

Ep. 22: Second Adolescence w/ Jose Morales (he/him)

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SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Jose Morales (he/him)

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 00:09

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 guest Jose Morales. Jose shares with us his experience growing up in a very religious home and context that ended up being quite oppressive to him and his budding queerness. He shares about having an upbringing that was marked by a lot of people policing his masculinity and his identity, having the experience of being told who he was and who he should not be before he himself had a chance to figure all this out. He then goes on to share about how all of this influenced the rest of his adolescence and what his own path to finding what he experiences now, as queer liberation has been, I really enjoyed getting to speak with Jose and hear his story. And I'm so grateful that he wants to invite you all into it too. And as with each episode of the second adolescence podcast, I want to invite you as a listener to listen with open curiosity, knowing that each of our stories are different and unique might hear some guests share things that really differ from your experience, whereas you might hear other things shared 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](https://secondadolescence.pod.com) for shownotes, and more where you can connect with the show on Instagram at [second adolescence pod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). All right. Welcome to the conversation. Thank you so much for being here. Welcome to Second Adolescence, I'm really curious and excited to learn about you and your story. And I'm so appreciative that you wanted to come on and contribute to this collective work. And so I guess before going anywhere, let's first start to give the listeners a little context to who the person is behind the voice. I like to invite people in your industry give a little mini introduction, just to kind of set the stage.

J Jose Morales (he/him) 02:16

My name is Jose, I grew up in Texas and graduated from LSU have a degree in English rhetoric. I'm 27 years old. I'm a Sagittarius, and I work for the post office, my mail carrier.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 02:32

Awesome. We love the post office. Awesome. Awesome. Okay, I want to dive into a lot of these parts of your experience that I'm curious about. But a first place I want to start is why did you want to come on to the show to share your story?

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 02:44

Well, I think it's important for more core stories to be spoken and to be heard and recorded somewhere. Because you know, if no one else in our community wants to record something like this, it's not like the straight community or people outside of it will do it. And I kind of feel like it's best to do it amongst people that are also in the queer world, if that makes sense. Totally. And yeah, I just think it's important for us to just keep having something for the younger people to look forward to. Because I know when I was younger, there was always a thought in my head like, well, when I'm older, hopefully I can XYZ you know, when I'm older. So that's kind of why I wanted to do this because it really resonated with me because I do notice a very stark contrast before my life as a young closeted gay child going after as a barely coming out adult.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:28

Totally. I mean, yeah, that contrast I think so many of us can relate to. And so I'm really curious to hear about your experience with that. And so going into your story, what is the beginning of your story? Where did you grow up? What was childhood, like, let's start there.

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 03:42

Well, I grew up in a really big family, not the most wealthy of people. But we definitely did come together get by do what we got to do. And growing up in a big family definitely made you have a larger personality, because you're growing up with other people who are also dealing with who knows what they're dealing with. And that was kind of lucky to grow up closer to my age. So I was able to be somewhat socialized into the world. And one thing I noticed about growing up was a lot of people would tell me who I was before I knew who I was, and little things from, why don't you talk like that, or, Oh, don't move your hands like that. Don't walk like that. Don't do this. Don't don't like I remember being told a lot of don'ts when I was little and it dealt particularly with behaving as a boy or something along those realms. Like a really key thing I remember I thought that was kind of hilarious that I'm pretty sure my mom kind of figured like, okay, my son's different was, we were watching Jerry Springer one time when I was like five or six. I was home from school. I was sick. Because I remember I was drinking Sprite, you know, which is like a staple in the Latino home for six Dometic. And they were doing an episode on trans women. And I was like, oh, man, those ladies are pretty and they might be out. My mom started laughing. They're like, those are not ladies. There's a man I was like, Oh, well, those are some pretty men. Like, it's not like I didn't think about it. It just came like straight out, you know? Yeah. And I'm just like, it's not like I was I was Oh, you must have been programmed to do that or something like cuz I spent most of my time with my family. And you know, we would go to church a lot. So I just kind of felt like, my sheltered background, despite all that, I still was a homosexual, you know, seeing all the other people dealing, I guess, like

being normal, or like all my uncles and Theo's having girlfriends, stuff like that, like, as a young child, I remember not necessarily caring for that, and not understanding what was even going on with that. So as I got older, looking back, when people would tell me certain things about myself, it didn't click to me like, oh, they were calling me gay until much later. And I don't know if people realize that they're doing that to some queer kids. It's like, Y'all want to talk about, oh, there's this agenda with gay people, the queer community, they have an agenda agenda. But for me as a queer chart, when I look back, it was a bunch of heterosexual is telling me that I was already gay, before I even had the chance to figure it out. Think about and do it in a healthy way. And it was me being told, Don't do that. Because you're going to be gay. Oh, don't do that. That's what gay people have stuff like that. And I was just like, What do you mean, gay? What is even gay? What are you talking about?

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 06:04

Right. Yeah, this sounds like this started at a very young age. For you that being kind of told, like, Don't do this. Don't do that. Was this happening both inside the home and like, outside the home? Who are these people?

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 06:15

More definitely wasn't part of the home. Yeah, it was. It was it was some siblings. It was some of the older people in my family, like, another instead of this was before I guess I had cognisance. But my mom told me like, yeah, your dad was freaking out. When I first was getting potty trained. They bought me red color. underwears. And they're like, oh, no, don't buy that. You're gonna make them gay. I'm like, what, like, hearing stuff like that was just kind of like y'all really were, I guess, clearly homophobic. And I internalized that at a young age, because I noticed there was a point, when I went into middle school around seventh grade, I started to act more straight, or as we would say, more Butch. And I noticed it was somewhat easier for me. And I always thought I was kind of curious too, because, at first, I really didn't have any much friends, I would always hang out with the girls. And you know, I was cool with them. And I would always talk with the chick students. And I just think it along with the boys when I was a young child. And that's just what it was. And oh, go play outside. You're supposed to be with the boys. Why do you like being inside you to clean your to meet? I was like, what?

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 07:11

Gosh, I mean, just like on that point, you shared about how, when you were kind of in early adolescence, starting to bring more Butch energy kind of perform in this kind of boys, quote, unquote, should be or what you thought you should be as a boy, you got treated better it sounds like, which is a confusing thing for a young queer person who is getting this feedback from people on the outside that Oh, when you are something other than who you are, it's okay. And ah, what was that like for you at that point, when you were trying to perform more of that traditional masculinity, and kind of noticing a difference in how people were treating you versus before that time when you were growing up? What was that like?

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 07:53

I feel conflicted about it. Because in a way, I was lucky, because I was able to pull it off, if you will, yeah. Right. It wasn't hard for people to believe it for me. And it wasn't till later, when like, I wasn't getting girlfriends I wasn't dating around and stuff like people started maybe like later on in my high school, brown people started questioning it. But I also hung out with someone else who was also in the closet, he looked masculine, but when he spoken to mannerisms, you would classify that maybe as not straight per se, you know. So I also notice how that was because there was more rumors about him than they were, if any about me, because like, I played football, and, you know, so that was also something I powerlifting. So I did that too. And oh, I tried to do sports. And I did have a girlfriend because I do identify as bisexual. You know, I did have a girlfriend, but at the same time, that's also kind of solidified the fact like, I like her. Yes, I do get, you know, sexual interior, or whatever it may be. But I still catch myself wanting to be with a guy. So I knew that the only thing that bothered me was like me recognizing that, oh, I'm supposed to want to be with her more, or something like that.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 08:58

Totally. Right. I mean, yeah. And it sounds like, despite kind of that internal struggle, there's a certain privilege for some of us who are able to kind of pass us straight and to kind of hide queerness though, it's, of course, painful and complicated. And it's not a healthy thing for our younger selves to do. But not every young queer person has the ability to pass and to hide their nests if they need to. And so yeah, that's very real.

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 09:22

And for me, especially in the type of household I grew up in, like, once that started happening, you know, it was easier to be at home, I could just notice a general more sense of chill, if you will. It was very eye opening. And I wanted to say that I mentioned my friend earlier, I definitely would always question those people and be like, Well, why do you care? But what's it to you? Why don't you ask him yourself? Because people would ask, I would always make sure to because I knew I had that passing privilege. I will try to use it to my advantage and be like, leave the dude alone. What does it matter to you? And I was very adamant about being that way towards people that I knew were small minded.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 09:55

So at that time, how were you making sense of your identity at that time, were you feeling like okay, yeah, I feel like I am by or is that a later insight that came to you? Like, how were you, at that age thinking about these feelings that you were having?

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 10:09

Honestly, I noticed my sexuality for sure. Between fourth and fifth grade, because at fourth grade, I had a girlfriend. And then I was like, Okay, I knew I did have an attraction to the opposite sex. I knew that was for sure. But I just also felt something was off. And along with, you know, the people telling me something was off that I couldn't get. And it wasn't until fifth grade when a new student came to class. And he came to class and I just was like, I was like,

dang, he's funding, then he's kind of tearing. And I was like, Wait, why am I saying this? Hold on, I had to like, be like, wait, I'm not supposed to be saying this. This is against God, this isn't right. I'm gonna go to hell. Like that. The moment I realized, like, Fuck, I'm different. And it was like, damn, I was like, what? 10 These thoughts? Were already coming into my head. And I'm just like, dang it. Because everyone else thinking like this? Is it just mean? Like, then you don't go ask people that, you know, and it's really not something you talk about. And at the time I was growing up, I mean, this is around 2005 ish, being queer. And being gay was just like there was a limited types of gays people were exposed to on the media. So there was already that to deal with and then there really wasn't much more beyond that, you know, you couldn't be a gay child. You know what I mean? Like, that wasn't how it was. And it's not that long ago, that the world was in our in our own country that was still like that.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 11:27

Totally. Absolutely. And yeah, sounds like for you, you were being hit both in your kind of the micro culture of like your family and the community within which you grew up. You were getting this anti queerness messaging, and then also kind of Yeah, at the time, you were seeing a real limited, greater culture around queerness. And so both of that added together to make that moment for little 10 year old you to have such a struggle be like, oh, gosh, what does this mean? This isn't okay. Yeah, what's it like in this moment to look back at that little 10 year old you feeling that way?

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 11:58

I just, like it's a struggle, you're going to eventually conquer. So it's a beautiful thing in a way. So I will tell them that. And one thing about me was, I wasn't a timid person. And I wasn't quiet. I know, even despite having all this going on, I'm still somewhat bold, and I've been described as opposed person, by my sister, you're a boat man. And she was scolding me. But that was the positive I took out of it. And I've realized that from a young age two, because as you like I said, it was very apparent, people thought I was different. And my presence made people react. So I had to control it as well, because I was like, I'm either gonna let these people control the situation, or I'm gonna take control of it myself. So whether that may be sarcastic comebacks, or, you know, quick witted insults. You know, I'm gonna get through this. So I had to create defense mechanisms to get through my life, especially before the Blitz period before I was able to start passing and all that as well, you know, so, thinking back, I'm just remembering there was a buildup of becoming that person as well. And, you know, sure, all, young, you know, gay queer, does mean vitamins that are pure, everyone that identifies with that can resonate with having to find defense mechanisms just to get through your childhood, and different types because of something a, you're still not aware of why they're coming for you, because you're like, most of us don't even know what gay is until a little bit later. There's some that do no earlier, but from where I was from the community I came from, and we didn't learn about gay or anything like that. So much older age.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 13:26

Okay, so then, like, what did the rest of your teenage hood look like kind of going from first kind of leaned more into that Butch period? What was the rest of that chapter of your life like?

J Jose Morales (he/him) 13:37

around that time, I was getting ready for college, and I knew I had to get out of it, you know, leave home. By that point, I knew I needed to go explore my sexuality, I need to go explore socially, I need to go into the world. There was things I knew I just needed to get done to make me evolve as a person.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 13:55

So that was a thought when you were leaving high school, like, I want to go explore, like, particularly your sexuality, like that was one of the components you were really aware of?

J Jose Morales (he/him) 14:02

Definitely.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 14:03

tell me like, What was that mindset? As you were preparing to kind of make that leap from high school and thinking about queerness? Yeah, what was going on for you there,

J Jose Morales (he/him) 14:10

it felt like I'm gonna have a lot more of my real first, you know, like, I'm gonna have my first real kiss. I didn't start to maybe close to a year into college is when I did it. But I was just thinking of all the first because at this point, I still wasn't virgin. And I consider I lost my virginity twice, you know, heterosexual wise, and homosexual. But both of that happened in college. So high school really was me just planning because even though I had to go from high school, both of our parents were strict, and you know, whenever the ultimate step, whatever you want to call it, but pretty much I just remember high school being me getting very good grades, trying to find scholarships, applying for colleges, knowing that there's life after high school, and that if I want to live my true self or any part of it that I know I need to leave home, so that I spent those four years focusing on that. And I remember I just needed one class. I stayed up all night studying for that class. I had to study the entire semester in like a night and a half. And I took a test on it. And I passed and I still graduated. And it was an administrative screw up because they were like always, we thought you have to cry, but you did it. And I'm like, bro, I'm not about to take high school all over again for that. GTFO. So I was determined still am. That's where I was in high school. I need to go out explore myself. Yeah, have you figured stuff out?

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 15:24

But you'd like we're waiting and you knew Okay, on the other side of this move. Once I get out. I'm gonna go for it. And then yeah, so like, what did that look like in that next chapter being

able to start going for it and to start exploring queerness and what was that like?

J Jose Morales (he/him) 15:38

I mean, I don't know how to explain it in a way because I kind of wish I would have had a guide or I wish I would have had someone to, you know, explain at least some ways to explore your sexuality because I really didn't. I dumped my girlfriend a first year after college because I just, I didn't want to be with her and dragging her along with me exploring my sexuality, you know, like, that's something I need to do on my own. So, I mean, honestly, I just started to date. And then I started to sleep around. If I'm being honest, yeah, totally.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 16:06

So like, How did that start? How did you find these people to date and to kind of have these experiences with what did that look like?

J Jose Morales (he/him) 16:12

For me? That was like on Tinder on Grindr and gruff. Yeah.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 16:16

And what do you remember when you were setting up those profiles for the first time? Like, was that an exciting thing? Was it scary, was it it was exciting?

J Jose Morales (he/him) 16:26

it was scary. It was nerve racking. I was like, What am I gonna put, and it's just even on those apps, at the time, there was a very strong culture of, we want you to be gave a masculine. And that was something I noticed on those apps after being on them was, it's like, everybody wanted to be gay, but not gay. And I'm like, bruh, that'll make no sense to me. And it definitely was a lot at first, a lot of my experiences were with somewhat older guys. And it wasn't till later on, I started experimenting with guys my age. And I'm not just served because guys, my age, were also just coming out as well. And then after being at LSU, for a while, like, by the time I was a junior, you can tell that, oh, there's more gay people here because you know, more people are coming in, and it's around what 2014 15 coming out was kind of like a thing to do, which I was very iffy about, because I came out when I was 22. I think that was what 2015 or 2016. And it was a relief and burden off my shoulders to do it. I like I said, like one of the stark contrasts. That's one of them, too, when I came out, because it's like, you know what they know. So now I could just be more gay. Like, I was like, I don't gotta really hide nothing, no more like, they know it. So it's like, now I can just show them that. Okay, well, this is about House gay as I'll probably get for at least that's what I was thinking. And that moment was also pivotal for me. Because those two moments, I came up to my mom over text message because I was manipulated by one of my ex boyfriends to do it. And that's another thing as a gay man, I dealt with toxic relationships, because it's a convoluted sense of a lot of things that makes you

deal with toxic relationships, that's for sure. But I definitely know that there was a lot of media that portrayed gay life that always ends in misery. And then the whole religious background, part of me thought like, I'm gay, so there's gonna be something wrong. That's what I would think.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 18:08

Yeah. So that then led you to kind of feeling even unconsciously Okay, being in a toxic relationship situation.

J Jose Morales (he/him) 18:14

Yeah. And he was like, to cut me off because I came out to my parents for you. I was like, Well, I didn't ask you to do that. But at the same time, part of me was like, I do want to come out because I'm tired of lying. I'm tired of saying this is my friend or I was just tired of it. I'm like, I don't want to keep lying to them. And I wish I would have been stronger and stood my ground and did it much later. Which, in a way, I did do it on my terms, eventually. And I did that. Because this was over text Alpha party, meaning was like, let me send a little shock before I talk to them in person so they can know what's coming. But I felt like my parents would have preferred that anyways.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 18:49

And how long after that text? Was that in person conversation?

J Jose Morales (he/him) 18:53

Like four or five months?

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 18:54

Okay. Wow. What was that like in between for you before you had the conversation, but after the text had happened?

J Jose Morales (he/him) 19:00

I know my Tia, I was like, You should choose that's wrong for you to do you should not have told your mom like that. You should have told her in person. And I'm like, Who are you to tell me how to come out to my mom. I'm like, I'm still just trying to control my life. Because again, this is just these are people I grew up with, in the sense because I did it. It was very hard to do something like that, especially when I kind of felt like too many cooks in the kitchen type of stuff was that moment for me. I'm like, You're not my parent. And this doesn't really concern here to be honest. And my mom's just I noticed he did become a little more distant. She did say I love you less that for sure happened. I noticed that and everyone had to turn around. I'm like,

Well, I guess she's shocked or something. And then whenever I got to spoke to them in person, it was right after I graduated because I knew that was my plan to like, luckily again, I was blessed to be able to follow my quote unquote life plan on when I wanted to deal with this. And I was like, I don't want to tell them until I'm graduated because I know they're not gonna want to support me out here in college if they know that I'm, you know, conducting myself in homosexual activity.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 19:58

Okay, yeah, that was a really real reality....

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 20:03

I laughed it off. But at the time, your 19 year old Jose very was like, Oh no, I can't let my parents fight about they're gonna stop sending me money. You're they're gonna let me just be out here on my own because they think that because I want to make grown decisions and live a lifestyle like, that's whatever. And there was definitely a very looming thing over me my entire college career up until graduation at that point I was being more open and friendly amongst the people. I was friends with that college because even in college, I wasn't fully out until like, my sophomore junior year.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 20:36

Yeah, what did that look like kind of coming out at college, to the people around you there.

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 20:40

I was very adamant about not making a whole big oh, I need to talk to I think you need to know that I'm gay. You know, I was like, This is my life. And I'm just gonna live it how I want to if you see me with a guy and you want to ask something asked if you don't, okay, I don't owe anyone an explanation for how I'm living. That was my attitude in college, about being gay. And I'm gonna just do it. Unapologetically. I'm gonna have a guy come over. Yeah, that was my friend. Okay, I'm gonna pop him on. I don't care. And that's what's gonna happen. Because I mean, they were doing that with chicks, you know? So I'm like, What's the difference if I do it with my sexual partners, because I had roommates in college. And that's the good thing about my friends was, it was just like a silent thing. They were like, well, we kind of knew, but we didn't care. I was like, okay, so people were definitely more accepting in college, even though I was in South Louisiana. Baton Rouge is very progressive for a place. I will say that.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 21:29

Yeah, I was curious about that about like, kind of the greater culture within LSU and around LSU, around queerness. Okay, it sounds like it was pretty progressive.

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 21:38

It was a big queer community. By the time I was graduating, they were doing drag shows in the union, like, it's very queer positive there. And that's what kind of helped me come out to you know, I made a lot of friends that were very formative in this identity that I was able to find, like, I was lucky enough to meet people that were living, unapologetically, as well. And just were doing it, you know, their struggle was theirs, and they made it beautiful. And that's something I learned about it. They're like, Yeah, we're gonna be queer. But at the end of the day, you know, we can make it where we want to make it. And that's the beautiful thing about our identity. So I really want to thank those friends that I had out there, that definitely helped me become more like, I guess shamelessly proud of being who I am, in a way. Because that's how they were living. And I was just like, damn, y'all know, like, I don't know, they just put like something with him was clicking, that I'm like, I need that to click with me now. And as a young 21 year old, like meeting people like that it, it was cool. The 824 film experience, if you will.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 22:39

I mean, yeah, like you're speaking to like, it's a common theme I hear on the show with other guests in their story is like such a power when you can find a community of people who help you put down your walls and really feel more ability to find yourself and be yourself and express yourself. And it sounds like you found that in college, both it sounds like you were getting some support from non queer friends, but also from this queer community that you were discovering and being a part of. That's fantastic. Totally. So then kind of after college, there's a conversation about coming out. And then what happens from then on at that point,

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 23:14

that was in the car ride back, and I just had to explain some of that. For sure. I remember telling my parents I'm like, I'm still got son, I've always been a son. I'm the same Jose, I just, I've always been kind of gay, too. That's just what it is. Like, I'm not different. I'm not this crazy, different type of person. Like, I'm like, I've always been this way. But I even hate that I had to speak it like that, you know, it's a way that I'm being like it just making myself palatable for them. You know, overall, that's what I summed up the whole being masculine and being presentable. It's like you're being palatable for the heterosexual society when they're never palatable for us. And they're actively some of the heterosexual community is actively out there trying to destroy us. So yeah, but again, this is just like a younger whole day, fresh out of college, very open minded, very, you know, people could change and I was very like that, and I'm much more cynical. Now. I still got that light going, though. Don't get me wrong. But after a few years of being out of college, you realize some people just aren't going to be open to certain things. And it's just too foreign to them for some reason. And it's very choosing to make it be that way to them. Because that's, I feel like that's ultimately what it is. Because at the end of the day, who another person falling in love with really isn't your business.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 24:30

Yeah. Sounds like you've had to maybe encounter some of those types of folks in the years post coming out these folks who you're realizing oh, well, yeah, these people can't change.

J Jose Morales (he/him) 24:40

Yes, definitely. Their family members. Like yes, definitely. Yeah,

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 24:45

I mean, in that, okay, so that's something that happens for a lot of folks, too, is like what do we do when we're at this point when people who are close people in our lives we have these relationships with their family members or our family, friends, people who have been there then and we feel this tie to, but what do we do when they are not? People who can fully see and celebrate our identity? And that's a tricky thing that people have to navigate. What did that look like for you? For some folks that involves like, yeah, having to like, put up some boundaries. And maybe there's a distancing for other folks, it's, they have to kind of sum otherwise negotiate how to maintain these relationships, if they choose to do that, or close them off, what did that look like for you,

J Jose Morales (he/him) 25:26

I didn't close off my relationships with my family, they were like that, I just always remind them that and it's something that I am going to stop doing eventually, too, because I'm not this exhaustive source of, you know, queer identity politics person, at the end of the day, you need to either accept someone or don't. And a lot of times they see this, my friend members for the straight up, they're like, Well, I'm gonna love you. And they're always you know, I'm always loving or whatever, but I just won't accept the sin, I won't accept that. That's what they say. Or have said, and I'm at the point where I'm like, Can I invite my boyfriend to family functions? Do I need to say, hey, like, I'm gonna bring my boyfriend is that okay? Like, that's where I'm kind of getting to, to gauge exactly. Well, where are they really on me being gay, because I have a cousin to and she has a girlfriend, they've been together for seven years as well. And it's like, they're opening up more to it. Because I've always been an open person, I've always been an understanding person at such a young age. So I'm watching them somewhat evolve, I guess, because I don't want to completely not give no credit to these people. Because I didn't want to come out before, like when I was a young child, because for sure back then they would have sent me to a camp or they would have just shot me away somewhere for sure. Because they did it to some of my cousins, and not even be engaged as being for disruptive. So that's why I waited as long as I did. And part of me knew like, eventually, they're going to change because they weren't always Christian, you know, they just got into this religion, some of its going to have to wear off and it did, thankfully. And it's more Don't Ask, Don't Tell. We're at that phase right now.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 27:00

What is that like for you right now to be at this phase?

J Jose Morales (he/him) 27:03

for me? I don't like it. Because I like talking about my boyfriend. And I like seeing stuff that he

for me? I don't like it. Because I like talking about my boyfriend. And I like seeing stuff that he does, he makes me happy. I posted him on Facebook for the very first time, I didn't even want to see who didn't like it out of my family. But a lot of people did like it. And a lot of my other cousins are very supportive of me, like the younger people in our family, for the most part are supportive of me. Yeah. And so I'm lucky enough and blessed enough to have that.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 27:26

How did that feel? Like, What was the decision to post the photo? And what was it like to do?

J Jose Morales (he/him) 27:31

that also was an accident.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 27:33

Yeah? Tell me

J Jose Morales (he/him) 27:34

Yes, it was my clumsiness, because I had just bought a new phone. And for some reason, I synced my Facebook and Instagram account. So I didn't know that my posts from Instagram were being posted on Facebook. And on Instagram, I'm a little more radical. But at that I'm like, Man, fuck it, it's on Facebook, it's gonna be on Facebook. And I was like, I'm not ashamed of this. And I do want my family to know, you know. So I feel like, again, you know, the initial shock wave, and let them see that, um, no, because I do want them to know, I want it to be in their face sometimes, because they were very in my face with their Christianity, despite it not working for me eventually. And despite me not just not resonating with it anymore, they were still in my face about and I'm just like, like, that's why I left that up. I was like, I'm not gonna take it down. Because if I take it down, it's going to show them that I'm ashamed. And I'm not ashamed of who I'm with. I'm very lovable to who I'm with. And I'm happy and proud to have found that love and to have healed beyond you know, dealing with toxic as people and letting myself know that I do deserve better in this world. And despite whatever programming I went through, before college, now's the time for me to start living for myself, because I gave them 18 years in my life, and I'm not gonna give them any more.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 28:43

I mean, just like pause like that is that is so powerful, everything you just shared. I feel so affected by that. What does it feel like just to kind of hear yourself say that out loud,

J Jose Morales (he/him) 28:52

it feels empowering and beautiful. And just relief, like, I do believe in somewhat of affirmations and you know, the whole idea of manifestations. And if you say something enough and you put

and you know, the whole idea of manifestations. And if you say something enough, and you put actions behind it, it will happen. And after having to, you know, cry my tears to my parents about this is who I am. And after having to like actually live that way. While being at home. It definitely was kind of a moment of like, What are y'all gonna do? Like I'm paying bills. I'm doing what I got to do. I'm an adult. But again, I'm being 22 years old, 23 years old, little younger than what I am now, you're a lot more pushing the boundaries with your parents to forge yourself because at the end of the day, they are always going to have this idea of who you are, who they thought you were.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 29:37

And it was it right after college that you returned home. Like I'm curious about that shift from being an LSU where you're able to kind of have more of this independence, really find yourself Be yourself and have that validated by the community there and then shifting in to being immersed in family life again, was that right? Did you go right home after college or what happened then

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 29:57

I sure did, I went right home after college. Yeah,

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 30:00

so yeah. How was that to kind of make shift again?

J

Jose Morales (he/him) 30:03

Yeah, it was intense. It was one of the last conversations I had was was my dad and I just straight up was like, I don't know if you understand, but I imagine being uncomfortable in your own home, because that's how I feel. And I just left them with that. I was crying. I said all this other shit, too. But that was the last thing I said in the conversation, I think he was like, because after that stuff, this started to shift, you know. And that's why like, I was glad that I did have some what have receptive parents to what was going on with me. Because he could have easily said, Get the hell out of my house. But in true of my family fashion, there was a lot of passive aggressive type of shit. But as of now, it's definitely different. I mean, the pandemic happened two years after I got out, I got out in 2018 of December, I got a job at the airport for 2019. I worked for a year and in the pandemic happened, right? Gosh, that's what my life was, like, I got stuck at home, you know, I didn't even get to start with I mean, of course, oh, you could get all this online stuff. There's all this other things gonna do blah, blah. And I'm like, okay, yeah, that's true. And as a rhetoric major, who studied English, there is a lot of other things I could have done. But it's some of those things that are like, you know, self starters, you gotta make a portfolio you got to build you got to put work into it before you get the work. So that's something that takes time. And 2020 was definitely rough. Because you know, I wasn't working, the pandemic checks were hating though, that's what kept me afloat here. And I think it was 2021 that I was able to find the post office and those two middle years they're in a pandemic are just kind of very weird. I think maybe that's when the shift started happening

with them, and then opening and being like, hey, he's gay. Oh, well, it is what it is like, it's his life. Like, which I'm glad they're like that. I just wish they wouldn't have the end of like, I just don't want them to go to hell type of almost there. It's like they're all there.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 31:52

Yeah. And yeah, how do you because it sounds like you've done a ton of work in like, being able to, like not let that in as much as it would before. I mean, it's got to be still painful and hard. And I can't imagine it's still easy and doesn't affect you. But like, what's worked for you, in this process of like, protecting yourself protecting your queerness protecting kind of what you know, to be true, and not letting that shame in?

J Jose Morales (he/him) 32:18

Honestly, I really don't know, I'm not sure I dealt with it even in an unhealthy way to be honest, because I would cry about it sometimes. And I would just let it all out. I wouldn't just bottle it all up, I push all those thoughts. I'm like, No, we're not thinking about this right now. No, no, no. And I was like, Whoa, find a moment to release all this. And, you know, periodically, every so often, I just would have a nice good cry about not being accepted. And maybe my family never ever wanting to see me in my future family. If I have one or my future husband, I had to just cry about it. And I hate that I did that. Because sometimes I guess it is powerful to cry, because ultimately, I let it out. I don't know, I'm not a therapist, so I'm not going to recommend it. You know, but it definitely did help me. And it was the process I had to do. And talking with my friends. Of course, I didn't deal with this alone. That's a key key key thing I should definitely throw in there. don't deal with it. If you have friends that are supportive and talk to you about it, talk to them. And, and definitely because they will definitely help you with it. Like my best friend, she was always open about queerness she had a queer cousin and who was kind of going through the same thing I was going through, but she was her cousin was four or five years older than I was. So I kind of had something to look at, like, I guess a rough sketch of a guide like, oh, well, you know, this is what she was dealing with. And she's going through that, like, I just know that I had other types of resources that maybe not we're definitely publicly created by our health institution or something, but the community you have definitely can keep you alive. And I mean that in the mental and physical way.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 33:46

Absolutely. Yeah. Again, sounds like your community has been such a resource at LSU kind of afterwards. Yeah. And sounds like within this community within these friendships and relationships. And now it sounds like kind of waiting your partnership so much healing can happen and so much growth can happen and liberation can happen like anything else, to share kind of framing on this concept of second adolescence kind of really being this life phase that happens after coming out. Oftentimes involving a lot of healing and also a lot of kind of building of parts of ourselves that weren't able to be fully out and expressed in our own adolescence like anything else come to mind about what has been a part of your journey there.

J Jose Morales (he/him) 34:26

Honestly, it's just been really beautiful to do it fully and just do it without being scared of what they might say like I've been lucky enough to be in an environment where I can have colored hair and yeah, yeah gay people have color hair so what because I still come off as masculine and straight to some people in the general public so that's why I do color my hair sometimes I put on earrings I do try to you know, do stuff that if you are more feminine, you will do not because I want to be all like in spite of the heterosexual culture. A I like it. It looks good on me. I'm doing it for myself. If you think it's gay, that's on you. You're thinking about gay shit. So what does that say about you like I like to flip it on people. but even still today, because ultimately what I'm doing in my life, if I'm not hurting you, if I'm not causing you any harm financially or physically, don't bother me, that's simple as that. That should be the rules for today in this crappy capitalist world, like if I ain't bothering you physically or financially stay out of my life, but we have our government who's doing both. And that's a whole nother can of worms. But yeah, being fully queer, I kind of also believe is being a somewhat political. And that's a concept that some people don't want to grasp. But our sexuality started as a riot against the police. So we just got to always remember that, like, at the end of the day, we have always had to fight for who we're going to be seeing as and who we want to be seen as, so that if you have the opportunity to do it, do it because you don't know what younger person is looking at you. And thinking like, there's no life after this man, I gotta be closeted this whole time, I'm gonna have to lie about that I'm gonna have to live a second life like those people that plan that type of stuff. But if you live your life out fully, as a queer adult, now, you got to be that representation that a you needed, and the representation that's needed for amongst these other young queer kids that are also confused and going through this stuff. And I feel like our stories aren't complete guidelines on how to live, but their suggestions on what you might want to do in a situation from someone who's been through it. So I just want to make that clear as well, like everything I did, and stuff, you can take it as a suggestion. And that's all because it got me to this point, it got me to 27 years of age, you know, thank you, mother, Gaia, I appreciate her for getting me through life and whatever coping mechanisms are used. And if you find them helpful, by all means, take them because community, at the end of the day, we do got to create our own resources in some areas. And I really do appreciate that this podcast is its own existence, because it's a form of resource for a lot of people who can't openly go to private events, who can't openly date who they want to date, they could do this in the comfort of their own space. And that's why I was adamant about not coming out because I came from a place where I couldn't. And I know there's a lot of people that couldn't either, and it's okay for us to exist proudly and quietly within ourselves for a moment until you know, we can do it openly.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 37:11

That's a Gosh, and yeah, I mean, I'm thinking, even just this image of you kind of walking around now. And yeah, what's your colored hair with the earrings like, you know, you still have the ability to, quote unquote, pass as straight, if you're wanting to, I'm thinking back to kind of you in middle school, who was trying so hard to pass a straight and kind of have to use that as a form of protection. And just to get by, and now kind of, you're on this other side of that, where you're really bringing your queerness out, taking up space with it, really trying to be seen and be something that other queer youth around you might be able to see, okay, great. I have this, I have this example of someone out there, okay, great. Like, I just think there's just such power in as you're speaking to just us existing, if we feel able to not hiding away, taking up space being out there, just like you're doing and I just feel like I'm gonna have to re listen to this conversation. Like many times, there are so many gems that you shared, and so much

power and so much and so much of your statements. So I just want to just take a moment just to say, Gosh, I so appreciate you coming on here to contribute to this work to share your experience. Because yeah, we all have different, unique experiences. But as you're speaking to us offering our stories for other queer folks listening for particularly for younger queer folks are really all ages of other people who are on their own healing journeys. It's so helpful to hear what other people have done and to not feel alone to get ideas. I'm feeling just really inspired from listening to you. So thank you so much for coming on.

J Jose Morales (he/him) 38:40

Thank you, that means so much to me. I'm like that truly did that that made my day that she said that. And I'm grateful that you created a platform for us, again, to speak on these type of topics and these type of ideas that is such a, you know, genuine chill and just not typical way. I mean, yet to podcasts, and a lot of people pockets and stuff, but like, I just feel like there's representation of coronations going on that's a little hype arised and we need to tone it back and be like, come on this live, you know, get back to the realness of it. And the real struggle, because it's not always pretty.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 39:11

Yeah, there's challenged their struggle. Totally, we gotta acknowledge that too. Yep.

J Jose Morales (he/him) 39:15

But I want to just thank you as well, because I've never really verbalized all this stuff before. And me saying it again, it just relieved me to be like, you're strong enough to conquer all this, you know, you can keep on truckin.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 39:27

Oh, awesome, totally. finding places to tell our stories is so empowering and so helpful. And whether that's yeah, on a podcast, whether it's just to a friend, whether that's just writing it out in a journal, like, engaging with our stories is so healing. There's so much growth that happens there. And it's so affirming and I'm so glad you had that experience because I even just as a witness to your experience, I'm feeling like energized and empowered and less alone in my own ways. So I'm going to stop gushing. But again, thank you so much for coming on to share your story and before we kind of look at winding down was there anything else that went tended to be a part of this conversation that hasn't been said yet from your end.

J Jose Morales (he/him) 40:03

Yeah, actually, if you want to check out my Instagram at Casa_de_Jose and put the Spotify link, I have my own anchor show. So I do a podcast on anchor and me and one of my friends just talked about a little bit of everything and you know, more ideas than what's being given to you

through the media. So if you're into just you know, seeing the grander scope of life in the in our government, and just, you know, we always get in conspiracy theories as well. If you're into modge podge of things, you should check it out.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 40:36

Oh, awesome. Okay, we're definitely going to link to that. I'm sure there might be some folks who want to reach out to you and to listen to what you're doing on anchor in that show. That's awesome. Cool. Well, Jose, thank you again.

J Jose Morales (he/him) 40:46

Yeah, this was great.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 40:48

And I so appreciate you coming on and sharing your story and doing what you're doing by kind of taking up space with your podcasts and kind of by coming on and having these conversations. This is it. It's what it's about?

J Jose Morales (he/him) 40:59

Definitely.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 41:07

Hey, thanks for joining us for today's conversation. Feel free to head on over to [second adolescence.pod.com](https://secondadolescence.pod.com) For show notes and more. And you can connect further by following the show on Instagram at [second adolescence pod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod/). 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.com/be A guest](https://secondadolescence.pod.com/be-a-guest) and you can submit your interest there. Alright, that's it for me for now. Whether it's morning, afternoon or 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. Alright, take good care.