

Ep. 34: Second Adolescence w/ Lindz Amer (they/them)

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SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Lindz Amer (they/them)



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 a guest I was so excited to talk to Lindz Amer, as some of you may know Lindz is the founder and creator of Queer Kid Stuff, an entertainment company that brings LGBTQ plus and social justice media to kids and families. They also currently host the queer and gender affirming parenting podcast, Rainbow Parenting, and their book, Rainbow Parenting: Your Guide to Raising Queer Kids and Their Allies will be out in May. So be on the lookout for that. And I cannot recommend Lindz and their work enough, I have been a personal fan of theirs, gosh, for several years now. And I just feel so pumped on how much they have done to support changing the landscape for queer youth and their parents and their families. So it was just such a special treat for me personally to get to have them on. And also, I think it's gonna be a really great conversation to invite you all into because Lindz was really generous with both their own story, but also kind of the behind the scenes of what it's like to do the work they do. And gosh, Lindz was so vulnerable and so honest, and I just feel so appreciative to them for wanting to come on and be a part of this collective work and to invite you all in. And as with each episode of Second Adolescence, I 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 guests hear things that really differ from your experience, whereas others might share things 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 secondadolescencepod.com for show notes and more. Or you can follow the show on Instagram at [@secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). All right, welcome to the conversation. Thank you so much for being here welcome to Second Adolescence. I am so excited listeners know that I've been a fan of you and your work for a long time. So this is like a very cool moment for me so I know a good amount about you. But for listeners who may not be familiar with you or your work the WHO ARE YOU question or how to introduce yourself question at the beginning of an interview. It's kind of a silly thing to do because there's so many places to take it but just to give the listeners a mini intro and a little context to the person is behind the voice. How would you answer that?

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 02:39

Yeah, for sure. My name is Lindz, Hi, I am I use they/them pronouns. I'm queer, and trans, non binary. I'm a multi hyphenate, writer, performer, creator, activist, author, etc. I mostly make queer and LGBTQ plus and social justice work for kids and families. I do all ages stuff in at work. And I do it in a lot of different places. I'm in TV film, I'm in podcasts, I'm in books, and I do live performances so that in like lots of different spaces, and people might know me from my web series, queer kid stuff that is kind of like the biggest claim to fame. I've also got a TED Talk. I've got a book coming out, I do a lot of things. So we'll get to all that I'm sure.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:27

Totally. Yeah, I want to dive into all of it. Yeah, so Queer Kid Stuff is how I first came across you in your work, particularly when I was working in the school system and working with a lot of queer youth and families. And then I still do that in my private practice now. And so it's just been a resource that I've sent so often to people, so very pumped. And yeah, I want to hear more about your new podcast and the book you have coming out. So I'm sure we'll get there. But I guess to land kind of right here. What made you curious about this idea of Second Adolescence and wanting to come on to the show?

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 03:54

Yeah, I mean, I first of all love going on podcasts. I mean, I also host a podcast. So I hope I like going on podcast, I was talking to a friend and they recommended your podcast to me and I was like, this is such a great idea because that is so true. And like I had top surgery in January of 2020. And this past year has been a real rediscovering of myself. And also like, I don't know how into astrology stuff you are but like I'm at the back of my Saturn Return. And I've been just like going through a lot like my Saturn's in my first house, which means that like self has been a real journey this past couple of years. And I am just a completely different person than I was in 2019. And so much of that has come from I mean, I came out as queer when I was like in college mostly, but like coming into my transness coming into my neuro divergence, like all of these things have been really big growth moments over the last couple of years, especially since I ended queer kid stuff. And like, needing to kind of catch up to myself a little bit. And we can talk a lot more about queer kid stuff in a definitely is very connected to this conversation around second adolescence, because I wasn't true really ready for queer kid stuff to like, pop off in my life in the way that it did. And I have really needed to catch up in my like myself, but also in my career and like in my personal life, and I don't even think I'm like through my second adolescence. And, yeah, I'm really, really curious to talk about it, because I haven't. I mean, I don't know, I'm in therapy. And like, I do a lot of that work and stuff, especially over the last couple of years. But I think there's so much to mine there. And like getting in touch with like, my inner teen and inner tween has been, I think, like, tough for me, I had a really tough time as a teenager. And I don't talk about that too much. And it's definitely a vulnerable point for me, but like, let's do it, let's get vulnerable. Because I think that that's important in what I do, but also like, as a queer, trans person in the world. And like, we just need to tell them more of our stories, who, when we're comfortable, and I think I'm at a point in my life where I'm feeling a little more realized. And I want to talk about that.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 06:36

Well, gosh, I just feel so affected and grateful that you're wanting to invite us all into you and your story and are offering your story. And I'd love to dive into that. Because yeah, I think for so many of us younger versions of ourselves, when we look back and bring about pain can bring about just some really complex feelings now. And yet there is something that's so important in our own healing to be able to kind of find space, whether that's privately or in conversations with other people, but to go back there and kind of let that pain be seen and worked through all of it. And I also want to invite you on this conversation, feel free to kind of protect yourself in whatever way you need, if there's things that come up. So I trust your judgment with you and your own story. But

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 07:18

I hope I trust my own judgement.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 07:23

I know, I know. Let's see what comes up. But okay, I guess like I want to ask so many questions I want to ask about your work, ask about now-

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 07:29

they are connected, and I can do my best to try and connect them as much as possible.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 07:34

Okay, awesome. Well you we're starting to go back into your own personal story, I guess where did your story begin? What's kind of the context within which you were growing up?

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 07:43

Yeah, I grew up in New York City in the 90s. I was born in 91. And really grew up in New Yorker through and through white Jewish family. My parents divorced when I was young. So I've always kind of had this, like, blended family, very sis, and straight and white and like access to wealth. And I went to private school in New York, and that whole thing and felt very confined in that world, and very generally confused about who I was. And I mean, I think that like the queerness, the transness, the neuro divergence, all of that kind of like, packed together. And then also like, in a family, that we just like, really didn't talk about sex and gender and like, didn't really have a lot of like, open conversations about that. And the way that I really expressed myself and like found an escapism of that or like, just like a way to process in some small way was through theater, through performance, through music, through art, and stories. And I think that that has been incredibly influential for who I am today. And like someone who is just like, an incredibly creative person. And I think a lot of my career has been like, How can I

be a professional, creative person, and tell my story and tell my perspective, in a world in the system and an art system that does not want my perspective there? I think like figuring out myself and figuring that out and like fighting along the way, has really formed me in a lot of ways. Because I think like, it's interesting, because, you know, I was a kid who like wanted to be on Broadway. And like, be a musical theater person and like, become a like a famous actor. Like that was like very much like the goal as a young child. And I went into theater in high school, and I did like acting class. isn't all of that, but there was always something that felt not quite what I wanted it to be. And I really ended up loving new work and like developing new work and I ended up falling in love with like children's storytelling. But so much of all of that, I think was because I didn't know enough about myself to understand where I fit within those spaces. Because, I mean, like, for example, like my junior year of high school, we did the sound of music. And I was like, oh, like I want to be Maria like, that's like the lead part. Like I love singing those songs. I love Julie Andrews, I watched that movie with my mom and my sister growing up. And then I got cast as like Elsa, the Baroness and like, had to sing a Nazi song, and which like many layers of inappropriate, but like I think that my theater teacher, as a high schooler, as a teenager, clocked me as queer and like, basically queer coded me as a villain. And now I'm kind of like, as an adult in like a more realized version of myself. And I'm realizing like, oh, I wasn't right for Maria, and I still am not right for Maria. But like, the Elsa bareness part wasn't right for me either, because I'm a captain von Trapp. And like, I was just like, looking at myself, and performance. Wrong, not wrong. But like, there was like that thing that was off. Because I was looking at what existed as a mirror of myself, when really, I needed to understand myself better to project myself into that space, rather than it telling me who I was, I needed to tell that who I am. And it's taken so long. And I'm like, just kind of getting into back into acting now as like a 31 year old. And it's wild to like, revisit my like Song repertoire. And I'm like, I can sing corner of the sky, and I can kill it. And like, I would kill PIP and I would kill Jack and into the woods. And now I'm like seeing where I can bring myself to the thing. That was like my first love, right? That like started all of this. And it's just like a really beautiful kind of full circle that I'm sorry, I'm getting emotional because this is. It's it's, it's deeply personal. And like, it's just like a really interesting process to be going through right now. And like, coming back to Yeah, a second adolescence, and like, bringing that to not just like my identity and myself, but like what I love to do. And like why I do the things that I do, and like why I fight for this and like, why I'm passionate about it. And like bringing my full self to my work, which is also part of why I was excited to come on this podcast. Most of the time I just talk about my work. Right. I think the big question that I've been figuring out, as I've been understanding myself better, especially over the past year, is how do I bring my full self to this work? Because I think that's what I'm trying to do with my podcast too is like I'm a human being. I'm not just this like queer trans Mr. Rogers persona that I'm putting on the internet, that's a character. And like, I as a human, am a whole lot more than that. But also like that is something that is really important to me and is like very fulfilling in a very specific way. But like, that is not all I ever want to be in my personal life and like in who I am, but also in like who I am publicly. And that's complicated in this era of online persona that we're in. So yeah, those are a lot of questions that I'm grappling with for sure.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 14:05

Wow. Okay, there's so much in there. I want to I want to speak to

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 14:08

I do tend to ramble. So if you need to cut me off...

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 14:12

please never cut yourself off. ramblings are so important here. Because there's so much just power in what you just shared. And I'm just so what I'm left in this moment just really struck by this image of you now in your early 30s, coming back to this thing that was your love in adolescence, but because there wasn't a space for you, but space wasn't kind of presented for you to kind of be able to bring your fullness, then you're able to offer that to yourself now and like, oh, talk about like, inner adolescent healing inner child healing having these moments. How did you come back to acting now? What brought you back there? I mean, I know a lot of your work has been there's elements of performance, but how did you act and come back in this more recent way?

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 14:55

Honestly, because I missed it. I think like getting top surgery just really unlocked a lot for me. And like, it's just like been outside of like the physical healing the actual just like scars and like tissue that like is healing, there's so much that I was like numb to because I wasn't comfortable with my body for so long for so long. And I think I'm like discovering different parts of my personality. I'm like discovering who I am and how I want to be perceived on like a whole new level friends have told me that like, I've seemed lighter, they'll have more fun. Like I like I'm, I don't know, I was at like a wedding with some, like close friends from New York. And they were like, Yeah, party lenses out. And I was like, Yeah, party one comes out a little easier nowadays. And I think like, especially with the pandemic, and lockdown and quarantine, like, I mean, I've been performing and doing queer kid stuff gigs for years years now, and going all over the country doing schools and libraries, etc, etc. And, you know, during lockdown, it was all virtual like, and like that was fine. And like, I've really enjoyed those spaces, but like, I just missed performance, I missed singing I missed acting was just like a thing that I did for a really long time. And like, was always like, a little dissatisfied with like, my experience as a performer. Because like I getting into college, and I did like a theater program. And I just like never got cast and like I just like wasn't, you know, girlie fair, maj and you and like, I think it has so much less to do with like, Oh, am I talented enough to get cast. That is people just didn't know what to do with me. They didn't know how to cast me. I wasn't like a Student Theatre hotshot. I started doing kids stuff, the people who were like directing the big musicals, like didn't care about the children's Student Theatre board group. And like, I just kind of found my way to become a creative and like, I learned how to produce I learned how to stage manage, were they good at those things? Not really. But the skills and I was in the rooms and I was making stuff. And like that was important. And then I went off to grad school for a year after I graduated, and I did this like weird performance art program, which like, actually really does influence a lot of my work. If you like, understand that like lens. On my work, you're like, oh, that's like the what that like weird in your face like punch feeling that is like punching you in the face with this. But also like, there's like a little kiss at the end. And like a little ukulele too. And like, I'm doing it but like, it's fun. Totally, totally. So I at least began to open the door to like, what my artistic practice might look like. And it took all of that rejection for me to be able to grow into that and figure that out. And then I did queer kid stuff. And like, came up with this like persona and like, this whole internet thing that was such a wild ride. And now I'm kind of like, Okay, I gotta figure myself out. And I don't know, now I feel like it's just like, Finally, I've

come through a lot of that. And I feel like, yeah, the returning to performance, like it just was an itch that I felt like needed to get scratched. Again, I think it's a little bit of like, okay, now I feel like I know who I am and where I fit in that world a little bit better. And also, like, I have been performing for a long time, I have gotten better at performing. And like the acting shops have been a little rusty. So I wouldn't say my self tapes are like, voted best in the biz. But I'm like, at least like feeling like, okay, I can actually connect with material now. And it's just really satisfying. It feels like a piece of the puzzle that was missing, because I find fulfillment and so much of my work. But the performer side of it is something that like when it's not there, I feel it less than the writing because writing is always there writing, I can go in and out of loving a deadline and dreading a deadline. Like that's always going to be a part of my life and like creative expression and like the telling of my own story. But like the performance aspect of it is where I probably feel most present and like in different ways too, because I also like I teach early childhood music as like a little bit of a side gig to things like that's very divorced from queer kid stuff and like it's very much like what I do outside of that and that like feels like performance and like, feels like I mean, I'm singing for a half hour straight in front of a group of preschoolers. So there's a performance to that. But I don't know, there's something about storytelling like in your body that really just feels good. And yeah, I had missed that. And so coming back to that, it was something that I felt like I just sort of needed to do for myself. And part of that was like, you know, picking up my songbook and going through and saying, like, Okay, what do I want in my repertoire now is this person versus like, I looked at some of those old songs, and I like, this is something that I've been figuring out with, like, my singing, is that like, I have a soprano range. But do I like singing? Soprano? Absolutely not. And so I've been doing a lot of my like, own work to like, strengthen my lower chest voice and like, how does it feel good for me to sing in a tenor range, the tenor key, like, can I bump that up a little bit, so it hits my mix in a really nice way. And I'm not singing like friggin greenfinch and Lynyrd so. It's just been a real figuring out that stuff. Again, stuff that like I did in my like theater education, but like that, I'm just kind of like going back over with like, a new lens, right? Yeah.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 21:25

Totally. And like with more connection to who you are, and like, integrating your full authenticity into your artistry, like that wasn't fully there before, because there maybe wasn't as much conscious awareness of that and or space to feel safe to explore that. And yeah, like, I guess, yeah, backing up just a bit more into your story. Like, where do you see like, the beginnings of like that conscious awareness of queerness starting to show up for you? And what is that part of your journey?

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 21:51

Consciously, I, when I was a kid, there was definitely the like, oh, everyone thinks about kissing girls. And like, the confusion of like, oh, like Aladdin, so cool. I want to be him. And I also like, that's interesting, because that's a boy and like, the boy kisses the girl and like, I'm confused. So there was that, I would say, it became a lot more visceral. I mean, I identify as by like, that's like, a part of it, too, is that like, I think I've always just kind of like been attracted to all genders. And just like, didn't really know what that meant. Or how to uncover that, in a way that made sense to my brain and like, other children's brains, and you're like, in relationship with other kids. I think like, something I've been like, remembering recently is that like, I definitely want to, like hang with the boys and like, do like the quote unquote, Tomboy thing.

And I remember like, one time, like, I was like, in a conversation with a good group of boys and like, trying to like chill and be like, bro, and they like, we're talking about girls. And I like was like nodding and like doing like the, you know, the masking like neurodivergent like just like, agreeing with everyone. And everyone they like, I remember them like looking at me and being like, what? And like me not thinking that was weird, but also being like, oh, okay, something is happening here. And then I went to like a pre college theater program in the summer before my junior year of high school. And like, it was the first time I was like, on my own doing something creative with like other kids who like love the same thing I did. And I like kissed a girl for the first time playing truth or dare who's now like one of my closest friends. And I was just like, I'm gay. And I'm like, then proceeded to have like a very miserable year of like, being incredibly confused and depressed and like in love in like unrequited love with my best friend. And like, just like, not good times. And then kind of like started identifying loosely as by going into college, took some queer theory classes was like, Okay, I'm queer sexuality stuff started dating my first girlfriend use that as like leverage to come out to my family. So like, summer away thing was very formative for me too, because I also did like a grant funded summer in London, my summer before sophomore year of college, something like that. And like it was the first time where I was kind of like, I'm going to try living as a gay person and went out to like clubs in Soho because like I could have a drinking age is different there. And just started just like hanging out at gay bars and like, doing gay stuff when I wasn't like doing like, the weird research I was doing. And that's when I came back and was like, Okay, I'm gonna stop lying...

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 25:01

Wait because what was it like in those bars? Like what was it like to be away able to immerse yourself more within queerness? How do you remember feeling in those moments?

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 25:09

I felt supremely awkward.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 25:12

Yeah, totally.

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 25:14

But like it, but like, in a fine way. And like, I'm alone, I like came to this queer bar in like the middle of London alone and like, don't know anyone here, like sort of made like, weird summer bar friends and like, I would go to like dance heaven in Soho with them and like, Just Dance and like, make out. And it was just like, super weird and awkward, but also like, kind of fun and like formative. And like, I would get home at like two three in the morning. Just like there's no reason I needed to stay out that late. But just because I was like in this space, and I was like dancing and it was summer and I had no connections or obligations or responsibilities or like really people who knew me it all around me. And it was definitely very freeing because like I grew up with like my worlds very intertwined. So My stepsisters are the same age as me and my like, quote, unquote, biological sister. So we're the same age, we're in the same year, and

in the same grade in the same high school. So like, I didn't really have a lot of space away from family. And like, away from like home. While I was kind of like growing up, or at least, like, in my first adolescence, I didn't have a lot of places to explore, and just get away from what people perceived and knew about me first, like the, not even just like expectations, but just like assumptions, and like, This is who this person is. And like, I have a hard time with coming out, I have a hard time with. I mean, I've worked through this interrupting people's like, perception of me and their idea of who I am, especially at that time, because I also like didn't know a lot about who I was, and am at the time. And so like, wasn't feeling like as confident in that for sure. So back to London. So like the pre college theater program, the summer in London, these were both places where I could kind of test the waters in like a really drastic way to write, like, really go 150% on it. And like, when I got back to my life, I was like, okay, like, I don't have to, like do that huge one ad immediately, like I can pull things from that time. That felt true to me. And like basically, the decision that I made coming back from that was like, I'm gonna stop lying about myself, I'm going to just live how I want to live dress, how I want to dress, and like be in community with people and like, talk about myself in the way that I want to, without like feeling pressure to be one way or the other. And that open things up for me like, yeah, my first girlfriend coming out to my family through that, that's really when I started falling in love with like, storytelling for kids, and like taking these gender studies classes, and like asking myself like, why I do what I do, because I was in those kind of two spaces like honing my craft, and like learning about like, queer theory, and I was like, Why can't these two spaces that I'm in right now speak to each other? And I found that there was really not a lot. And I was like, Okay, maybe this is what I do. And then, you know, we wind our way up to here. And I don't remember what the question was.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 28:36

But no, that's great. That's great. And then yeah, you were speaking to the different moments of coming out, particularly, I guess, at that point in your story regarding sexuality. What do you remember, like that experience being like,

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 28:47

Yeah, I mean, I came out, like my first kind of, like, coming out moment, I think I was like, 16. And like, my friend who I was in love with, like, didn't text me back. And like, the amount of time I wanted her to. And so I was just kind of like, How can I be very dramatic, and came out to my mom, I was like, I'm bi. And she was like, I don't know what to do with that information. And I was like, yep, because I did not prepare for. So for this moment. This was not the right reason to do this. This is me speaking now. A lot more self aware. And then we didn't really touch it for a long time. And I think my mom would like check in periodically and like she's done a lot of work since then. But like, you know, wasn't great. And yeah, it was tough. I just like, I hate coming out. I mean, I come out every day of my life. And like part of my career is like can I just let my career come out for me for the rest of my life? That would be nice. But I wasn't really out in high school only to my like close close friends at the time. Really only kind of like went to college being like okay, like I'm out I honestly don't even remember like coming out in college. I think I freshman year and like, I mean, I was in the theater program until There are a lot of queer people, mostly, you know, sis, gay men, and a lot of people who have since come out as like trans and like by and queer. There's definitely a nice liberal contingent of us. And yeah, I mean, I really didn't come out as non binary until I was in my mid 20s. I mean, that was

something that took a lot longer to find words for. And that really happened because well, I'd started quick kids stuff. And that was going well. I mean, well is an interesting word to put it I love dearly quick kids stuff and was done for me and being able to make that show. But there was just a lot about it that was really, really hard and painful. Mostly just like the online harassment and the all. You deal with that. So like, that was a lot. But I went to, if people know that website, auto straddle, which is like an indie lesbian, queer run website. That's fantastic. I still love Otto straddle, they used to do this thing called a camp where they just like did like a week long camp for like queer grown ups. And I went one year, and was just like, in a queer normative space for like, the very first time where like, people were very, not just like casually, but like, very fluidly using they then pronouns for people like there were a lot of trans people there. And I just like had kind of another moment of that could be nice for me, too, that could feel good. And then I kind of started asking folks around me to use they them pronouns for me, and I was kind of testing the waters. And then like, I came out on queer kid stuff and was able to kind of like, script it and like, put like a very purposeful structure around it. I think that's like the most proud I've ever been of myself of like a coming out moment that I've like, done for myself, it's like, cool that I was able to, like, write a coming out arc for myself, for kids to I don't know, it's, I have a lot of like, really cool feelings about like, the fact that I was able to do that. And I don't think there are episodes that a lot of people watch, because they're a little deeper into the series. But I really, really love those episodes that I was able to do. And over the last couple of years, I have felt more of a coming into like the trans community. And I'm still kind of like, not so out about my like, neuro divergence that's been like, kind of like the newest layer of things. But yeah, I mean, it's just like a constant coming out and cycle of it. And like, I don't even know if that's a first or second adolescent thing. But I do think that I figured out my sexuality a bit earlier than my gender identity, and then even earlier than my neuro divergence. And it's interesting, because I feel like the different layers of it, the gender stuff unlocked so much more for me than ever the sexuality stuff ever did. And then like on top of that, the neuro divergence of it, like has just like, blown everything wide open, which has been really cool. And also like, the crutches that I've given myself of like, Oh, I was confused and depressed because I was queer. Oh, I was confused and depressed because I was trans. Oh, actually, I was confused and depressed, because I have ADHD, and like autism, and like, whatever cocktail of all of that. And like, that is a huge part of my gender, and also my sexuality. And also just like how, like the expectations put on me as a kid from the culture I came from, not being able to, like understand, like, why wasn't like coming up to my potential in school and all this stuff around my brain and how my brain works in not wanting to be confined by rules, and like, and social constructs, and social scripts, and like, how I am socially as a person. And the only thing that made sense was being creative,

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 34:04

Right! Gosh, I mean, in that I hear both, like, on one hand, like, it's so powerful to have this new awareness and knowledge about the why and how of our story. And on the other hand, there's like, this efforting that comes with having to like, challenge and rewrite all the stories and meaning we've already made about our story. Gosh, yeah. And it sounds like that's been this experience for you now with this layer of seeing your past through the lens of neuro divergence. Like Yeah, whoa, whoa, yeah. Yeah. And then okay, we pause like When and how did that part of your story start to come into more awareness of Oh, I think maybe this is part of my experience. When did neurodivergence come more to the forefront for you?



... .. 34:45

L Lindz Amer (they/them) 34:45

I watched a lot of tik tok in quarantine.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 34:50

Totally.

L Lindz Amer (they/them) 34:51

I'm really not on tick tock anymore because libs of tik tok found me. But yeah, I just like watched a lot of tick tock and it's started giving me ADHD people. And I was just like, Oh no, this sounds like my brain. And then I just went deeper and deeper into it. And I'm like, oh, not only does this fit my brain, this is like also other things and like figuring out like, okay, the ADHD, but also like, probably autism, and like, Okay, how do those two things speak to each other? How does that speak to where I am in my life and like, because my wife also has ADHD, and she was diagnosed young, she presents very differently than I do. But I remember she's struggling with a little bit like some of her work and like getting really burned out at the job that she was at. And I was like, oh, like, I'll walk you through my system. I'll walk you through, like, you know how I keep track of all my goals. I don't know, I think I've hacked my brain well enough, unconsciously, to get to where I am in my career right now. So like, I've been doing something, right. And so I walked her through my system. And I was like, walking someone through, it was just like, such a mind melting moment. I was like, I have built this like, really elaborate infrastructure to hack my, like, total lack of object permanence. Just like walking her through, like, the layer. I'm like, literally looking at my whiteboard in front of me that like, just has like, all this stuff on it. And I'm just like, oh, okay, my brain, there's, there's a lot. There's a lot happening that I was just so unaware of. I was like, Yeah, people, everyone has these systems, right? No, they don't, they should, because it works. But there's a lot that I did to my brain to just like, figure out how to function at like, a really high level. And a lot of that's really worked. But a lot of it really contributed to just so much burnout. And yeah, it's just been a lot of discovering, like, okay, like, how can I look at those systems like in a little bit more of like, a purposeful way, or like, use them to, like, actually balance my life, or use them to figure out like, Okay, I have all these projects going on? What do I actually want to do? Versus like, what do I need to do to further my career? Like, what is the difference between those two questions. And that's kind of where I'm at right now. Because I like, have reached a level in my career where I'm like, Okay, I've gotten like through the first tier of a lot of these spaces, and I'm like, doing a lot of stuff that I love. And like people are starting to recognize me and like my work, which is important. But now that I'm kind of like past that first tier, but also I'm like, not getting like a lot of it isn't out in the world yet. So I'm not getting like a lot of feedback on stuff I've already been doing. So now I need to be like thinking like, Okay, what is the step after the reaction that's going to happen? But like, I need to be planning for it now before the creative careers are really wild. Yeah, so now I'm kind of like coming back. This is what I've been talking about a lot with my like, executive coach is like, Okay, how do I recenter and I asked myself, like, what do you want to do? What's going to be most interesting and fulfilling for you? And I think that like that's maybe just like, this, like little back into my Saturn Return is like, what are you okay, now that you know, all these things about yourself? Now that you've like, come through all of this, like growth as an artist? And like in your career, like, Okay, now, can we put

it all together? And like, figure out how you actually want the rest of your life to go now that you know, all of these things and have these opportunities, and you've set yourself up in this way? So yeah, big questions. Big questions.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 38:36

Yeah, absolutely. And like, it also seems like it makes sense. Now with that timeline. Now, it's happening on this back end of this return, because I'm thinking about what's happened in terms of like, your career, but also your selfhood and your artistry and also like your awareness of who you are. And like the intertwining of that I'm just thinking about, like, the growth and healing that's probably happened in your work, then there's also sounds like there's been maybe some layers of complication, as you're alluding to, there to like, for sure, I guess. Yeah. Could you speak to like, what has that journey been of healing growth and maybe some, like unexpected having to deal with shit or trauma from the work too

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 39:14

Oh, my gosh, yeah, it's interesting, because I feel like Queer Kid Stuff was the first project I did that was my own out of grad school. So like, imagine, like basically, like the first project you did out of college, like popping off and like millions of people seeing it, and like half of those people being Nazis. So queer kid stuff is something that I loved doing. But it's also something that's really complicated for me. And especially like, I think there's a lot of frustration too, with like, I didn't pop off when that happened. Like people know about me, this was a sliver of people were like, I'm a household name, which is wild, but like everything that I've got And since then, has been just pure hustle, like, nothing has really come easy. The pattern for me has been like finding the person who gets it, who is in that space. And then working and collaborating with that person, those people to like, make a thing that other people are going to want to buy, and like, take me seriously for and like want to put out into the world. And like it's just been a constant, how can I prove myself at this point at this point, and like, get me to this next level, and this next level and this next level, and it's very tedious mountain climbing. And so like in terms of myself, and understanding kind of like these intertwined like career and like selfhood journeys, my career really took off at like, an accelerated pace. And so like, really got like a head start on that, like, things are going, like, I feel like I grew after that kind of like initial sprint up hill, I think things have been like, very steady, just like climbing, climbing, lots of effort, lots of just growing and building myself as a creator, as an artist, my reputation, my network, et cetera, et cetera. And like I on like the selfhood side have had to do just like a lot of catching up. And it's been in real spurts and starts, it's really just like, not been at as steady of a pace. I think I had like, been at a certain point. And like, I just kind of think of them as like, as you're going up the mountain, I've kind of got this like Billy Goat that's like my career that's just like, very tried and true, just like going up at the pace and like getting tired, but keeping going and like very resilient. And then there's like the self that has just like, up and down and up and down. And like, you know, feeling like I was maybe at a certain place after college and like, had figured out my sexuality stuff. And then like the harassment and like trauma, just like pushing me back down. And like career stuff still going up and up. But like feeling like much, much lower there. I don't know, maybe this metaphor is working, who knows. And I feel like top surgery was like a real like, huge growth moment where I just like sped ahead. And same with like the neurodivergent stuff. And like, I feel like I've been doing some good work in therapy over the last couple of years. And like that has felt not easy. But like at least it's been

happening. And I feel like I'm kind of finally at a place where they're like almost level with each other. And they can help each other. I don't feel like my career and my like self have had each other as resources, really until very recently. And that's kind of like the biggest shift is like these two things have been at such different cadences. And now I feel like they can kind of step in sync in a more meaningful way than I have been before. And I'm like still kind of like honing that like last piece of the thing that's sort of happening right now. But it feels more whole. In the way I'm starting to approach things now. In like, yeah, like I've reached this point of my career, I've reached this point in my like self awareness. And like, I know myself and I know my work. And now it's kind of like, okay, we can get to the top of this mountain like together now. And also, like we can see like the other summits around us. And like, that's the goal. It wasn't just this one mountain, it's like a mountain range. And neither of these sides can do it on their own.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 43:58

That image is so powerful. Just seeing these two, side by side, same level able to reach kind of the top of this vista where now you can be looking together out and together be making decisions about what path to go, where are we traveling next, like I can't find words, I just like my body's just loving this image. Oh my gosh, so cool, so powerful and speaks to I can hear the work you've done on the personal end to really offer a lot of this healing really address some of the needs that you're speaking to, to catch up in a sense to kind of give yourself that space and time to dive into that work. Oh, cool.

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 44:35

And something just really quick. That's interesting about that, too. Is that like, I think now from the place where I'm at, I'm also like better able to see the ways in which my work heals other people too, which has been kind of like a new side of it as well, which is something I think I knew, but it's something that is just becoming a lot more prominent about my work and is not something that like I ever really put purpose behind or like, I know that like, what I do is healing for a lot of people. But that's not necessarily like the goal of it. It's just something that is like a byproduct of my work that like happens. And like, that's part of my voice, I guess. But I feel like I can better recognize that part. And like, I can perceive myself better because of all of this. So I don't know if that's just like an interesting other kind of like angle on it, too.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 45:33

Oh, absolutely. In some ways, I relate to that too, in the work I'm doing here. And I could talk your ear off there as well, for sure. But I so get it. Absolutely. And I'm looking at the time I know and you'd like to go soon. I really don't want to we should have eight hours for this conversation. But I wanted to also talk about your work kind of more recently, your work with rainbow parenting. And I want to hear both about the podcast and also the book that you have coming out, which I think in May is in 2023?

i

45:58

Yeah. May 30th is the pub date

Yeah, my book is the pub date.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 46:01

Tell us about all of this. Yeah,

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 46:03

yeah. So in 2019, I did a TED talk. And I went to my book agent, we've been trying to sell a picture book for many years together. And that wasn't happening at the time. And I said, What if I expanded the TED talk, and then they were like, that sounds great. And then the pandemic and put together this proposal, and ended up selling it to Macmillan. And I've been working on it for the last year and a half, two years almost. And it's kind of like parenting guidebook. But like, it's not just for parents, it's for really anyone with like young people in their lives. Because it's about like, how do we raise young people raise children in queer and gender affirming ways. So like, that includes parents, but it also includes like educators, and caretakers, therapists who work with kids, like really, really anyone who interacts with young people, if you have a nice, like, I think you should read the book, because I'm not talking about like, when they're gonna crawl or like when you should potty train. Like, it's really about like a parenting philosophy of like, this is one way that you can approach gender and sexuality and consent and intersectionality and identity and activism, with the young people in your vicinity. And is really just an approach to that. Because I think so many parents want to do that. And I think especially this book is very much for like, left liberal people who like, you know, support trans rights, like want to bring their kids up in like a queer and gender affirming way, but just like, have absolutely no idea how, because they grew up in like a heteronormative society. And like, we still have all of these gender expectations and like, sexuality expectations, put on young people, and they just don't know how to break those cycles. And this book is like, really, for those people, maybe you are queer, maybe you're not queer, maybe your sibling is trans. And like you want your kid to, like, understand them. But also like you want your approach to gender with your kid to feel inclusive of that person, like a redoing of like a trans childhood. Because I think like, the thing that frustrates me is that if you're adjusting your parenting, when your kid comes out to you, it's too late. And so I'm talking about like, Okay, this is the book that you get someone for their baby shower, this is how you, like philosophically, approach queerness and gender with a child before they even come into the world. And like there's a lot that I do to like break down internalized stigmas, talk about like, the mental health rates with LGBTQ plus youth. And just like the first part of the book, that's like, kind of the hardest to get through. But like, you have to get through it to get to like, the juicy parts is like, you gotta like, figure it out for yourself first, before you can approach even infancy. And it's really just like, Okay, how can we up end how we approach child rearing, and gender and sexuality? So yeah, that's why it's called Rainbow parenting because we're trying to coin a parenting philosophy. And then the podcast is just an extension of the book where I just like, get to talk to cool people about intersections of childhood and queerness and transness and other social justice things and has been like a really beautiful space that like has been fulfilling for me because I mean, there's this whole grassroots field of like creators and educators and authors and parents who have been doing a lot of this work for a long time, but people just like aren't aware of it because it's had to be so underground and like on an individual level, All and has been like popping up in like picture books in a couple of other spaces, but really hasn't gone, quote unquote mainstream and like, that's why we have don't say gay right. So I've really been enjoying those conversations and I would say that like, if the book is like 101, the podcast, very

much jump straight to like 301 got, which is fun for me might be a little off putting to some people. But um, hopefully you can kind of come along the journey and maybe get more acquainted with some of my other work that's like more for the all ages less 301. But it's fun for me to be able to do something that's a little bit more like advanced, because that's kind of where I'm at in my learning too, because I'm a white person. And I'm still, like always working on myself and like the activist side, which we really haven't talked about too much. Because like the side of all this that I like, really stumbled into and like wasn't like, initial, I want to do this to be an activist like no, I'm, I'm a storyteller. I'm an artist, I'm a creator, the activism is because people don't want me to create the stuff that I want to create. So I have to be outspoken about it. And so I've had to like learn a lot along the way. And I've made mistakes 100%. But I'm just like learning from people who are really, really smart. So yeah, that's the book you can preorder now, wherever you get your books and the podcast. Remember parenting, also called Rainbow parenting is wherever you get your podcasts.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 51:24

I'll absolutely be linking to both of those and big recommendation to all folks listening to definitely go check it out. I guess before we wrap up, was there anything that hasn't been a part of this conversation that wanted to be you were just mentioning okay. Yeah, like activism, kind of talking about that piece. Any other component of you or your story that wanted to be part of this conversation?

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 51:46

I think I mean, like going back to just like the healing of it all. So much of the fits and starts of like me, figuring out myself have been about like, being traumatized, not being able to work through that and understand why something's happening, figuring out how to even start to heal, taking some big leaps in order to do that. And then being able to like, come through, and figure out how to, like, continue healing myself, while I'm also balancing that with moving forward. And also, like still being actively traumatized by a lot of the world, I think, like, something that's really tough, and like I talk about this with my therapist quite a bit is that like, with social media stuff, I am still in the midst of like, going through that trauma as I'm healing it. And like, I don't know, if like I'm ever really gonna pull through the other end of that, because of just like the nature of my work, and like, this is the side of it that's like, really, really hard and like, has made it extremely difficult to just continue doing what I do, it affects my bottom line, my ability to just survive as a person in this world and like make my mortgage every month, like that, I think has really stymied a lot of my ability to understand myself and kind of like, fully come into this, like second adolescence that I've been having. And I've seen before, like, I'm discovering, like, parts of my personality that I didn't know or like, didn't feel placed right within myself, because like the outside and the inside weren't matching up. And there was a lot that was like numb and like not feeling settled about who I am. And I think like some of that's really exciting, for sure. But also, like, I look back at my life, and I'm like, man, it was hard. There was a lot that was hard. And just like, it's been a lot of like coming through the other side. I don't know, I've got a lot of Scorpio placements. So there's a lot of like phoenix rising from the ashes sort of stuff. I'm glad that it shaped me. But it's been really hard. And a lot of it still continues to be really hard. So I feel like the Self Realization stuff has just been difficult. And it's been feeling easier recently, which is like not something I'm used to. So I feel

like very in the middle of my kind of like second adolescence, and like just doing a lot of like, I don't know, I'm getting into haps right now. Like silly stuff like that. And I don't there's a lot, but Tony told I was just like the little addendum.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 54:40

No, absolutely. Absolutely. And I mean, that's what it's about. It's about like the ongoing healing. It's about the ongoing discovery of okay, what feels good for me now what feels most true and free for me now? And yeah, I mean, you're speaking to it's so you're in this complicated situation where you're trying to continue this work of kind of expansion and liberate question of your own self. While also because of the nature you work, you're kind of continuously being exposed to sounds like messaging from folks who are trying to counter that work in, I'm so frustrated that you have to deal with that. And that's just so not fair. And it's, I also am really touched that, like, you are offering so much work for folks, whether it's parents of queer people, whether it's queer people like myself, whether it's all the other people who are following your work and benefiting from your work, like, God, what an offering to be doing that, while also in the back and having to deal with the shit you've had and having to deal with, like, oh, so I just like, I'm feeling both appreciative, and in awe of what you're offering, and also just feeling so much empathy for like, fuck, it sounds like, it's also been challenging. Gosh.

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 55:44

And if anyone wants to help with that problem, they can go to my Patreon, and they can go and support my work, because that is truly what makes things happen. And what makes me able to do all this, in spite of all of that is like community coming together. And like, really just like, asking for it with your wallets. Like, there is no, like that has been, I would like the harassment, but also just like the financial, like reality of it, is that like, nobody wants to pay me the big bucks to do a reboot of queer kid stuff. Like, it's something I want to do, I have a script written, like, I, we've got a budget, I want to do new episodes, and like, no one's gonna give me the money to do it. They're just not, I've tried. And it really has been kind of heartbreaking, I have to say, and because this is like, I make the work that I do, and I continue to make work, because I love it. And because I want to, and the barriers are always going to be time and money. And just like bandwidth, right. And like, if people like my work, if people want more of it, you gotta help me. Like that is like, just like from the bottom of my heart, like I want to give all have this to everyone. And I'm doing my best. But like the money part of it is hard. Yeah. And like, people do not want to give money to queer and trans work for kids. They just don't like the powers that be who have the purse strings. And like, I am doing my darndest to get them to do it. But it is slow, it is slow. Oh my goodness. And this is work that people need now. And I know that and you got to put money into it, you got to spread the word, you got to tell other people about it. You don't know the money. So it's really hard. It's really, really hard. And like, I think that like what it comes down to, is like community building. And this is something that I've struggled with so much, because Cricut stuff lives on YouTube. And there's not a lot I can do about that. That's where it lives. Like I always want it to be publicly accessible and free. But like, because I think that it's a resource that's like sorely sorely needed, but like, we've passed 4 million total views on cricket stuff over the past. I started in 2016. And I haven't even broken \$2,000 on the entire series from YouTube ad revenue. And like that is not normal. That is not a normal thing. I'm currently in the middle of suing YouTube, like there is a lot to that. And I had to shut my comments section down before that was even a thing for kids content.

Like it's just never generated any income for me really. And also, it's been really, really hard to one connect with my audience through queer kid stuff. Because people go to the web. People go, I mean, like I can look at it right now. I think there are probably a couple of 1000 people watching it like today in the last 24 to 48 hours. But like they have, I have no way of grabbing those people and telling them hey, sign up for my newsletter. See what has been going on in the business since the web series ended. See what we've been doing. See how you could help us make more cool stuff like this. See how you could help us like financially make our business more sustainable so I can pay more cool people. Look at the new projects that we're doing. We have this letter writing project called Dear queer kid, where we commissioned queer and trans folk grownups to write letters to queer and trans kids. And like we put them out through our patreon. And like, it's just like, oh my gosh, these letters are so beautiful because nobody ever gives these people money to talk to kids. like that. And it's just grabbing the audience from queer kid stuff and pulling them into the present moment of like what I'm doing, what my team is doing, how we're trying to put this kind of work into the world, again, has been really, really difficult. And I think so much of that is like one because like, YouTube is like the way that YouTube functions. And this is why I've kind of moved into podcasting a little bit more, because it's a lot more amenable to community building, which is just, I don't know what that's about. But that's just kind of like a difference in the mediums, right? Oh, and the other part is like the online harassment, like, I have no idea how much of my viewership of that like 4 million people is people who like absolutely hate my guts, right? Like, there is no way to differentiate that side of it from the people who like love what I do, and are my actual audience. And so like, it's really difficult to even figure out like, where I am reaching out and doing good work with an audience, because I don't know what my actual audience is from those numbers. And like how to engage and connect with them. Because I think the ecosystem that I want to exist so badly for this work, and for other queer and trans creators who want to make stuff for kids is like, Okay, how do we connect with teachers? How do we connect with parents? And how do we connect with other creators? And how do we get those two groups to speak to each other and live in an ecosystem and a community together, so that the work can reach kids. And that's ultimately what I think we're trying to build to and queer kid stuff. But like, that's three audiences that I have to build and pull under one roof and get looking at something. And it's really hard to do practically, and you need money. And I do not want investors, I do not want to be in the VC world. I don't want to give over ownership of my work to other people who can tell me what I can and cannot do with it. There's a reason I'm not a nonprofit. I mean, like, I've tried the VC thing, like I've tried to like, you know, pitch summits, accelerator programs, I don't have an exit strategy for queer kid stuff, I don't want it I have a strategy, I am not in this for the money. I am in this to make good work. I am in this to shift culture and try to like blue sky, change the world, right? And like that narrative does not fit capitalism. And I am trying to circumvent all of that, in my day to day and in how I run my business. And I cannot do that without a community to lean on. And like, I know, the audience is there for my work. I know that I mean, you exist. Yes, exactly. It's so so important. If you like something, and you want more of it, that you support the people who are making that happen, because the day to day of making this stuff is extremely difficult. And I'm bad days all the time. I'm like, if I want to, I could just stop, I could just stop. But like, I wouldn't be happy. So that's kind of what that comes down to. But I'm also like, I could do so many cool things with a lot more money. So yeah, if you want me to do more cool things.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 1:03:40

Absolutely we are linking to the preorder link, we're linking to the Patreon we're going to be linking to all that because yeah, like, that's the reality of our world, like we exist within a

capitalistic system, like money is real and drives what's possible and what's not possible often in a way to like give care, a way to give love a way to offer our support is through our dollars, if we have the access, if we want to create the world we want to see. And we have the ability to fund that. Like, we got to do it even if it's a small amount here and there. And so yeah, I'm nodding my head to everything you were saying app. salutely. Absolutely. Okay, so everyone listening, follow the links in the show notes. Absolutely. But okay, Lynn's again, I could talk with you all day, I do need to let you go but I just feel so touched and grateful not only for you and your work but you kept coming on to the show, letting me in as an individual into your story, letting all of our listeners in to your story like I so believe like that's how we heal as a community continuing to share our stories continuing to kind of be honest with our vulnerability to support someone else and kind of their own journey. And so I just feel like I feel so affected and so touched from this conversation and from getting this time with you and so just thank you so much for being here.

L

Lindz Amer (they/them) 1:04:55

Thank you for having me. I feel like I was able to like, speak fully to who I am and my work and like a lot of different angles and also just like how I've come to be the person that I am and like this moment of my life and my career, and that's, that's a real treat to be able to dig in like that

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 1:05:20

hey, thanks for joining us for today's conversation, feel free to head on over to secondadolescencepod.com for show notes and more. And you can connect further by following the show on Instagram at [@secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/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 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.