

# Ep. 18: Second Adolescence w/ Saawan Tiwari (they/them)

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## SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Saawan Tiwari (they/them)

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 00:09

Hello and welcome to the Second Adolescence podcast. I am your host Adam James Cohen. On this week's episode, we have costume designer Saawan Tiwari. Saawan identifies as a gay non binary trans feminine person who goes by all pronouns they share with us in this episode, their experience navigating gender and sexuality as a queer Indian kid born into a body of male sex within a community that was predominantly white and conservative. They share about their little kids self identifying with the label Tom girl, which began their journey of understanding and finding ways to express their true identity. They go on to share with us about the evolution of understanding their queerness that took place as they progress through adolescence. Then they share about their process of coming out and then navigating queer culture as a non binary trans Femme and the subsequent toxic fetishization that was directed at them, which led to a future need to work on unlearning an internalized belief of not deserving love, which so many queer people for different reasons can unfortunately identify with, they were so generous with their story and are inviting us all into it. And I'm just so grateful. And as with every episode of second adolescence, I really want to invite you as a listener to listen with open curiosity, knowing that each of our stories are different and unique, you might hear some folks share things that really differ from your experience, whereas you might hear other things said that really speak to what you went through or are currently going through. And I really hope that all of 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 second adolescence. pod.com for shownotes, and more. Or you can follow the show on Instagram at at second adolescence pod. All right. Welcome to the conversation. Thanks for being here. Welcome to second adolescence, I'm really excited and honored that you wanted to come on and be a part of this work and share your story. And before going anywhere, I want to invite the person on your end, as I always do to give a little mini introduction just to give a little context to the listener for who the person is behind the voice.



Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 02:26

Sure. So my name is soften. I'm 22 years old, I am a costume designer based out of Manhattan, though Currently, I am in sunny Southern California. I am non binary trans femme, specifically my pronouns. I go by all of them, but I tend to write them if someone asks me makes it simple. I'm an Indian first generation American. And I also identify as gay. So hopefully that gives enough information at least start. Yeah, no,

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 02:58

that's great. Thank you. I'm so excited to dive more into you and your story. And I guess starting here, like what made you feel pulled to want to come on and share your story?

S Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 03:08

Yeah, so I actually know Brandon, who you just released the episode of. And when they posted, I listened to them. Because honestly, I've known Brandon for a while now. And I was listening. And I was shocked because like, we never talk about any of this stuff. And if we do, certainly not the way that Brandon did. And I knew some of the pieces of their story, but not all of it. And it was interesting to me listening because we have so many similar identities. But we both also have such different views of our identities and also such different stories of how we came to them. And then a part of that also is like Brandon's 29. And I'm 22. And obviously like that represents a difference. And especially with queerness. I feel like people forget how recently the landscape is changing. And so Brandon's adolescence by the version of queerness and queerness in the popular like society and public eye is completely different than my version which is already completely different than kids in high school right now. So I think I just want to come on to offer something different than them. I felt like it's this year that was different than than that was maybe interesting. And also like looking, I was looking through your episodes and you really haven't had anyone like me on before and I was like that could be cool. Just explore that and just give people just something different. I figured I had something different to offer. So that's

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 04:28

awesome. Oh, I'm so grateful you reached out I'm so touched and you're willing to Yeah, offer up your story to both fill in a gap where perhaps we haven't gotten to hear a story like yours yet on the show. And also Yeah, just offer a story for folks to both learn to perhaps feel less alone to connect with all of it. And so I'm yeah, I'm really excited. You're here and appreciative. So thank you so much. So yeah, let's dive into your story. Like, where did your story begin?

S Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 04:56

Oh, gosh, I think in terms of like queerness everyone always knew I remember being in I think it must have been like, oh, gosh, it wasn't even first grade, let's think kindergarten. And I think people don't realize that queer language isn't what makes people queer. It's just having access to language that gives people the ability to define what they're feeling. And so I always felt different. And I didn't know how to explain very early on what I was feeling. But when we were in kindergarten, people talked about tomboys, how tomboys were these girls who's sort of like,

dressing more masculine and doing like, Boy things, and like hanging out with the boys and having short hair. And I was like, Okay, so like, if those are tomboys, that I must be a Tom girl. So I would tell everyone I was a Tom girl. Because I was like, that's, obviously that's the opposite. Little did I know that that was not a thing that existed. There was no vocabulary for what I was describing. But that was sort of the first way I knew how to identify. And I remember saying that in kindergarten. And so I did that. And I didn't know anything about queer culture, especially like I grew up in an Indian household. So we weren't watching. queer culture had sort of existed in American cinema a little bit up to that point, but it barely entered the conversation. It is cinema if at all. There was one movie called those Donna starring Priyanka Chopra, at the time, where before she made her American debut, it was about these two guys who pretended to be a gay couple in order to stay up here a virtual place, because they both wanted to date Priyanka Chopra. But their mom and her mom was really explicit about no straight men in the house. And so they found that loophole that way and was like a comedy preacher that and also featured like a stereotypically gay couple, who was basically coming to vet that they were actually gay. And that was probably the first time I ever saw any sort of suggestion of queerness and didn't really stick because it wasn't super accurate to anything that I was feeling. So I was just like, that's interesting. And then completely forgot about it. The first time we really, like, encountered, the word gay was probably like middle school, and obviously was like, as an insult, as like a bullying tactic. Because I was very, very different. And like, people knew that. And so I associated it with a lot of negative things. Again, not even knowing what the word meant, just knowing I wasn't and it wasn't a good thing. At some point, I think in eighth grade, I found out what it actually meant. And even then, I was like, so scared of it, that I didn't really want identify with it. And I was like making up crushes that I had, like, fully like gaslight myself, like, I'm clearly not good. I like this girl a lot. But obviously, it was just like, they were really good friends. And I liked hanging out with them. And I didn't even understand that that wasn't what that meant, because I didn't understand, like romantic interest and desire, because they hadn't experienced it. And all they had to go off of was like friendship. It's like friendship must equal romance. Cuz that's also in middle school. Everyone's like we're dating. And I'm like, you don't know what you're talking about? Totally. So I really didn't realize until I like went through puberty, which was pretty late. It was like sophomore year, and within like, a month of puberty hitting. I was like, oh, oh, I'm gay. I was on. I was we were on a trip to India. And I remember very distinctly, we were on a houseboat in Kerala with my family. And in the middle of the night, I just woke up and I was like, fuck, I'm gay. Very, very, like, I don't even know what prompted it. Dream. I don't know what a big moat was.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 08:37

Oh, it just clicked. Yeah. Yeah.

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 08:40

And I came out to my mom as bisexual. And she essentially said, Pick a side, which is not great, obviously, in terms of like, by erasure, but it was correct in the sense that I was not, by the way, I don't think that's what she meant. And I'm certainly sure that the side she met was probably not side, I ended up picking.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 09:02

Was that immediate? After you had that moment waking up? Or how, how soon after,

**S** Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 09:07

it was about four months, I think after I came out as bi to her and he she was like, like aside and was like, okay, and I was like, I'll think about it, you know, again, I don't think I didn't even take it as like I was like, Yeah, you know what, maybe they were very early on, I should figure out a little bit more of what I'm thinking still didn't come out to anyone in my life. I called what I was doing. I called it the glass closet, right? In retrospect, because like, everyone knew, but we just didn't talk about it. And I just wouldn't answer questions that people asked me. I honestly wouldn't say either way. I wouldn't say it was straight. Or I would say I would just be like, I don't, it doesn't matter. And I would just sort of deflect, which I thought was like, I'm prepping them and like they obviously know, like, clearly and then I didn't have to say anything because we also were super concerned about my dad, and how he would react. And so I was like I need to make sure that it comes out sort of on my own terms and this way it was giving people I thought it was giving people enough Just sort of let it be known without actually being formal and that information being able to like percolate. So then the next year almost identically, like a year down, I like was with my mom and I was like, I'm gay, like, that's the site, the site is like gay and I kind of and I thought what I do, and she was like, okay, my mum's a researcher. So, in the moment she was okay. And then she went down like a five day rabbit hole of like, not even like anti gay three of like, the gay hate crimes, and like, how bad it is in the world for queer people. And so by the end of that she was a mess. And she was like, okay, just make sure you're like a Tim Cook gay. Cuz Tim Cook's doing great. And he is okay. So if you do that, you should be fine. There was always with like, the best intentions of like, making sure I would be safe, right? Even as an Indian immigrant with like, no exposure to any of this. She was just like, how can I make sure my son's gonna be okay for the future? That this is what how they identify with in terms of my dad, we were like, how do we figure out how he's gonna react? And we were on a trip with some friends. I think it was 2015. It was around the time of the SCOTUS ruling. And their daughter mentioned, the SCOTUS ruling and how this was great. And my dad basically said something along the lines that I was like, Yeah, I think some gay people are gay. And then I think a lot of people just do it because it's trendy. And I just don't believe that they are. And then he and my mom's was gotten a huge argument after that, where basically, he was like, what if one of our kids was gay? And he was like, Well, you know, we'd have to decide how much we want to support them and all this stuff. And like, it was very, like a matter of fact. And so once we knew that, we were like, okay, so we can't really come out yet. Because I need him to pay for college. So we're just gonna, we're just gonna write out and I thought the glass closet was working. I was like, Oh, this is working great for me. Like everyone kind of knows. And I don't have to do anything. And it's great. I was like, I could just do that until I graduate. And then I went on this summer, this is a really long story. I'm so sorry.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 12:04

No, this is exactly what I love to hear. Thank you so much for sharing all of it. Absolutely. Oh, my gosh, don't skip any detail.

**S** Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 12:12

I was invited to do a summit in Washington DC. It was like a two week summit about the

I was invited to do a summit in Washington DC. It was like a two week summit about the environment because at the time, it was gonna go into like, Sue ology, and animal conservation. And so I went to that. And I was like, you know, I'm never going to see these people got two weeks. What if I just try it from the get just like, tell people and get the beginning. I just see how it feels. And I was positive, I was like, it'll feel exactly the same, I'll be totally fine. And then I'll know. And then I'll just like, go and do my thing back at school, and nothing will have to change. So like so. So it's kind of like when you start like a diet, or like, you start exercising, and you're like, I'm going to do this for two days, but I'm going to feel exactly the same. And then I'm going to know that I'm fine. And I don't need to change my life. And everything's going great. And of course, that wasn't what happened. It was I came out and immediately it just was like, push like it. I don't even know. It's weird, because it's like a for all intensive purposes, I was out. But like for people to actually know, and reference that and understand that and start asking you about like boys you think are cute, and all these things. And there's a straight person who was rooming with, and we ended up becoming like Super buddy, buddy. And we like started doing this bit, where we convince everyone we were a couple. And it just became like this whole thing that was so much bigger than me. It also brought so many people so much joy in a way that I didn't expect because I was just so much more comfortable just doing my thing. And people like, loved it. And like people liked me more as an out gay person, because I was more authentic than I was as a not out gay person. And so it kind of stuck. So that senior year, I was like, Okay, what's my dad? So I told my sister, who? I mean, she knew she was like, yeah, no, great. And then I started coming out to people at school, and I thought it wasn't gonna be I was like, I thought it was gonna say in a resume. Oh, yeah. And then it was like, but it was like, what? Like, I was like, drop it in passing would be like, I'm sorry, what? What did you just say? And I was like, you knew? And I was like, well, we knew but we didn't like know, and I was like, I'm very grateful. You didn't assume I think that's very sweet. I think you could have presumed you could have done a little presuming on your own by reward you the opportunity in this moment to make assumptions and be correct about that.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 14:25

And we what was like the culture and climate at school like around awareness and like,

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Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 14:29

I lived in Placer County, which is one of the few conservative counties in California, rich, wealthy, white, very affluent. And we were not that obviously. So I've been dealing with that intersectionality that was its own thing the whole time. All the way through like holidays. My history being mentioned in class, like we can go on this tangent at a point but like, one thing I do applaud my mother for which she is very insistent that like we find a way to integrate Indian culture, at least a little bit in To my classrooms, because otherwise I would never hear

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 15:02

about myself. Yeah. So what did that look like? How did yeah, what did that look like?

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 15:05

**S** Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 15:05

So when I was younger, I didn't understand my mom did this, but she would go approach the teachers every single year, until we had to like take different classes with different teachers where we had a homeroom every single year, she would approach my homeroom teacher and say, for Diwali, which is an October ish. I want my kids to do a presentation about the walls in the class, we can do an activity thing, they can bring food, we can do stuff, like I will help on that side of it, to make it like a full section of the class day to talk about this. But I needed to, I want my kids to be doing this. And so from like, first grade, every year, my mom would take off work, and she would be there that day. And we would like she would help us make the PowerPoint, we would like play music for people, we would explain what the day was about and all this stuff. And we would like hand out food sometimes at every year, it got a little bigger. By the last year we did it, which was sixth grade, it was me and my sister did it together, her fifth grade class and my sixth grade class sat in the room. And another sixth grade classes teacher had heard about it and one of them to be there was also in the room. And we did a presentation we did a full performance we made run goalies which were sort of like the sand drawings on the ground. But we didn't sort of we had like a dot system, we sort of explained like the basis of how you build run goalies to run goalie contests. We also had food. Now in retrospect, I mean, I'm so grateful for it. Because my mom was me, my mom was a working like a full time working parent, like she did not really have time to do this. And she did it because otherwise we'd never literally would never have heard about ourselves in class. And actually, for sixth grade, they don't have enough time to cover we had to do ancient civilizations. So up until ancient Greece, they didn't have enough time to cover all of it. So they would make you choose between the two Eastern civilization chapters. So either China or India, and my class was the only sixth grade class that ended up picking India. And it was because of that presentation. And so because of that, I actually learned the entire ancient history of India, and no other sixth grade class learned that it came to bite me in the butt sophomore year, because they assume you know, all this stuff about China. And I was like, I don't know any of it. But that was just incredible to have the foresight to do that is amazing. And then after that point, I never heard about anything related to my family again until senior year when they did AP. gov, which covers up to like modern history. And they talked about the Indian migration that happened in the 80s and 90s, in response to the technology boom in the States, but the lack of engineers, that's when a huge portion of the Indian population moved from India to the States. It was like a documented migratory pattern. And I was like, That's my parents. And so that was the second and only time I heard about myself, especially in the context of American history, which was super cool. But yeah, so that's kind of what that looks like. But getting back to queerness if that's alright.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 17:54

Yeah, absolutely. Thank you for sharing.

**S** Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 17:58

So I came out at school, I thought I was like, I did it done. But then it was like, I've been dressing essentially what I thought was straight the whole time. So workloads that I was, like, neither quotes were really was like, what like a sixth grader wore, and I like, kept that all the way through, because I didn't know what I was doing. And where a lot of graphic tees a lot of like knee length cargo shorts, bands, loved bands still up and just very simple buzz cut, like didn't really know what to do. And then as soon as I came out, I was like, we don't have to dress

straight anymore. I was like, I don't even know what I like to wear. And I think just because I like grew up in a very colorful household. And like my mom dresses extremely like big bright patterns, bold colors, big jewelry, all that stuff. I was just immediately and it's just more interesting than Menswear. I just started getting drawn to it. And I started like thrifting it and I would started like I think within a four month period, I like had this complete visible change in the way I was dressing to the point that I was wearing. Like, I would like hide pumps, in my car in apartments I jacketed into my car. And so I would go to school, and I would just throw random things on and I would go out because I couldn't wear it at home. And my mom knew I was gay. She did not know that I liked women's clothing. She was helping out with a Tim Cook. And I was clearly not going down that avenue. And my dad definitely didn't know so I had to hide it from both of them. So I would sort of do these car transformations where it would completely change in the car and then go to school.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 19:26

And what do you remember like that being like really keeping all of that separate?

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Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 19:30

I think I mean, I don't think I realized how taxing it was. My mom noticed she was like you are never home anymore. Especially by the end of senior year and that summer before I went to college, I was never in my house because I couldn't be myself at home because of my dad and because of the clothes. My mom found out once I went to an aquarium with a friend in the Monterey Bay Aquarium which is great and I wore like a really like a cute little like tied up Daisy Duke with like really short overalls and a palm Got a big hat. And my mom saw a picture of it and she flipped out. And when I came home at like 11 at night, we had a huge like screaming match about these clothes. And she was like, You look cheap look like a whore. I didn't know that I would have to talk to you about this. We talked to your sister about this, you're not treating your body with respect. People are going to look down on you for what you're wearing. And I was like, I just like wear these clothes. Why are you fighting me about this? Blah, blah, blah. And so that's quickly established. I could not dress like that at home. Ironically, my mom took me to do like, auditions for schools. I wore pumps at my auditions. And she let me wear those pants. If she didn't really think twice about it. I was wearing like men's clothing. And I would just wear a prompt on the bottom, which I think helped because it made me stand out. But it was always a thing. Even like for senior ball, I went to my friend's house who had asked sort of like a buddy buddy thing. I didn't ask a boy, because I was like, There's no way. I was, I think one of like maybe four or five out kids at my school. Lots of women less so men. And so I went to this friend's house at like four o'clock in my suit. And we took a picture up for she was wearing her dress and I was in my suit. And then I like took it all off. And I started getting ready to put on like a full face of makeup. And like I had bought, I guess it was a dance costume. It was like a sequined top with high waisted like long cigarette pants attached. And I've made it into shorts, blazer on top of that. And then I were these coral fish nets that I had gotten from Target. And a huge like a six inch platform like it was way too tall. But I didn't have any shoes. I was like, this is the shoe I'm gonna wear. And so I sent that picture that I took forward to my parents at seven when everyone else showed up at that house. And then I went to senior ball and the full thing. So that was a little wild. I even dressed for like my graduation rehearsal, I was all dressed up and not actual graduation. I wear men's clothes for that. But like I was always finding where I could do it. And I didn't look great. It was a it was a rough patch. But

thankfully, by the time I went to college, I had really figured out my aesthetic. But for a while there, it was really, it was all over the place. But it needed to happen. And I'm glad it happened. And I'm glad it happened, where did and when it did rather than in college, because then I got to come to college, essentially fully formed. I think this happens with a lot of queer people who come out in high school, as you do so much of the work that heterosexual kids do in college, when you're in high school, you find yourself in high school. So you come to college fully formed, rather than leaving high school and then find yourself in college. Yeah. So everyone always assumed I was older. When I was in college, everyone always assumed I was like a graduate student even just because I was like very confident and very comfortable in my skin and my queerness even though personally I'm now looking back, I know like, I still went through like a whole range of queer transformation after that. But visually, I already came in basically, where people thought queer people should be. And so it really changed how people saw me in that way. Wow.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 23:07

Oh, I mean, yeah, this point you're making about, for people who come out in high school, like, you're kind of initiated into this kind of more deep, like, who am I and kind of cultivating that? Because you kind of have to because you're not in your borders, ask those questions literally, like,

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Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 23:25

Why do I like to wear those questions suddenly come up. And all of that was happening, gender was not even on my mind. That was not even something I need to consider. I feel like again, people forget this because they think it was so recently I graduated high school five years ago, at this point, we had no terminology for gender. In school, we had trans kids, we had a couple of trans kids who were like raising money for their transition and stuff, which is the only way I knew about trans this, I learned about the concept of non binary very, very sort of like out of pocket. I had heard the term used in articles at the time, like it was three genders, literally, like the discussion wasn't even a spectrum. It was three genders of like, there was men, and there was women. And then there was the non binary, third gender. And then it was like, try gender and age, gender and gender fluid. In all these words, I had started hearing about them, but I didn't understand what they were. And I didn't know I don't think I understood what I was doing. The only things I had to compare it to were like Jeffree Star and James Charles, which is not great retrospect, but that was like I'm kind of doing what they're doing. Or like Mitch Crossy from Pentatonix because they have their YouTube channel Superfruit. And I was like, Mitch and I are doing something similar and I don't know what it is. But I feel like it's that. I remember in our AP gov class, we had to talk about how like, identity informs politics and things like that. And so like different groups are assigned different things like family affiliation, well, etc. You picked your identities, and we were assigned gender and so I did like men, women, and then it did trans non binary cuz I was like trans men don't vote the way typically sis men do. And so that is a separate demographic and they're gonna vote differently. I remember talking about non binary and how like non binary issues, were going to come up. And my AP gov teacher who's probably like one of the most liberal people on campus was really like, that's never gonna happen. And I was like, What do you mean, he's like, we're never going to talk about like, he was like trans issues aren't even going to be on the table. Like, he was like, we're never going to talk about that. And the trans bathroom discussion, like just started, he's like, we're



never going to come around on that we're never going to be talking about non binary in the public sphere, the American public is just not going to get there. And that was a little bit disheartening. But also, like, I think, to be fair, like a realistic point of view of just like, do we trust the American public to be ready to discuss gender beyond the binary, looking at history and how long they've had to deal with, like, queerness. And like, just having past gay marriage, and then immediately, this was 2016. So I was thinking, maybe God, when Trump took office. So it was a lot of just like, This is how we thought government work. And now there is an exception, which is currently happening. Totally, that was most of the class was like, this is a government normally has worked up until this very moment. And now it is doing something different. Wow.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 26:12

Okay, wait. So at this point, you're just about to go to college. Like what happens? Like once you're in college, you say you're more fully formed than your peers, like, what do you remember about stepping into that next chapter of your life?

**S** Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 26:24

Well, so I went to school, it was the first time I wasn't under parents supervision. So I wasn't doing like these transformations in my car anymore, can leave my house, my dorm, exactly as it was, I even got to this whole thing happened with my roommate, where he like, eventually dropped out of a program. And so he was not in the dorm with me. So I was in the dorm by myself. I didn't have a roommate, so I didn't have to worry about that. I was just like, on my own, basically living on my own, in a room, at least having my own room. And then like, getting to know the people in my hall. And we were all part of a learning community. So we were all like, grouped together, we took a class together, we had like workshops and things we were doing. So we all got to know each other super well. But I was like, I mean, within the first week, there was this event called North fest, which is about like student clubs. And it was also coupled with I went to the University of Michigan, by the way. There was also like, halfway across the country from where my parents live in California. So there's a vet called North fest, and then it was coupled with pride outside, which was this LGBTQ event that happened literally during the commencement we like it was a commencement activity. It was this whole event called pride outside, which is about the queer clubs and organizations on campus, which is super cool. I don't think a lot of schools do that, actually. So that was super nice. Fun fact, University of Michigan spectrum center was the first LGBTQ Center be opened on a public campus ever heard, I learned a lot of fun.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 27:50

That's awesome. Wow.

**S** Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 27:51

Yeah. So they were the first LGBTQ Center on a campus in 1970. I think sometime around that is when they opened. So University Michigan has had a long standing like, large queer population and it's been infiltrated into the town around in Michigan. So I got dressed up for

population, and it's been infiltrated into the town around in Michigan. So I got dressed up for pride outside and then went to Northwest and that was like I was again, it's like the booty shorts and the fishnets and the pump. And I had honestly, it was almost identical to the outfit, I was wearing the same overalls, I took a Michigan shirt and I cropped it. I wore that full face. Not that it was really good at it because I didn't know anything because I didn't really I've never really practiced I was doing with solid lids of black eyeliner because I was like, I don't know how to do eyeshadow, but I can do a black lip. And even then it was like I was feeling so empowered to myself. But also, I was becoming like so many people that I know like their first experience meaning like a person like me, or they're only experienced, meaning a person like me is me. Like I have a friend who is from rural Michigan. And I was the first time he had met a Indian person. He had met a person from California and hadn't met a queer person like all and like a bunch of things. And I guess I didn't know what it was like to step into that. So the intersectionality of it all I went from being Indian, being my visible identity, we start you know, like with identities, visible identities, and there's hidden identities, and queerness is often treated as a hidden identity and informs a lot of like our history, because we have the ability to go underground when needed and like disappear from public view in the way that race you can't. But I went from being my most visible identity being Indian to queerness like it flipped people identified me as queer before they identified that I was Indian. A lot of times people didn't know I was Indian at all until I told them to the point like Indian people didn't even realize I was Indian, even with my name and my what I thought was pretty strong Indian influence in my life. Like I was having to now justify this even though I was like I'm first generation like my parents are from India. I've been several times I'm sitting on Indian cheese right now. Like it's been around me my whole life more so than queerness. But all of a sudden Like queerness was not questioned. But being Indian was suddenly a question. Wow. Which is interesting to have that, when you're sort of like introducing yourself to a new group of people also have a group of people, everyone who I was with in high school, watched me sort of become who I am now. Like, they had seen me since like third grade, and they'd seen the full progression, where it's like, these people were meeting me at sort of what at the time was like, peak, like my peak authentic self. And so they had a completely different visual of me. And like, people were scared to approach me for like, a couple of days because it was just so intimidating. But then I think as people got to know me, and I think there's a lot to be said about like existence as rebellion for queer people like non binary trans femme people are so often treated as the other and media and we're sort of presented very, like otherworldly and like, alien like Benedict Cumberbatch and like zoo lander to like very, like, theory, Old God s God things. And it's like, no, I'm just like an idiot with hair. Like, just just like a person in a wig. Trying to figure my life out, much like you are also person in wig trying to figure your life out. And I think once people started talking to me and realize that I was an absolute dork that just happened to do this very glamorous and like, different thing. It also humanizes, I guess queerness in a way that I don't. I don't know if I'll ever know the impact of that, you know?

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 31:31

Totally, totally quick pause, like, what's it like, in this moment, going back into these memories?

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 31:38

I don't do it a lot. It's very, like it's very, it's like you're simultaneously recounting what happened. But also you're like, retro actively seeing so much. Yeah. And getting, I'm so out of body with it. I like where I'm like. I'm like. I'm not visualizing it as like myself through my own

body with it. Like where I'm like, I'm like, I'm not visualizing it as like, myself through my own eyes, what was happening? I'm like, seeing my body from like, a theoretical point of view and be like, Oh, this is all happening around me. Because of me, like I'm at the center of this thing that's going on.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 32:08

Totally. Like so then, moving forward. What happened next in your journey?

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 32:14

Oh, gosh, I started to learn a lot of language when I was in college for gender. And so I settled on gender queer pretty quickly. Once I got on college, I was still using he him pronouns. I still kind of do to this day. And yeah, I was just like, genderqueer feels right. I was like, it's not gender fluid. Because no matter what I look like, I always feel the same way about where I want to be gender, like I have the same goal about how I feel gender wise, always like there's no sort of fluidity in terms of like, I'm feeling more masculine today and feeling more feminine today. It's always sort of in the one spot on that spectrum. So I sort of used that for a while to describe what I was doing, and Jeffrey Star for all that he is in other contexts. In terms of pure Gender Spectrum, I identified with it a lot in this idea that he would always say, I'm just Jeffrey, like, I'm just doing Jeffrey. And I was like, Yeah, I'm just, I'm just doing sovereign. This visually is me. And I don't know how to get more definitive for it. But like the visual that you're saying is, and that's what I'm doing. And that's what we're going for. I always had, like I didn't, I still had things that would like that, I have my same dysphoria that I have now. But because I couldn't really deal with them. I was just sort of like, these are my gender dysphoria is that I have, I don't even think I call them that because I knew I wasn't trans in the sense that I didn't want to transition. I even have like two gender dysphoria in the sense that I was like, I need to go through such reassignment surgeries, I don't feel right in my body. I feel like my skin actually felt pretty good about high like, visually, but like things like facial hair always really bugged me. Basically, all my body hair always drives me insane. Like, that's always the point for me, shoulders, jawline, just little pieces that will sort of trigger it. And I had those, but I didn't really know how to deal with them. And I was doing so much in terms of like, finding my where I fit on the spectrum that I think I just didn't have the bandwidth to also deal with, like the implications of that. I was also finding out a lot sexually, because like I was in college, I was like, Oh, this is my moment. This is like, my sexual this is when it's gonna happen. Like, I had one sexual experience in high school, like I did not have a lot to go off of. So it's like, Oh, I'll come to college and like, I'll do it. And then I realized at that point that and I think a lot of people don't understand that there's gay hookup culture, which is its own thing. And then there's non binary trans CD crossdresser hookup culture, and those are not like synonymous. I wasn't getting attention from gay men at all, because I was too femme presenting what I was getting attention from bisexual pansexual discreet, straight men, people like that, which They didn't, I wasn't prepared for I thought I really thought I was like, Oh, I'm gay, I'm going to be in the gay scene, I'm gonna be doing gay things with gay people. And it turns out, I was not I was going to be in a different arena, that I wasn't necessarily prepared for it. And it's a lot, because it's so discreet. And because these are oftentimes, these are straight men, who I call it, it's almost like they like women plus, like they have their definition of women is a little bit broader than the typical heterosexual definition of women. And it includes more people. But because they have that, they're not able to discuss that publicly. There's no community that really exists for them. So they exist on like Grindr and on on these hookup sites, and they're really hidden, and

therefore, like blunt and aggressive about what they like and what they don't like. And there's like, no romance involved at all, like it's pure sexual satisfaction. And there were things I would do in there things I wouldn't do, like people would ask me like, like, can you put on makeup? Can you put on wigs, can you put on laundry, and I'd be like, that is so uncomfortable. I don't want to do that. Like, I won't be doing that. And so that made me even less desirable to this, like small group of people that was like, really, really interested in me. And so I was learning all that at the same time, too. And that became a big part of the struggle as well as just figuring out like, I've always been like, monogamy, marriage, kids, picket fence kind of person. Like, that's always what I've wanted. And I was trying to realize that, like, there was not a lot of people who liked me, and also want that with me. So I don't know if I'll ever admit that. There were like, a few people I knew personally like friends of mine who were like, and we had, like, we did stuff, but it was never beyond sort of like a sexual gratification thing. Not even like Friends with Benefits really, like it was very like one time on standalove. And I of course, also we don't get the training, and the high school arena of like, sort of how to be like, involved romantically with people or being involved sexually with people. So I was also doing all that. And I was obviously messing up or getting too attached, or like, not being attached enough for like judging people too soon, or like putting pressure on. Like, I didn't know how to do any of that. And so that was hard. That was probably the biggest struggle, I think, in college for me. Do I deserve love? Do I get to have that? And how do I find that in the sea? Just like people who are not what I want? Who Want me to be something I'm not?

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 37:26

Yeah, so you in college was really internalizing this belief or kind of question of Yeah, am I someone who deserves love can have love based off of getting? Because yes, I'm just thinking about like, you like, first probably feeling other within like straight culture, then like, then feeling others within gay culture. And then like, Ah,

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 37:43

I really felt like I didn't have like any community college at all. Like, I was like, I was hanging out with straight people all through college, I was hanging out with the straight people. Because I was like, I would rather be the one in a group than sort of be like, the one of many, I thought that was better. And the queer culture, I mean, not the queer culture, but pretty much everywhere is a little bit toxic. I think we can all say with confidence. And so I was seeing the toxicity. And I was like, I really don't want to be involved in that. So I'm just gonna stay up here and do my little thing in this corner, where I might be lonely, but at least I'm not being hurt, right?

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 38:22

Yeah. And I'm just like, struck by kind of thinking about these men, these discreet men who are approaching you for something they just saw that they could get from you and not seeing all of you. Like, I wonder like, have you had that experience of feeling like your whole self has been?

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 38:36

Well, yeah, I had a I always felt like, there were people who were attracted to one half of me, like people really liked when I presented more masculine, but didn't like when it presented very feminine. Or there are people who exclusively like when I presented feminine and didn't like at all, when I presented more masculine gender expression wise, again, like I was always consistent with how I was speaking and feeling and doing but like, visually, people had specific things they wanted. And I never, I mean, I never really I was deep in hookup culture, not because I wanted to, but because I thought it was the only option. Like personally, I was like, I hate this. Like it's draining, it's exhausting. You're scheduling like crazy. You're always on your phone, hoping that like at some point, you get something that's probably not gonna be that good. Anyway, like, it's gonna stop. And then you just sort of like kind of like, okay, great. And then we try again, I found it very tiring. And I was really bad at doing it in person. Because in person, I would be with my crew, and I would get drunk, and I immediately be like, Okay, I need to get everyone home. So immediately, my body was off the table. And though to be fair, maybe if like people were approaching me at a party, that would have changed, but they obviously were not because they didn't want other people to see them approaching me at the party. It's interesting. This is sort of a tangent, but even in high school, like once I came out, I started getting attention from straight men, even though I was still dressing in like cargo shorts and T shirts, which I think says a lot about like, I think gender wise I was always doing what I was doing, you know, like I had a very feminine but not like not like in a femme gay sense. But like a very, like, female feminine way about me and the way that I speak in the way that I talk to people in the way interact with people, and they think people could read that way early on. And it caused a lot of confusion for people and made them question where they lied on that scale, the Kinsey scale or things like that, of like how they felt about me, I have had people like, especially in the last couple years, who have like been like, knowing I met you, and had a feeling about you that I didn't understand. And now I'm like, pansexual, and I'm bisexual. Now I'm more fluid in the sense of how I think about gender, because I met you. And so in not even having like, interactions with me of like, any sort of romantic or sexual nature, but just like seeing me being like, this is triggering something that I don't understand. And then going through that on their own, which is great, because then it doesn't involve me at all lack of trauma on my side. Right. Right. Inconvenient in terms of like, I would have loved some attention at that time in my life. But very happy for you. Glad you figured that

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 41:08

out. Right. Gosh, yeah, that mean that's making me think like, I hear like a through line, where different points in your life you've been put into this by existing in like the context, even existing and you've been put into this role of, I guess, for lack of better word like teacher like giving, whether it was you in school, right, like teaching your classmates about your culture, whether it was you just existing, like activating something and other people about kind of what where they stand and I'm like, I mean, sure, on one hand, yay, like to expand knowledge. But also like, I can imagine that's like, can be a burden as you're speaking to can be traumatizing can

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 41:43

Yes. To be frank, but like, sometimes they just want to get like, Dick. You know, it's like, I'm glad that I'm expanding your musings on gender. But right now, I really just would love like, someone to dance with me at this ball is totally, totally. Like, I'm like, I'm glad that like, you're

having an epiphany at this bar. But I just want someone to like, wrap their arm on the small my bad back and like dance with, you know, like, that's all I want. I would like these experiences for myself rather than to trigger them in you. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it's great. Like, it's super cool to do it. I call myself a converter for a very long time. I was like, that's my, I'm this is my work in the gay agenda. I'm not really happily retired. But at that time, it was I think a lot of what I was doing was just like exposing people to queerness. And then having them realize it and themselves. I'm trying to think where it went from there. But I think that was my true. This is your next question. But like, that was my true I think second adolescence. Yeah, honestly, my real adolescence in a sense of like, the messy the figuring it out, not understanding how I felt about myself, the messiness with people and romance and like, everything that we write about as adolescents for straight people, I think was really happening for me in college, and the finding myself part of it, which had happened early on, I think it's almost like I didn't really find myself, I just leveled myself up with where everyone else was. So that way I could start the process to begin digging into the weeds of it. Yeah, to get where I am now.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 43:21

Yeah. And could you share more about that chapter about kind of getting to where you're at now going through the messiness going through the weeds doing all of that? Yeah,

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 43:29

yeah. I think a couple things happened. My senior year of college, I met my current boyfriend, and he's like, he's literally like, he's like a jock. He was a frat boy was like, super into like, Ultimate Frisbee, and all of his friends were straight, and they like watch Game of Thrones. They're all from his fraternity. And he's like quintessential cornfed, Michigan boy, lived in a cute little suburb with like, his mom and his dad and his two other older brothers, just all that but also happened to be pansexual. And very interestingly, like, just known it like since he was 15 Never really affected how he felt about himself did not go through a wave of anything. He wasn't really out to people, but he just kind of was like, Great more options. Like, like went forward with it. I still I asked about all the time because I don't get it. My brain just can't wrap around them was like you had this Epitome about yourself. And you were just like fine with it. He was like, yeah, like we were watching. heartstopping is like That was not me. That was not me. I was not the kid Connor. I didn't have like a crisis. I did not look up how to date. He was like, he just like knew and he was like, great. So meeting him, we met on Grindr, and it was supposed to just be like, we had talked every year I'd been there, but like never anything had happened. And like that year, we were finally like, we're gonna do it. We're just gonna, like, hook up. It's gonna be great. And it was the day of the game. I was outside. in pajamas didn't look glamorous, didn't look like anything literally just look like myself. No makeup, nothing hair up. Very just like, at home, grabbing, like packages from Amazon or something. And he like came around the corner and like a fool jersey. So you've been tailgating. And what was supposed to be just like a quick little thing ended up being like two hours of us just talking and hanging out. And I don't know, it was it felt immediately different. From the very beginning. He wondered My name before he even showed up. He had my number. I remember like meeting him, the first thing I noticed was he laughed at my jokes. And I was like, nobody ever does that. I can What are you? What are you, I don't know what's happening. And like, we just got along and he just got me. Like, just me as a person. Like he really understood like me and where I was coming from. And it was also like, open to receiving it because it wasn't just about like, you

know, like getting them out and leaving. It was more personal for him. Yeah, he ended up coming back that night. And he stayed that night that night. And then you know, it kept snowballing. And like, in a couple of weeks, he had asked me out, he wanted to be my boyfriend. I said yes. And now it's been two and a half years. We're also pandemic relationships. Yeah, so definitely like, I will be honest, it had its ups and downs. We broke up and got back together three times. Because it was like, I mean, we were together, maybe four months. And then the pandemic hit. And like we literally didn't couldn't see each other for like a month and a half. And so like it became like this moment where we really had to decide, like, is this something we want to do? I knew I was flying back to California, he was gonna stay there. We had no idea what our futures were gonna hold. And he ended up coming and staying with me the last two weeks of my time in Michigan, and he like stayed with me. And he helped me pack and my friends were super great. And they we basically did a bunch of graduation festivities just for being at my house. Like we took the photos and we like, had like drinks and a little party with just the people that lived there. And that was like super special. And he was there for all of that. That was great. And then I moved to New York. And he broke up with me right before I moved to New York. And it was what motivated me to end up moving to New York because I didn't know where to go. And I was like, should I just move in with you? And he was like, I can't stop you. You want to move to New York, you want to be a designer, you have to be in New York. And I don't know where I am. And I don't know what my future looks like. We haven't been together that long. And I can't be the reason that you don't do that. So I ended up moving to New York. And by the time I got in the car to go to New York, we were already back together. Just enough time for me to like pick it like Slack. And like actually, can we and I was like Yeah. So then he went to New York. And then Peter was here's the boyfriend on computer was in Massachusetts on like an internship. So he would visit when he could. So we were able to keep things up that way. Yeah. And then he started booking work, which then like allowed me like Peter ended up going back to Michigan, I was able to go to Michigan all the time for work. So we would see each other that way. We did this huge trip where I went to Michigan for my friend's graduation to sort of repay the favor. And then he came with me back here to California to meet my family and stuff. And I met his family while I was there. So that was a big step for both of us.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 48:24

Yeah, I mean, when we have these relationships, he's like, first meaningful relationships that we maybe didn't get to have when we were younger. We have like this, all these firsts that happen in our second adolescence, and one of which is like, yeah, integrating this person into meeting our family or friends. Like what was that? Like kind of bringing him home?

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 48:41

I don't even know how to describe it. Yeah, I feel like he had had significantly more partners than I had, as I had had one kind of boyfriend up until this point. And he had obviously been had dated girls and guys starting when he was in high school up until this point, he was also two years older than me. So he had had just a lot more experiences with people. And I knew, like I met him and I was like, Oh, this is like not that this is the one this was a very good contender. I knew from the beginning. I was like, this is different. This is special. I wasn't as concerned maybe in my naivete. I wasn't as concerned about like, what is it going to mean? Like, what is it? Is this going to last or anything like that, because I just knew I was like, There's

something about the way that we are together. That's like really special. Peter was the one to think more about it. And obviously he had all of his experiences to compare it to and he was like matching his life. And he I guess being pansexual and passing, he had more options. And he also didn't have to come out. Like he could choose not to come out and no one would ever need to know. Whereas I have never really been afforded the luxury of being able to sort of pass everyone knows I'm queer when I walk into a room, and also him being with me by being next to me. Everyone was gonna know he was queer. And that did create some tension in our relationship. So like, it was hard to navigate for a little bit, I think in that I was never concerned about my family meeting him. Because I was like, I know like, this is a person who's gonna be a big deal in my life. So like, I need them to know who he is. So I think I told my parents, I was dating someone within like two months of us dating. And then I, my parents met him right before the pandemic, they came to see one of my shows that I designed and he was obviously there as well. And so we had a dinner together. And he met them. They're very, like, formally very like, out of like, the way that it's done, like movies and stuff, where it's like, you know, like dinner with them. And then I met his parents because I had to do a job in Michigan. This was about a year later, in the pandemic, I met his parents, and I was doing a job in Michigan, and I was staying at their place. And I mean, we hit it off, I couldn't have asked for it to go better. I was a little nervous, because I was like, I'm an acclimated taste. More so than Peter is theater, again, is corn fed, like Michigan boy, naive, Lee charming and like very attractive and classically handsome. Whereas I'm the one who's doing a little bit more of like an off the beaten path. thing, but it couldn't have asked for it to go better. It went really well. And everyone who's ever met theater that are my friends, like love theater, there are people in my life, who I think like Peter more than me. It's just like, he fits really well until like my world. And I and having that experience meeting his parents, I was like, oh, and I fit really well, in your world, too. And that was very comforting. That being said, like, obviously, it was still a thing. And we actually here the third time he broke up with me was he basically was like we were approaching at that point two years. And he essentially said that he wasn't sure he was ready to enter a relationship. That would be the longest relationship he's ever had. And he wasn't sure if he was ready for what that meant. Because we both knew, in that moment, we were heading down the marriage path. Like, I don't know if I'm ready for this. And if it would be anyone it would be you. But I don't know if I can do this right now. And so essentially, like, you know, like, it's not you, it's me, and he broke up with me. And thankfully, at that point, I had developed a queer family of friends in New York, with things opening from shows and things like that. And that, I think, was also a big change for me and a big transition of like, I'm not hanging out with strict people anymore. I mean, with queer people, and not even in specifically like not sis heterosexual. I call them the SIS hat gays, which doesn't make sense. But it's like that. It's that particular that vibe? Yeah. Have you watched Fire Island yet?

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 52:45  
Yes.

S Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 52:46  
It's those girls.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 52:47



Yeah, yes, yes.

**S** Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 52:49

Yep, yep, yep, yep. Yep. I wasn't hanging out with them. I was hanging out with the other people. And that was my group. So I think that helps a lot. And this was the highest queer people in my life. And they knew what was going on. And they like, took me in and like, show me around and, like, experience so much acquire New York that way, in a way that I hadn't before. And he ended up talking to me like a month after because it was like, literally, we broke up. And then like, two weeks later was his birthday. And then a week later was my birthday. So I like was like, Okay, I'll just text him happy birthday. I'll just do that. And I did. And he was like, I'd love to FaceTime with you at some point if you have the chance. And I was like, I'm not ready yet. And so I got to a point where I was like, I think I'm okay with it. And I was gonna wait until my birthday. And I was like, that's stupid and weird. Like, I'm not writing a movie. Like, I'll just let them know I'm ready. And then ironically, even though I tried to avoid, like some sort of significance, it happened to be like the day that would have been our two year anniversary was the day we ended up talking again for the first time after we broke up. And I believe that, that he knows that. I don't think he did the math when that happened. And he like talked to me. And he just started saying all these things. And I was like, Oh my gosh, like he actually like hung up and like did the work. Like you started coming out to everyone in his life, all of his friends. He started going to therapy. He started like doing like so much introspection about who he was what he wanted, it was insane. Like, it was like it was like a full like, Okay, I said I need to do something, I'm gonna get down and get to it. And so then we started like hanging out again, a little bit in the following months. And this was a much slower, we both were very, like cautious about entering back into it. Because I think we both knew we were like, we can't keep playing this pattern. Like really, if we're gonna do this, we're doing it. And I also like started like at that point, going to therapy and sort of attacking things that I was feeling about us and myself and like learning a lot about who I was and the things that I had to work on. I think by the time we got back into it, it was also the first time that both of us had been in a really good place. We both had like something coming up for us. We both had a lot. I have a A lot happening in that year, he was in his master's program. And so we both were very just cautious and protective about reentering. But there became a point where it was literally like, I think any literally said to me is like, I'm preparing for the moment, I'm preparing myself to get back together with you. He said that about I think a month before we ended up actually getting back together to realize that they had work to do on themselves, realize that the only way they knew how to do it was by ending a relationship, having the courage to then do that, and then immediately get into working on themselves in order to be prepared for the next and final. Yeah, I think to me, it spoke to his character, honestly, almost as much as anything he did while we were together. So that was really beautiful. And I mean, if you circle back to like, am I deserving of love to have someone do all this? For me, because I was worth it. You know, I could cry.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 56:00

Well, my, my whole body's tingling, whoa, yes, my heart stopped. Oh, my gosh.

**S** Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 56:08

I also spoke to so many things where I felt like I was like, always putting more into my

I also spoke to so many things where I felt like I was like, always putting more into my relationships with people that I'm getting back in there. Yeah. And that was always a thing for me that I felt like was an issue. And to have someone consistently throughout the entire time, we've known each other always put in as much or more of themselves and to our relationship and what we need to each other than I was not that this is about queer love being the solution, because it's not always but it is nice.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 56:35

And it's nice, like, totally, it's nice.

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 56:39

We don't hear enough stories about happy queer, and it's totally queer discovering the way we want and like people ending up in a better place.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 56:46

Yes, totally. Okay, I'm looking at the time. I know, I've kept you over and I need to let you go. But I guess like one, I'm just thinking, you have to write about this relationship and share that story. I just like, I want it. I have so many more follow up questions that I want to hear. But yeah, I'm also thinking about before you wind down, like, is there was there anything else that wanted to be a part of this conversation that hasn't been able to be shared yet, about you and your story?

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 57:12

Sure, I guess kind of in the vein of Brandon, we're still I'm still on my journey with my queerness. And like this idea of like, really, up until like, November of this year, I really didn't identify as trans femme. And that was a very new thing, in the sense of like, the label, and not necessarily, because I felt like honestly, I was just just giving more definition. As I got more language to what I was doing. I was like, like, I never I didn't come out as trans stem, I didn't really tell anyone, I was just like, oh, within this gender queer umbrella, what I am particularly doing is in fact, trans fats. Like that's the most descriptive word for what I am doing. So that's been its own journey. And that's when I really started to be like, Oh, these things that I don't like about myself aren't just insecurities. They're like, dysphoria, like I'm experiencing dysphoria about these particular things, because they don't align with visually what I'm trying to present to the world. And that's why some non binary people love having a beard, and I literally detest it. Like, that's literally what that's about. And so like to then redefine my insecurity as dysphoria, because with insecurity, we tried to teach ourselves to like, let go with it. And with dysphoria, we it's much more of like a nuanced approach of like, are there things you can do to remedy the dysphoria, so you feel better about yourself in a way that feels comfortable to you? Yeah, and now like laser hair removal is like at the top of my list in a way that it wasn't before. Because it's like, this isn't about me, like being like, Oh, I don't like my hair. This is about me being like, not having hair is going to make me feel so much better about myself than currently dealing with it. And so just like helped me completely reframe how I was looking at things and looking at how I felt about my body, and then my skin.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 58:56

I'm just Yeah, I mean, I'm struck by even just like the last like hour or so that I've gotten with you knowing your story, just like the arc is like wild. And I'm thinking back to like, little you, who was like, a Tom girl, like you were creating your own language like you knew then and like, I'm just saying, like, how cool.

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 59:14

That's where I am now is exactly where I started. Yes, really took this whole wave. And really language, I think was the basis of it. I just needed the words, and the exposure to what those words meant to figure out what I needed. And I think that's something I'm very excited to see what this generation, how they grow up. And when they get to tell their stories of figuring out themselves because they have so much more exposure than I did. And again, saying that as someone who graduate from high school five years ago, I was one of the only people doing anything non binary. Honestly, any of my general knowledge before the Billy Porter see the guy on this before all of that and to now have like, where we've come I'm in five years through honestly, the Trump presidency and where we are now. I'm like, I just I can't even imagine.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 1:00:06

Yeah, I'm really curious to what happens next with all this. Well, sob and I'm so grateful for you and for you coming on to share your story I like yeah, I just feel so appreciative in this moment. And I've like so many more questions that like I want to know more, but we'll put a pin in that for another time. But if folks who are listening want to connect with you want to follow what you're up to, like what's a good way to get in touch?

S

Saawan Tiwari (they/them) 1:00:29

Well, my Instagram @saawantiwari. it's going to probably the best place to find like the most things about me my website as like a designer, and stuff is also there.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 1:00:49

Thank you so much. Hey, thanks for joining us for today's conversation. Feel free to head on over to [www.secondadolescencepod.com](http://www.secondadolescencepod.com) for show notes and more then you can connect further by following the show on Instagram @secondadolescencepod. If you're interested in being a future guests on the show, and you want to come on and share about your own second adolescence, visit [secondadolescencepod.com/beaguest](http://secondadolescencepod.com/beaguest) 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 and your day, go on out there and keep doing things that would make younger you absolutely thrilled. That is what it's all about. All right. Take good care.

