly, Adam, like the what I told you about, like not knowing whether I was a boy or a girl, like Sandy was the the woman who I would visit. She didn't necessarily use that language, but the way that she lived her life was so challenging to the gender binary. So she didn't necessarily use the term genderqueer or non binary or anything like that. Like she was Sandy. She was a lesbian, she was a she, but the way that she navigated life, her attitude, and her essence was inherently gender non conforming, and she is in a book I forget the game metropolis, I think it's called. And in that book, and she told me this many times, she said that she never came out. She's never had to come out. She's always been gay. She's always been, you know, herself. And I thought that was pretty cool. You know, and she has a very loving family. So she's just always been herself. And that was really cool. That was really helpful to just be witness to her and experience her life.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 24:35

Yeah. I mean, this really speaks to also just the power of having elders and having their guidance and wisdom and experience,

R

Ryan Backer (they/them) 24:45

their guidance and their wisdom and their experience. But also, I think the thing that gets ignored is that they don't know a lot of stuff, you know, that they're still figuring it out that everyone no matter what age we're all still figured Hearing it out, like she was still figuring out for gender, you know, probably up until she passed. I think that's something that really helps me when I spend time with older people, I realize they're still figuring it out. There's not like this grand equation where I'm gonna graduate into being all knowing at some point. It's like, No, we're all still trying to figure it out.



A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 25:20

Ooh, thanks for adding that. And there's something in that. I also like here, there's a connected humanity that we have with people of all ages, in that there's still so much we don't understand about this really confusing, messy thing that is being a human. Yeah,

R

Ryan Backer (they/them) 25:33

yeah, exactly. There's so many threads in there. It's like, totally, that's why I love my work so much. Like, I'm just curious about living. When it comes down to it. I'm just curious about life and time, that combination.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 25:48

Okay, so it sounds like at the time, you were really getting to spend all this time with Sandy and where you're at sounds like shifts were happening in terms of your life work direction. And also in terms of your own experience of your identity. What else like tell me more about that time period.

R

Ryan Backer (they/them) 26:03

I mean, that time period, it was like the first time because I wasn't drinking. And then eventually, I stopped smoking weed too, and doing all the other things. I just started to listen to myself, I think I started to listen to my body. And I didn't know that at the time. At the time, you know, I was struggling with having to get a different friend group, because my friend group was, you know, disappointed in me for not continuing on with that lifestyle. And I was figuring out what I was going to do with my life. As far as did I want to keep on being a barista, even though I developed like a very severe caffeine sensitivity. And because I put so much time and attention into drugs and alcohol, I wasn't able to let anything else in my life. And because I put those to the side, I was then able to welcome other people and opportunities in my life that I never considered before that I never really been open to before. So I'd always been sort of around the anarchist scene, you could say in New York, kind of like dumpster diving and sort of very punk riding my bike all over and going to like DIY bike shops and the anarchist bookstores and stuff. But I was never able to really apply myself to any of that. And I feel like I was starting to be able to basically be a community member in this organization called Flatbush mutual aid. And mutual aid is like a very anarchist idea. I think the pandemic has sort of taken it from its roots a bit, but it's it is a very anarchist idea. And so, you know, I was hanging out with people, different ages, mostly straight, but people of different ages in that setting. And I was just open to new experiences, I guess. And I was really having to let go some pretty tough stuff. And you know, once I went back to school, it was like this whole experience where I was getting straight A's for the first time in my life. And that was really powerful, you know, because my sister got straight A's and my mom would like expect that of me and I was never able to get there. And now you know, at that time, I was able to apply myself and I was able to sit down, I was able to pay attention, I was able to ask questions, I was able to be a good student because it was something that I wanted to learn about that I was really interested in. And I saw it I saw me getting that BS even though science is not my strong suit. It was like under the Health Education umbrella. But because it was Gerontology it was very interdisciplinary. So I was taking classes in all the different departments, it was still a lot of health education classes. And

it was very challenging for me. But I saw that that suffering in a way that I was experiencing would bring me joy later on. And it's kind of that way how I felt about transitioning to so when I came out as trans, it was like, Wow, this sucks writing my whole family and telling them that, you know, I'm changing my name, and then I'm not a woman and, you know, really, really challenging, but I knew that there was something on the other end of that challenge that would let me have a little bit of peace and also, you know, have a little bit of peace and room to explore. Because it wasn't possible for me to explore all those parts of my identity unless I was able to be honest with those who I loved and cared about. You know, like so much of our identity is about communicating with other people and forming that identity through that communication. If I wasn't able to be open and honest with the people I loved about what I was experiencing then it would be impossible for me to live my life. That's stuff that I still have challenges with today. How honest and open Am I about like do I put them on non binary During my bio, do I put that I'm clear, when I'm introducing myself and stuff like that it's an interesting world to navigate. And I think this is what came up for me when I was thinking about talking to you today was like, it's an interesting world to navigate. And maybe it's so tricky to navigate this idea of a second adolescence, not because it's hard being gay, but because it's a symptom of how challenging it is to be hetero, right, of like, in a weird way, it's like heteronormativity has such a strong grip on everyone. The problem isn't loving other people are feeling differently about your body than other people or anything like that, like the challenges is this rigid path that has been set down for all of us that we are expected to stay on. And I've just found so much joy from deviating that path over and over and over and over and over again, because it's not like you just come out once and it's done. But it's challenging, you know, it's challenging to see the rest of society on that path. Still, I always describe my sister is very strict in every sense of the word, compared to me who's like very queer in every sense of the word. But I see some of her challenges in life could be mediated if she just took a step back and realize like, oh, like, is this what I want? Like, is this my desire? Or not? Like, is this because I want this? Or is this because society wants this from me? And I've really benefited from asking myself that over and over and over again in my life. And I wish that for other people. But there's also joy in not having to think about it either, I guess. Sure. Right. Right. Which, you know, I benefit from too, sometimes. But yeah, it's it's definitely been a journey.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 31:56

It strikes me that you've done a ton of self work and a ton of reflecting on your story. But what's that, like, right now, like, kind of in this moment, after traveling through the parts of your journey that you shared?

R

Ryan Backer (they/them) 32:08

Well, it's the work is never done. It's like, Yeah, I'm still doing things and figuring out things and working on things that I've been working on my entire life in a way. And things have gotten a lot better, my life is definitely way more magical than I ever expected. But the work doesn't get easier. It never gets easier. There's still a lot of pain and suffering in my life. The thing I think that has helped me with that, though, has been my meditation practice. That's been transformative. So in 2015, I was 27, I did a silent 10 day meditation. And it was through that, that I really learned things about my mind and my body that I'd never known before, that I'd never like, allowed myself to know that I'd never given myself space for. And also, I think fear

came up so much in those 10 days, because I think I had a real fear of tapping into my deeper self tapping into who I really was. And I've done two more since then. And it's been some more experiences where I've gone deep and been able to find a piece. So now, you know, when I have a lot more tools when I'm doing this difficult work. But yeah, it's definitely like a daily thing. It's so rewarding. So you know, I wouldn't want to stop doing the work. I mean, through the pandemic, it's been a roller coaster of there's, there's just been so much, you know, totally. And also something that I haven't mentioned yet, but I think is really important to my story is the climate crisis. And, you know, I'm so grateful that now people are able to talk about it, like the way that we are as in like, it's an eco emergency. And there's climate crisis related anxiety, like, I definitely think I had that growing up, but I didn't have the words for it. Now I have the words for some people to talk about it. But that's definitely part of it. And it definitely taps into my work to where I'm really curious about, like humans, in general have this really hard time with the idea of our mortality. And we spend all this time you know, looking for the Fountain of Youth and trying to extend life and at the same time, we're destroying our planet, and have a really high or a hard time understanding the fact that the planet is mortal, that I've spent a lot of time just like, in meditation and just in my life, like, really accepting that time is a finite resource and realizing, you know, I'm starting to think about like, Well, what do I want to do for the rest of my life? Like, how do I want to live that out? And I am so grateful for my early 20s because it really kind of gave me this like weird Foundation. of having to do all that work to get out of the sort of pit of despair that I was in that now I have that capacity to be like, Oh, it's a pandemic, okay, well, it's a crisis, probably what I should do is to reach out to other people and talk about the fact that there's this pandemic happening right now. And that there's a crisis happening. And that human connection and connecting with especially other queers has just been so rewarding and so resourceful, and built my resiliency so much. And it's, you know, it's times like this where I'm like, oh, yeah, that helps. It helps to connect with other people.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 35:39

Gosh, thank you so much for for sharing. I feel like there's so much more about your story that I want to get to know, I feel like in some ways we scratched the surface. But everything you shared had so much depth and beauty. And yeah, I just feel so grateful for you coming on and sharing your story.

R

Ryan Backer (they/them) 35:59

Well, thank you for having me on, because I wouldn't have been named for it in that way if you hadn't prompted me to do so. You know, I always love opportunities like this, because I feel like there's just so much to untangle. And there's also just so much to do in life, that sometimes it's really rewarding to just sit down. And to talk about this stuff in a way that I know other people listening to this will maybe identify with something I say or it's a way to sort of pass along the harder knowledge that I've gotten through my experiences. So it's a great opportunity. And I love the idea. And I'm really curious to hear what other people have to say,

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 36:39

awesome. Well, then, if any listeners want to follow up with you or get to know more about you and your work, what's a good place to direct them.

R

Ryan Backer (they/them) 36:48

A good place to direct you is probably to oldschool.info, which is a clearing house that I co founded. And I'm on there, you can just start trying backer and my face will show up and my email will show up, see more about old school. So old school is a clearing house of anti ageism resources. And it was started by anti ageism activists named Ashton Applewhite. And it was really her idea. And she went to someone named Curie carpenter who you know, and asked Curia, like, listen, like I have this idea to make like a one stop shop for but not shop, have it be free of all the resources having to do with ageism online so that someone can just go and find everything that exists out there on ageism. So they started to put it together. And they realized that they might need more help. And that's when they brought me on. And it sort of just became this snowball, where it started off with just this idea of having a list. And then Curia was like, well, we need to make the list look nice. So it became like a website of sorts. And then once we launched it, people just went wild for it. Like in the context of age world, people went wild for it. We realized it was a need that was being filled and we just kept on going with it. It started in 2018. And we're always growing and expanding and getting new resources on there and changing now we do workshops and consult with people we've worked with the World Health Organization and all sorts of people trying to figure out how to combat ageism.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 38:32

Ryan, thank you again. So so so much, it was just such a treat.

A

38:37

Thank you so much, Adam.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 38:46

Hey, thanks for joining us for today's conversation. Feel free to head on over to secondadolescencepod.com for show notes and more then you can connect further by following the show on Instagram at [second adolescents pod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescentspod). If you're interested in being a future guest on the show and you want to come on and share about your own second adolescence visit [second adolescence pod calm slash be a guest](https://secondadolescencepod.com) and you can submit your interest there. Alright, that's it for me for now. Whether it's morning, afternoon, night, wherever we're finding you in your day, go on out there and keep doing things that would make younger you absolutely thrilled. That is what it's all about. Alright, take good care.