

Ep 32: Second Adolescence w/ Kami Brannon (she/her)

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SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Kami Brannon (she/her)

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

Hello and welcome to this week's episode of the Second Adolescence podcast. I'm your host Adam James Cohen. This week's guest is Kami Brannon who is a 38 year old therapist based in Columbus, Ohio. In addition to her therapy practice, she and her wife are also working to create a queer campground in Hocking Hills, Ohio, which you'll hear her talk about. And it's just so cool. But yeah, on this episode, Kami lets us into her experience as a black lesbian walking us through her own personal journey from growing up all the way until now, her life's work has really been focused on turning her own personal pain into purposeful action forward for the queer community. And that absolutely comes across in this conversation, I was so grateful to have Kami on, it was such a special conversation for me to get to be a part of I took so much from it. And I'm just so excited and honored that she is inviting all of you into it too. And as with each episode of Second Adolescence, I really want to invite you as listener to listen with open curiosity, knowing that each of our stories are different and unique. You might hear some guests share things that really differ from your experience, whereas other guests might share things that really speak to what you went through or are currently going through. And I really hope that all of that 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. That's it for me for now. Welcome to the conversation. Thank you so much for being here. Welcome to Second Adolescence, I'm really excited to get to dive in and see what comes up in this conversation. But before going anywhere, I always like to invite the person on your end just to give the listeners a little context to who the person is behind the voice with a little mini introduction. And I know the WHO ARE YOU question...I always laugh when I make people do this because it's impossible to like just give a little snapshot. But when you're in spaces like this, what would you say first when you're first introducing yourself.

K Kami Brannon (she/her) 02:26

So my name is Kami. I use she/her pronouns. I really identify myself as a 38 year old black

So my name is Kami, I use she/her pronouns. I really identify myself as a 30 year old, black queer woman. I'm a wife, I'm a mother. I'm a small business owner. I love animals. I love nature. One of the things that I think over time I've become most aware of is I find a ton of joy in community, especially the community that I have found with other black queer folks.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:01

And I'm just curious to hear about the evolution of finding that community in your own personal story. We don't always start out with our community, it can be a path of finding it. And so I'm curious to see as we dive into your story, where and how that came up. But I guess before going there, centering on this idea of second adolescence, curious, first, why you felt drawn to want to come on and contribute your story and experience? And also Yeah, what in this idea of Second Adolescence perhaps resonated for you?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 03:30

Yeah. So I really felt, you know, sort of initially drawn to participate in your collective work of art here. Because I think that it is so important for queer people to tell their queer stories for the benefit of other queer people. And I think like, specifically, as a person of color as a black person, our stories are very underrepresented. And there is value in the shared experience, I think about like, as a young person growing up in the late 90s, like, early 2000s, like when I saw a queer couple featured on TV, just like what a lifeline that was for me in like the belief of possibility. So I think, for all the people that are, you know, sitting in a space where the only expression of their queerness or they're like developing awareness of their queerness as listening to these stories, it's such a energizing lifeline. You know, for me, my process of like, second adolescence was really like coming into an authentic acceptance of myself, and all of like the intersections of that person. It was really I think, for me, the process of believing that I can I couldn't change my sexuality, I couldn't hide my sexuality. I couldn't produce enough outcomes to balance the coffers, so to speak that, like, I think, becoming comfortable with the fact of like, who I was, and like that, that in and of itself didn't like, not do me to isolation and misery, but like transforming into a person that knew who I was, and had the ability to express that and interact with the world in that way, in a way that was like uplifting and positive and joyful.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 05:45

As you were just even just sharing just there I can hear what I imagine has been such healing work that's happened on your end, in your own process, I can hear kind of what sounds like perhaps prior experiences of yourself earlier in life, what you were feeling, and then how now that's been shifted out, and kind of there's been either unlearning or healing, or just so much there. So I'm just so excited to dive in, and also feeling so appreciative in this moment of you being here and letting us all in to your story. And so I'm just gonna start there. Thank you. And I guess Yeah, before going into Second Adolescence, it can be helpful for us to really kind of bring more awareness to like what our first adolescence was like. What growing up was, like, kind of the pre of our stories and the before of our stories. And I'm curious, you know, hearing you allude to some of that, where did your story begin? And what with regards to kind of telling your story? How do you tend to start that?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 06:42

Well, there has been certainly like an evolution, I think, lots of therapy, lots and lots of therapy.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 06:49

You and me both!

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 06:52

Yes I'm a huge advocate for taking care of yourself. And that way, you know, so I grew up in Louisiana, in the Southern Bible Belt, of like America, like it was everything that you would imagine it to be very conservative, really strong and religious influences. You know, I think one of the things that I remember the most about my childhood was like sort of a sense of just sort of being different, a sense of like, trying, in my little mind to figure out like how I fit into the world. So I grew up in sort of a upper sort of middle class, background, solidly middle class, as a person of color, especially, you know, geographically where I live, really, my peers, and the people around me, were not people of color, you know, I sometimes make the joke that I was like, the flake of pepper in the salt jar, like I was like, the only one that was like me around. And you know, sort of feeling like a disconnection and that community, not really feeling like I like fully fit in with my peers there. I think the most visible way, you know, initially experiencing that is race, and later in, like sexuality, and like attraction to other people. And I think like, also a dissonance, like a disconnection with my family of origin to, which I think, probably came from the amount of trauma, and I think dysfunction, and my family of origin. So it was a story of really performative over the top religious expression with this, like, undercurrent in my family have, we keep family business insulated, I think a lot of black families or people of color, like really experienced this, that we don't talk to providers, we don't share our business with other people. And it really, I think, created an environment of a lot of sexual abuse, a lot of family secrets, a lot of people that just sort of like disappeared, and we never heard from them again. So just like a lot of like, not feeling fully incorporated to that system, either. Not feeling like I quite fit there, as well.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 09:15

Yeah, I mean, pause. I'm just thinking about little you, there's this sort of othering like feeling so othered, both, like, in these different external structures that were operating around you and then also internally within this family system, that sounds like yeah, there were different things occurring that didn't let you kind of grow up feeling fully supported and validated and seen and safe. So I'm just like thinking, gosh, like, what was that like for you?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 09:42

I think confusing. Confusing, you know, and it's actually I have this like, very vivid memory of being sort of a little kid in the bathtub with my mom like probably second grade, third grade, just talking about like how different I felt from everyone else, and really feeling quite distressed

about it. You know, and I think as a kid, I didn't necessarily have an awareness of like, what was curating all of that. But I think sometimes our bodies will tell us before we can fully put, like thoughts and words around it. Yes. And I think like, a lot of my journey has been unraveling those feelings and really starting to put like language around them and understanding. You know, even when I look back at little me, like, you know, I didn't understand what gay people were or queer people were, I didn't even have the language to describe that. It certainly wasn't anything that was like socialized around me, it wasn't even until high school that like, I encountered queerness through television and assumed that like queer people must live in like California or New York, they certainly didn't live in Louisiana where I was from. But like thinking back, like, you know, there were certainly signs like I was always drawn to female presenting like energy. All of my childhood friends were gay, but we never even talked about it. Like, it's funny. As adults, we see each other on social media, I see their social media, and every person I was connected with was, was queer, and we never once discussed it, or interacted with it at all.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 11:25

But on some level, you were drawn to each other, have thinking about this kind of this whole evolution of finding community. It's like at that time, there was like this unconscious joining of community, something that's pulling you together. But yeah, as you're speaking to, like, when we grow up without exposure to language, to kind of what it means to be queer kind of lots of different representations of what it means to be queer, like, it does keep us stuck in that place of just feeling this unconscious sense of different pneus that can be really damaging. I mean, I don't know if this feels true for you. But I know for me, and for a lot of other queer folks, like there's that unconscious feeling of different nests, like often always translate to this some internalized core belief about ourselves as something's either wrong or not okay, or not, right, that like, becomes the work to have to unlearn. And I'm curious if that feels true for you in your story of kind of the different nests that you felt in all these different kinds of places and systems you're operating within, if that translated into some type of kind of belief system that younger you was operating from?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 12:29

Absolutely. You know, I would say, growing up in a family where, you know, we were the only people of color amongst like, our cohorts that worked. I definitely felt support in the identity of being a black person in that system. But the support in the sense of like, Yeah, this is what it is like, you have to go out and produce like, you need to challenge those biases, you need to be better, you need to show up first, you have to work harder, you have to be better. So this idea that like you really need to like produce in order to earn your spot at the table, which was I think my parents attempt to prepare me for the world, but also like their model as a person that I think I would describe my mother as a narcissist, I would describe her as like, kind of a homophobic, transphobic person. So I definitely didn't get any support when it came to sexuality, that I remember, sort of, I don't even remember the show now. But some show came on when I was like in high school, and one of the couples on the show was like a lesbian couple. And it came on at like 10 o'clock. It was on late, you know, like, the nefarious nature of homosexuality, you know. So I remember like, you know, I was old enough to be able to stay up that late and like watching the show, and my mom really liked this show. And, like, I remember watching it and seeing this queer couple and I was like, Oh my gosh, like, what is this? Like?

That's, that's interesting feeling. Really, John is sort of testing the waters. What do you think about this? And like, the messages were extremely negative, directly? Homophobic directly? Well, that's disgusting. That shouldn't be on TV. The impact of this on young minds and and like, just a lot of really, like, this is not okay. If you want to make it if you want to, like if you want a seat at the table, and like, this is what you need to be doing and definitely not this.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 14:31

Gosh, then it makes me wonder, when you started to have more conscious awareness of queerness within you like what was that like, given this is how you were socialized? Yeah,

K Kami Brannon (she/her) 14:43

Yeah. Tragic. It was. It was tragic. I was always sort of a person that recognize that, like, I couldn't stay in Louisiana. You know, I that I couldn't stay. I couldn't stay where I live geographically in the town that I live. then, like, I needed to be in a bigger city and like try to find people like me. But I think fearful, I mean, I think my queerness was definitely not a journey that I picked or desired. And I spent a lot of energy and a lot of intention, you know, a lot of effort, and actively trying to push off of that identity. I think, for many years, I harmed myself with men, and put myself and continued to try in situations where it was very apparent that I was unhappy. And the dynamic was not good for me emotionally relationally. But like, really sort of having this idea that I've been socialized with it, you know, if I embraced my queerness, that I was going to be doomed to a life of isolation, a life of like, nobody's gonna want me around their kids that I'm gonna have a bad life, everything's gonna be hard for me. So just a lot of fear.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 16:15

Yeah, totally. It's sometimes hard to interview people on this, because I just feel so overwhelmed by my own feelings. hearing these stories and thinking about little you feeling this way? It's just heartbreaking. It's heartbreaking.

K Kami Brannon (she/her) 16:30

You know, it was, I mean, I look back at it myself. And when I went away to college, you know, that the coffers sort of like fly open, and, you know, you're exposed to the world and like, different trains of thoughts and different experiences, but even then, just feeling in my college life and my young, like adult life, really trying to outrun this very ingrained belief that like, if people know, if I really like, quote, unquote, choose this, everything that I've worked hard for, is off the table.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 17:10

I feel like so many of us at different points of our stories are kind of caught between these two opposing forces, like our queerness, and kind of what we're longing for, and desire and connection, wanting that, but then also kind of all the stuff blocking that, whether that's fear

connection, wanting that, but then also kind of all the stuff blocking that whether that's fear, shame, there's this opposing force that kind of pulls in, like, oftentimes, we can kind of get stuck in that tension of both. And it can be a really tough place in our journeys. And I hear how sounds like in college, there was a new exposure than what you were around growing up. And I'm wondering it was that maybe both enticing, but also, maybe there was some fear of I'm curious, like, what happened there, when you started to be immersed in this new culture, this new community?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 17:51

Yeah,, you know, my singular goal in high school was to go to college and go as far away as I can go. And that's exactly what I did that I got an academic scholarship, production, production production, you have to produce and I went away to college. And first thing I did was join a queer club. But as an ally, I was just an ally. I wasn't fooling anyone, but I just remember just being exposed to like new ideas, and new people and people from different places, and experiences with other women. And it just feeling like so right. And just like knowing instantly, all the things that I had suspected about myself for as long as I could really remember, but also sort of recognizing some disconnection there, as it's interesting, what you pick, and what you gravitate towards that like, in some ways, like the system that I had grown up in, in Louisiana, being the only person of color I basically sort of recreated in college. And still, like not feeling sort of like fully connected to that experience, either that closer, like, you know, closer in the sense where I felt more connection, and compatibility and safety in queer spaces with other queer people, but also still sort of recognizing that I was like the only person of color in those spaces and feeling like a lot of insecurity. Honestly, I think about that feeling unsure if I was going to be good enough for those spaces. And I think still overwhelming fear that there would be some sort of exposure and that other people might become aware of like these nefarious behaviors, these like Are these things that I'm doing away at college, and like, what might happen? If that was the case.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 20:07

Like people back home?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 20:08

People back home, my professors and college people that I'm in class with, that could be people that maybe I network with, and they're gonna know, oh, she's the gay one, and really buying into, like, the idea that if other people know about this, it's gonna be a big problem. So like expressing it, but with a lot of fear, and hiding and insecurity, and like, oh, this was just a thing that happened, even though sort of deeply like more fully knowing this is more than what I want it to be or what I'm willing to express to other people.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 20:49

Do you think that would have been different? If you were surrounded by more queer people of color at that time?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 20:54

I think it would have been different. Yeah. You know, I think I had yet to interact with someone that had the ability to understand my experience fully. And I think Sue's some of my anxieties about how this might ripple out in my unique experience as like a person of color. And, you know, sort of being socialized around the belief that like, Well, yeah, things are different for people that are white, that they have more fluidity, like, they can do this. And they can do that. And like, you can't do that, then if you want to sit at the table with, that's not your life, that's not your experience, that you you're not going to be able to access that. So I think sort of this like sense of like, well, yeah, I mean, he'll be fine, you know, that, like he can show up still be a white man in the room with other white men, and maybe he'll pass in some way that I'm not gonna pass, you know. And like really fearing what it might mean, if I had what I perceived to be all these strikes against me.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 22:17

Sounds like as you were navigating, and kind of being with that fear, you're also sounds like starting to have some queer experiences that are really kind of allowing for this part of you to get to come alive. And I'm curious, like, what was that like for you to kind of be having both occurring at the same time? And also, what were those experiences like to start to get to have these queer experiences and seeing what that felt like?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 22:42

Yeah, I think a lot changed for me when I met another black lesbian, you know, and she was a little older than me, and we started dating. And it really sort of gave me a lot of confidence that meeting someone whose experiences more fully sort of mirrored mine really opened things up for me in a significant way, and energized me in a way where I was like, you know, maybe I can have a life and maybe things are possible, and like, this feels really good. And I really liked this person that I came out, I met somebody and I came out. And, you know, there was a lot of beauty in that situation, you know, because I started to hang out with other queer people and make queer friends and feel more at home and myself, but like, at a really high cost of my entire life. Before that point, that I my parents stopped supporting me financially. For as college, I didn't have a place to live, I didn't have any money. I had no skills, like, I had to leave my university. So I was going to the University of Richmond at the time, and I ended up having to come back to Louisiana, which is the last place I wanted to be. So although there is this like, unique juxtaposition of like this, like really great relationship, where I'm accessing, like, all of these things that I've most wanted, like, at a cost of my entire life, my family, my connections, you know, I have a very clear memory of my mom like shutting the door in my face and saying, don't ever come back. You're not welcome here.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 24:37

When was that? Was that when you came back after university?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 24:42

19

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 24:43

Oh, goodness. What did you do then?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 24:48

I struggled. In some ways. It kind of affirmed a lot of what was told to me about what was going to happen Um, you know, so I went from going to this private university that I was doing really well at and like had food and didn't have to worry and to having no support poverty. I mean, I remember a time when I made friends with the janitor at the college, I transferred to like a community college and finished out my degree. But I remember making friends with the janitor at the college and like, they would give me like free toilet paper and free hand soaps, because like I literally had no money and like no way to support myself. And I think like most people that are sort of abandoned by their family, you fall into bad communities, you fall into bad behaviors, you cope in negative ways, and I definitely did my share of alcohol and drugs, and I think survival behaviors, you know, like things that you do to just make it to the next steps. But it was bad because I think in some ways, I had this like really affirming relationship, the juxtaposition of like, the crumbling of the rest of my life, I think amplified the fear, to a place where I was like, this cannot be my life, like, I have got to graduate school. And I course corrected, and I started dating a guy, and I got pregnant, and I married a man and like, really try to, quote unquote, like, fix my life. And the cycle sort of repeats, right? Like, you fall back into a sort of another miserable cycle, where you're like, Well, you know, now I've getting access to all the things that I wanted, right? Like, I now have a more positive relationship with my parents, I can go around my family, my cousins aren't yelling fagot at me as a family function. You know, I regained access to my family, but it like the cost of myself.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 27:13

I mean, I can only imagine what that was like. Because yeah, on one hand, I can imagine there's parts of you feeling relief to finally feel that, quote, unquote, acceptance like this quote, unquote, belonging, like, again, not full, but like, the at least the external appearance of belonging and acceptance from these people who have been so caught in your life, getting to probably direct messaging that you're doing the quote, unquote, right thing now, but gosh, yeah, with with such a loss, and with such a dissonance to your full, true self, ah, that's so complicated. This must have been so complicated. So what then changed? And how did that happen?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 27:53

You know, you can't outrun yourself. And I think I sort of became aware of the unsustainability of trying to be someone that I wasn't. And, you know, it's sad in some ways, because Hurt people hurt other people that like, he was a perfectly fine guy, like a really nice man. But he

couldn't produce enough to make me heterosexual, you know, so we separated and I moved to Columbus, Ohio, which is where I live now. And it was like a breath of fresh air that I by that time had finished school. And you know, was in my career, I got my masters and counseling, and like, you know, really done a lot of like, work on myself and therapy, and had really prepared myself, I think, to start a new life, and hopefully do it in a bigger city with more open minded perspectives. I think at that time, I was still very fearful of describing myself as a queer person, I think, fully, but I had maybe become more okay with the idea of like, expressing my queerness in some way, some of the time. But it was a journey. I mean, it wasn't until 2012 2013 Really, that I stopped dating men and really came into a more clear sort of accepting place of myself. But you know, at the cost of everything that, you know, even as we speak today that I have, you know, no family connections beyond the family that I have created in my life here. All of the things that I had relationships that I had curated and reestablished really dissipated, they really went away. When I stopped dating men when it came out When I was openly out, and like the damage of the back and forth of like the inability to accept myself fully, I think probably in a lot of ways harmed my daughter in ways that I didn't expect that like it exposed her to homophobic beliefs and transphobic beliefs and like, really has created a lot of like negative feelings there on her part. But in an effort to access my family, I sort of sacrificed so much in the pursuit of that, that it ultimately cost me that makes sense.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 30:40

Yeah. The word grief is popping up for me around just the different type of grieving that we have to do in general as queer people, but particularly when there is a need to, or or we can't help but there's a loss of these relationships or loss of we are not what other people are wanting us to be, though there's on one hand, there's an a real power, and empowerment and celebration and kind of making decisions to honor our authenticity, there can be such a loss on the other side of that, and there can be this really complicated need to accept and acknowledge there's a grief of whatever these relationships or realities, I'm curious like, that were grief? Well, first off, does that resonate? If so? How do you navigate that? How have you navigated that?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 31:33

Oh, yes, I mean, I think grief is a huge component of all of this. So I think what has really been transformative for me, and managing sort of the grief of the law says, sort of, like distancing myself from the attachment or like, the belief of how things ought to be, and more fully sort of accepting that things are, as they are, and will be as they are, you know, manifesting as create, and the story that we tell ourselves about what is going to present in our future, there's really, you know, it's easy to set up this binary that like, well, if I do all of these things, and I'm gonna access this, and it's gonna look just like this, and it's gonna feel just like this. And I think really doing a lot of work at like detaching those things. Yeah. And understanding that no path is guaranteed and outcome, that we're all creating our outcomes fluidly. And I think that's really helped me to manage the grief of the loss, you know, that those things weren't guaranteed, even if I persisted in pursuing heterosexuality that like, there is no guarantee. And even if it did look like that externally, it wasn't going to emotionally resonate with me in the way that I have told myself, the story would, then I might have my family, but like, it's not going to feel euphoric. It's not going to be this Hallmark picture. Um, so I think I did a lot of work around that. And then I think, like, chosen family, and my work, and the queer community has been

something that's been just like, tremendously restorative to me that, you know, in 2016, I met my wife and I started my therapy practice and through relationships and community, I've really created a safety for myself that like I've never really experienced, and I think a joy and being able to connect with other people whose stories and lives mirror some of the similar situations that I've been in. And I think, like the behavior of being able to, like be a person that I wished that I had had in that process, I think has been huge, like in working with young queer people, you know, opening like a queer campground in Ohio and I think like creating spaces like diverse accessible spaces for people that I wished that I had had, like places that I could visit and experiences and relationships I wish I've had and I think that's been really transformative and managing the grief that like, although I've lost a lot, I gained a tremendous amount too.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 34:33

Absolutely. Okay, I've so many questions, even on this last section, I guess first off this queer campground. Tell me about this. And then I want to go back a little bit. Yeah,

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 34:41

Yeah. So in Ohio, there's this area. It's called hocking hills, and it's, it's gorgeous. It's got big rock formations and waterfalls and it's lush. So I really enjoy the outside, but I'm oftentimes found that spaces like that are not necessary. rarely the most queer friendly, especially where I live, it's important to me to create spaces that are accessible to folks, it's important to me to create diverse spaces that are accessible to queer folks. And to be able to have experiences as young people that mirror the experiences that every other young person has going on a camping trip, being free, being trans in like feeling safe, and being a person of color. And like being able to integrate into those experiences. Yes, I think that that's really been a joy for me like to arrive at a place where I am no longer surviving, or just existing, but in a place where I can create, and share and guide. And I think like, for me, that's a big part of success. My definition of that is like when you arrive at a place where you feel like you have enough to give back. And that's what the campground is, is an opportunity to get back.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 36:03

Wow, that's so cool. And yeah, this idea of being for others what you wish you could have had like this, it's so it's so powerful and can be so healing to be in that process. I mean, I personally resonate with that part of your story, too, of going into this work as a therapist, working with lots of queer youth like it has almost like I didn't anticipate how much healing would come from that being able to be this person holding space for offering affirmation to validation to these young queer people who are struggling to feel okay, as they are, in many ways like little 12 year old me, 13 year old me, 18 year old me can sometimes sit in on those sessions too. And it's this really powerful thing can happen. And it sounds like we also had maybe a similar timeline of both kind of going to grad school, also around the same time of trying to kind of be fully in our queerness. And that's an interesting thing that kind of coincide with one another. For me, at least they were so deeply connected. And the work grad school to become a mental health counselor often leads to a lot of our own personal reflection and healing. And I guess I'm curious for you, like, in starting this career, and being in grad school, beginning kind of becoming this person offering this work in the world? How has that been for you?

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 37:25

One of the greatest joys of my life has been my work with and for the queer community. You know, I think grad school, and like the work that I did, there was like, transformative for me that it challenged me to view things under a radically different lens, like a radically different lens than what I had viewed things under before and really challenged me to challenge like a lot of the beliefs that I had really accepted as like truth with a capital T. And, like, the ideas that I was doomed as my, in the expression of my queerness was radically shattered in grad school, because I became aware of the fact that like, the problem wasn't my queerness The problem was, like other people responding to my queerness in a reasonable loving and supportive way. Which was just like, I mean, I was just like, oh my gosh, like, it was, like, the door swung open. And the onus of like, you are the problem, you are having these experiences because of you because you've done something wrong, you are doomed, changed in this like radical way. And it's like, Well, I'm just me, you know, I'm just being myself in a way that isn't like harmful to anyone. And the juxtaposition of like, I haven't done anything to deserve the treatment that I was experiencing. was radical. Radical, yes, it did it change the discomfort of the rejection and the abandonment. But not loathing myself in that changed everything

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 39:29

That I see is the end goal, like that is what we work towards that is the Ever After if our if we're thinking of our queer lives as like the fairy tales, like getting to this point where we can shed this belief system about our wrongness shed this belief system, about like loathing who we are or fearing who we are all of that, like that's the end goal is not I mean, I can I want to hear about kind of finding your wife and that part of your story too. But it's like that is not necessarily what we're working towards. That doesn't mean we've we've we've made it where we've made it isn't this point that you're speaking to this own individual healing that happens like that? Is it? So powerful? So cool? And okay, how did you meet your wife? And how has that happened? Yeah.

K

Kami Brannon (she/her) 40:16

You know, my grandma used to always say, A watched pot never boils. And I think there's like a lot of truth in that. But like, I think, as a result of like, my deep desire for like attachment, and connection, and love, and like some of the things that like I really was lacking, like the safety and relationships, the community, the consistency, I think I, like a lot of queer folks was willing to tolerate, you know, a lot of like, really trashed situations, to be honest, that were toxic and unhealthy and not good. And I think they sort of came out in nowhere, you know, that my wife started off as a person that I just hung out with, and with somebody that I was, like, really good friends with, and enjoyed their company. And like, I don't know, where it changed into a romantic relationship. And it's been a joy, you know, that we share community with each other, we have safety, we have support, we, you know, she, she came with three children. So we have three boys, and they're lovely, I think, the joy of like, integrating the idea that like, I can be myself and have external outcomes, still present, I can still like have a living and have a career and be impactful and also experience like romantic love and authentic way. I think the connection of those two things, coexisting together, has been a joy. I think that's the reality that is maybe sort of off putting, though, is that it is still challenging in some parts of the

country, to be a visibly queer person in the world. Even in the season of things being really, you know, ideal. You know, in a lot of ways, there is a certain adversity that comes with being very visibly out queer. My wife is non binary, and non binary person in the world. I think, especially in Ohio, in you know, I live in Worthington, it's a tiny little suburb of really a fluent, predominantly white folks, that I don't know everybody, but they certainly know who I am. There's a certain adversity in that, but I think it's been more than what I could have even imagined.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 43:05

Kami, I want to talk with you all day. So can we just clear our schedules, so we could just want to talk about so many things? I know, I know. But before before I let you go, was there anything that hasn't been brought into this conversation yet? That wanted to be?

K Kami Brannon (she/her) 43:23

You know, no, I think we've covered a lot of the ideas and thoughts and experiences that I wanted to really cover. You know, I think one thing I just want to make sure that I say is, I think one of the most transformative things in my experience has been like quality therapy with queer people. And I can't underestimate the impact of communicating with someone that understands your life experience, and can create some community and help to reshape some of your perspectives, like how impactful that is. And I think community, like I think things don't always work out to be the Okay, that we've imagined. But I think people have like a very resilient quality, and like, building new and different and evolving okays. And I think, making sure that you have like, set yourself up with people that support you, and validate you. That's it. And yeah, I was just gonna say that like, if anybody wants to check out our Instagram @brannonacres, please do that. Or my therapy practice. columbusqueertherapist.com.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 44:45

Okay, good. Yes. I wanted to ask if people wanted to connect how they could do so. Okay, awesome. Yeah, thank you for offering that so people can reach out if they would like or to stay tuned to what the work you're doing in the world. Great. Well, gosh, I again, I just feel so good. grateful to just selfishly get to kind of get to receive and witness your story. But then also knowing kind of you're here as someone who's done so much healing who has done so much work and is offering that to our listeners and this this greater community and I just feel so personally touched and for my community, I feel touched and just like knowing you're out there doing the work you're doing, it's just, I feel like overwhelmed in a month by emotion in this moment. And so I'm, I'm gonna try to not ramble. But I just want to say I so appreciate you and I feel so appreciative of getting to have this time with you today. So thank you,

K Kami Brannon (she/her) 45:32

thank you for the work that you're doing. It's it's so important.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 45:37

Right back at ya. 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 in your day, go on out there and keep doing things that would make younger you absolutely thrilled. That is what it's all about. Alright, take good care.