

00:07 NEIL: Check it out I'm Andrew Huang and now we're going to make a beat out of that. CODY: You feel good about that. NEIL: Yeah that's our cold opening because it's cold and I opened it.

00:47 CODY: Hi this is Cody Daigle-Orians. NEIL: This is Neil Daigle Orians CODY: and welcome to another episode of bearded fruit. YAY YAY. NEIL: We're on time. CODY: I know we're like really kicking buTt this month. NEIL: Oh kids are listening. CODY: No they're not. NEIL: No they're not.

01:05 CODY: Yeah we're in quite a groove and feel pretty good about it. So before we jump into today's thing I just want to share what I was doing this weekend. Just really briefly. So this weekend I did something really cool. I was part of the facilitator training institute with the Discovery Center in Hartford and that was part thanks to Neil. NEIL: Oh I did that. CODY: Who tagged me in a Facebook status. NEIL: It was that simple. CODY: Yeah it was really awesome. I spent four days with some really really amazing people in Hartford training as a facilitator for conversations and workshops and presentations -- to present those -- on racial equity and also around other systems of oppression, and it was a really... it was a really like intense and challenging and sometimes frustrating but mostly like really powerful and cool weekend. NEIL: Sorry I punched my microphone. CODY: That's OK. IT was a really really awesome weekend. And I know you've done this work in the past sort of similar.

02:13 NEIL: You know we all we all just try to do what we can in the world to make it a better place. You go to this training. Kendall Jenner gives Pepsis I mean really everyone plays their part. CODY: And so I just wanted to to -- I don't know if anybody listens or will listen to the podcast but if you do it just wanted to thank the Discovery Center in Hartford for allowing me to be in the room with some really smart and engaged people particularly Derek Hall who made the invitation and also lead most of the training institute and along with Jason Fredlund who who did that as well. So thank you for a really challenging weekend. You know I sat in my feels for a while. NEIL: You're welcome about it.

03:03 CODY: Maybe we'll get one of them on to come talk more stuff about about race worm in equity arms. So this week we're going to be talking about something I saw on Instagram this morning and it's not a shirtless guy which is mostly what I see on instagram. But this is not so. So this morning I was perusing Instagram and I saw this guy post a screenshot of a text conversation that he had. And so the guy who posted it is this gay guy in his thirties. He's not someone that I really know. He's like a rando. I don't even like I don't feel like it's a thirst follow because there's no thirst. NEIL: You followed him because he followed you. CODY: Yeah. So he's a random follow and so it's a conversation between him and this younger gay man.

03:51 CODY: And so in the in the the screen shot the first text is from the younger guy the younger gay man and he's saying something like basically like "hey I'm having a really hard time meeting people because there's such a focus on hooking up and I'm more interested in romantic connections" and he says at the

end of his text - this is a quote- "I guess I'm doing it wrong." And the response from the guy in his 30s who shared the post was basically "hey you just got to get with the program, guys are gonna be guys and guys are going to want the D so get hip to it." He didn't say get hip to it because that's the thing that I say because I am nine thousand years old NEIL: you're looking to replace your current hip basically CODY: But that's basically it and the caption was basically this guy in his thirties saying that he was teaching a younger gay man about gay culture.

04:53

NEIL: And that's embarrassing for him. CODY: I got so angry about this post. NEIL: I was wondering what your tweets were about this morning. CODY: I was angry about it. NEIL: I was like How are you mad about this when you're in the middle of your training. CODY: Yeah it made me angry on a lot of levels and I want to talk about that today, about the the ways in which it made me angry and first to just talk about the things that are involved in this post what I think is like deeply troubling and problematic on a lot of different levels. So I wanted to first start, to just kind of talk about his assertion that this is just gay culture. That's where I want to start and start. So OK so here's my here's my feeling here is what I feel about this. What bothered me so much about this is that he was basically saying that what gay culture is is just chasing dick and I reject that whole heartedly. I do not reject chasing dick. I don't reject that. NEIL: I say it's a regular Tuesday night. CODY: If you got the running shoes for it and you got the feeling to chase it, chase it, walk behind it, hang out with it, buy it dinner, do what you got to do. NEIL: So sometimes I wish that this was like a visual format. To see me actually reacting to you. But also like so people could see you're like ridiculous hand play.

06:31

CODY: But no really I firmly I am not saying that chasing the D is bad. I see him chasing the D as good if that's what you want to do. Then you can chase it, like don't don't chase it in a gross way but chase it like, I mean. you know like don't like attack it in the dark in a dark alleyway or something. Don't chloroform it and then take it back to your house. I'm just saying NEIL: If I get where you're going for but it's getting a little de-humanizing how you kept saying it.

07:01

CODY: OK fine. OK. I don't know its pronouns I don't know how it identifies.

07:28

Anyway, what I do object to is the idea that that chasing D is the foundation of our culture that as gay people -- because and I don't normally use gay as an identifier it's kind of weird to be calling myself gay because I normally say queer but I'm really just specifically talking about the gay part of my identification here -- that gay culture is about so much more than that to me, and to say to anybody that you were not participating in the culture of our community if you are not interested primarily in getting laid, I like to say that makes you an asshole to me and missing the point entirely about what our community really is about and what our history is about and what what really is the thing that ties us together.

08:19 NEIL: Well I mean the initial comment it all boils down I know you're going to get to this but I don't care I'm going to bring it up now. It all it all boils down to just a very simple crisis in masculinity, in a crisis in manhood, because when it comes to socialization it comes all that stuff. As men we are socialized to be sexual we are socialized to believe that we are meant to be conquerors and queerness doesn't get in the way of that.

08:50 It really doesn't it doesn't it doesn't get in the way of the fact that we are as men socialised to be sexual So even though we experience that sexuality in a different way than what we might be socialized instead of conquering women we're conquering other men. This kind of falls into line with, it's really not that far cry from like bottom shaming, the notion that being a bottom makes you lesser. It's really along those same lines but at the end of the day it boils down to this very misogynistic notion of men conquering and sexually conquering. So. So it makes sense. Like the idea is that the next logical step is OK. So if you're man who has sex with men, then you're both into that. So like of course the gay culture needs to be super sexual it's because we're both dudes and we're both socialized to have a whole lot of sex so as a result we're going to have a whole lot of sex. And obviously that's harmful for many many many many reasons not just emotional psychological but also very physical things. I mean there's there's a reason why STDs are very high among men who have sex with men. There's a reason for that and that's because we're socialized to have a lot of sex. So as a result we have a lot of sex.

10:15 CODY: I mean yeah that the assertion that this is just part of gay culture but that it's just guys being guys I think is like enormously gross. It is enormously gross because I feel like yeah it's taking part in a system that is much larger than gay men and it's taking part in that system that that that impacts -- that impacts women it impacts rape culture it impacts all of those other those other things the idea that guys are just going to be guys and like go after fucking.

11:02 CODY: Like I want to I want to swing, I want to swing back to that notion of culture to the notion of culture again. And what is gay culture and dig into like, how do we then balance, because I do feel like it's important to acknowledge that a considerable part of our history is connected to sexual contact as a way of community building. Like that's it's a tool, it has been not a tool but it's been a conduit for community building. It's been the way that men have found each other. It's been you know those gathering places like the bathhouses in and that whole the way that we sort of met each other the way that we would find each other would be through these sexual means. And it was often the way that that community got built. It got built while you were out looking for the D NEIL: And at the end the day that day, end the day that's what made the persecution and oppression happen in the first place it all boils down to the sexual aspects that had nothing to do with any emotional or psychological attractions that men have for other men. It came down to the fact that it's a sexual act that's happening between two men and all of the arguments against same sex marriage are against anything that is remotely queer affirmative always boils down to the sexual thing and it always comes down to what is physically

happening between two bodies or three bodies or multiple bodies. So at the end of the day it makes sense that that is kind of like a starting point a starting point in not only realizing identity but also realizing community it makes sense that the starting point does involve sexuality.

12:58

CODY: How do we. And this is probably a question that I'm just thinking about in myself right now. How do we balance the. How do we balance the assertion that we as a community exist in space beyond sex. We exist in a lot of spaces beyond sex particularly now that there is a culture that is beyond, that the beyond the bathhouse and beyond the random hookup. And how do we how do we balance that, how do we balance that with a sex positive approach to the community. How do we balance the rejection of of of the bathhouse as central with an affirmation that you can explore your sexual identity in the way that you want to. And it's not shameful that we're not shaming you for it. How do we balance that.

14:02

NEIL: Well I guess for starters we have to define queer space. We have to define what that means. And in a lot of cases queer space does exist sexually. So the bar's cruising spots the bathhouses those are sexual queer spaces. And then we define the non-sexual queer spaces. So those are protests those are historically speaking any kind of social gatherings that exists like like cabaret nights CODY: and things like the teas. like that the Sunday tea. NEIL: Oh yeah. And like brunch at brunch is a queer space. but it's I think that they're historically even with the whole bathhouse even with that whole culture. There's always been a very explicit line between the sexual and non-sexual queer space. And I think it's just kind of looking at what that means now. And I would argue that what's really messing things up right now is that digital space is both, digital space is both a sexual and non-sexual space for queer people to realize themselves and that's where we're getting this problem. We're getting this problem where is this interaction. It's like oh I need to teach the young ones about about gay culture and it's like OK here's this person coming to you in a non-sexual way looking for a non-sexual space and you're giving, you're forcing them into a sexual space instead. And so as a result of this this beautiful great equalizer of digital space is making it hard to do that. But in a way that actually just makes it more queer because it's less binary. It has to be sexual and non-sexual. So in a weird way that's kind of fixing with that as well. So I think the answer requires nuance as it always does.

16:09

CODY: But I think it's like it's worth thinking about like you know because I I know that in myself I want to not, I don't want to communicate that I think one has to pursue romantic connections primarily or that you know one has to pursue platonic friendships with guys primarily because I don't NEIL: you know it the greatest thing that I miss about Omaha Nebraska right now. I no longer have a great circle of queer friends who there is no sexual thing at all. I lack that in my life right now I lack queer figures that I can hang out with on a regular basis. That there is nothing sexual about our relationship. Yeah and I miss that desperately.

17:00 CODY: Yeah because I mean I feel like, and this is and also like, this is partially because of the nature of our relationship the way that our relationship is structured, because those in in a like a traditional monogamous relationship because we are married, those other doors would be closed and you wouldn't have the opportunity, those spaces would be defined. But in our relationship it's not, because we can we can have other sexual partners.

17:28 NEIL: I feel like regardless of that I feel like that's still a thing. I mean like think about it. I think think about how many how many men do we talk to in digital spaces that are in closed relationships or advertise that they're in close relationships that still flirt with us. CODY: Oh yeah they are. NEIL: And like even though a physical thing may never actually happen even though it an actual emotional connection may never happen. This is how we connect to each other. Yeah like we connect with each other because I want to bone you. Yeah. And I mean like Granted that's because look at the tools that we're using to connect with people we're using hookup apps our sexual spaces digital sexual spaces. Even if you're looking for romance like friendship. Right. Right and the guy found right. Exactly. We found love in a hopeless place.

18:18 CODY: Yeah exactly. Growlr.

18:22 NEIL: But I mean like it's it's just a situation where there's no way to connect with a person who happens to be within my sexual aesthetic that doesn't involve that. And you know that's also my doing. That's not like I'm not like a victim of a sad sad sad little world. So how do we then create those kinds of queer connections How do we create those that are that exist in non-sexual spaces. How do how do I create those bonds without them being sexual and like the unfortunate reality is that it requires not only restraint on my part but also trust and restraint on the other part. So if I were to be just friends with a bear it would require that kind of like a thing.

19:50 CODY: And so then I'm sorry I just I feel like then that goes back to the original the original idea that that there is this notion that's been perpetuated that sexually. Sexual connection is the only way to relate to another person who is in you're like "want zone" The only thing that one can do with another, with another dude is have sex with them.

20:17 NEIL: I mean to a certain extent. I mean that's kind of the liberation of being queer is that we can do that yeah like to a certain extent that's that's that's a liberating thing. But yeah it definitely becomes problematic when that's the only way. And I have I have this theory of social theory and I'm pretty sure this is a thing that many people have written about before I just have never gone searching for it. But is this notion that we are told like like bringing back bringing the conversation back to socialization, queer men specifically I can speak to that because that's my experience, our social lives that we are Other because of our bodies and because of what we want to do with our bodies. So naturally that's what we want to do with our bodies. And think about it, like where do we learn love. Where do we learn about romance or what: we learned from porn. And

basically this is my roundabout way of saying that the reason why all all of gay culture and gay men are hypersexual guys is because there are no Disney princes who are in loving relationships either. But if you really think about it like hetero romance is very heavily pushed and normalized and to the point where even traditional conservative courtship is a thing. So as a result growing up you don't see that for your own sexual desires. So you think oh there's solely sexual. So of course the only way that I can connect with another person is sexual. And then you look at it from a radical queer perspective and you're like that's a good thing it's actually a good thing that you're doing that because that's different from the norm. It's subversive it's it's a it's a great thing that that's actually how we connect with each other because that's what makes us queer. So like it's messy it's messy and you've got one side saying that this isn't a problem that that's actually a great thing. And then you've got the other side saying it's kind of rapey.

22:18

CODY: I think the subtle distinction is the notion of choice, that very very radical idea that this isn't, it that this is an OK way for us to do that radical thinking saying that this is the only way that one can do that. It is saying that it is an option that is open to you if you want to make connections with other men that are sexual, you can. if you don't want to do that, you can. And what I think is the problem is the assumption that Creating connection in the gay community with another man needs to be sexual. That idea, that this is what gay culture means. And it goes to that that younger gay man thinking "I guess I'm doing it wrong" He believes that because he isn't prioritizing sexual connection and he isn't prioritizing hooking up that he is somehow doing gay wrong and I feel like that's a real problem. It should just be an option that's open to him and not not something that he feels like he has to do in order to be right and to be appropriately or acceptably gay

23:24

NEIL: can doing gay wrong be the title of this episode. CODY: Yes

23:26

NEIL: I mean you'd think so you'd think it'd be nice and easy to convince other people. That's a quote like an OK thing. You think it. You think we get along with each other that way.

23:44

CODY: Well it comes down to, it this connects to other issues that I think are very prevalent in the gay community and it's why I stopped identifying publicly and in conversation as gay because I feel like this is rampant in this particular community. Under the under the queer umbrella is the lack of of self-critique and thought about what they're doing. it feels like in a gay male circles whatever you fucking feel is even if it's completely shitty and it's completely problematic and you're not thinking about it and you're not noticing how you're impacting other people you're not noticing how you're participating in really shitty systems of oppression within our community and without our community. It's just what you feel and it's A-OK. This is just what we do. You know it's cool for us to be racist because it's just my preference. It's cool for me to tell you that, you know, you just got to get with the program and fuck everyone you can because that's just what we do. You can, you know, you can call women, you

can call women bitches and you can like grab their boobs when they're in bars because we're gay and it's just what we do. And like that is a real problem to me.

24:51 NEIL: Yeah it's it's a situation where there is this entire cultural force that says it's OK to be against the status quo when it's convenient to them it's OK to it's OK to be subversive in a way that is very like gay pride we're going to do rainbow shots at the bar and is going to be awesome over gay and we're proud and we celebrate the way we want but then also I'm going to perpetuate this toxic masculinity because it's convenient to me to do that because it gets my rocks off.

25:25 CODY: And if I may I feel like it's because we're mostly talking about gay men who are white. And so we're talking about white men and white men have a really specific kind of privilege and experience in our culture and it's a culture of doing whatever the fuck you want and not having to explain yourself and not having to answer to anybody. And I I I feel like really deeply the more that I have engaged in these ideas over the last several years particularly like I've thought about it more I feel like like we really have to get our shit together on this and recognize that we have to take seriously. And answer to our reliance on the privilege of being white dudes.

26:09 NEIL: That's harder. CODY: No it's not hard because we do it. We try to do NEIL: it takes effort CODY: yes takes effort but that effort is useful and necessary that that effort to make sure that other people don't have shitty experiences in the world because of you.

26:24 NEIL: Right. I mean I guess that makes sense. I mean yeah.

26:30 CODY: You can tell what I was doing this weekend right. You can tell what kind of conversation I was having all weekend

26:38 CODY: and the last thing. And it's it's something it's kind of, it's not really, it's a little tangential but I think it's important and if you like it's a good wrap up place for this conversation. I want to go back to the notion of him saying, that kid saying "I guess I'm doing it wrong" and this guy in his thirties missing an opportunity to positively model something that's expansive and not exclusive.

27:10 NEIL: What did RUPaul say. Don't fuck it up well you fucked it up. CODY: Yeah. And I think there's something very important that everybody and I'm more speaking to gay men who are who are closer to my age. Those of us who are in like you know like mid-thirties and into your 40s and mid 30s. But people who are like their mid-thirties to their in their 40s and even into their 50s because we gay men around my age came in at the real tail end of like serious kinds of marginalization as gay men. I mean when I came out in 1994 we did have that we had the HIV crisis to to the AIDS crisis to sort of reckon with and have that be like this. The stamp on our experience but I cannot really tell you that I have

faced a ton of marginalization or a ton of institutional pushback in my life because of my gayness I have felt it internally and interpersonally but not necessarily like in the world. The world hasn't always for marriage equality like that's been a major institutional one. But I have been a fairly easy ride right. So. So we're here we have a responsibility.

28:28 NEIL: I just want to like you I feel like race and class really really feed into that.

28:34 CODY: Yes. Oh absolutely. No you're absolutely right because I'm white and fairly like lower middle class middle class. But we have a responsibility I think to make sure that the younger younger gay men who are coming into this world who have dealt with serious internalized stuff in their coming out process aren't fucked up by us too late. We need to be better. We need to be thoughtful. We need to be self-critical about what we're doing and how we are like perpetuating bullshit that we got fed and that has been ingrained in us so that we are giving better mentorship and better guidance and better being better elders to the people in this community and not handing them our bullshit.

29:29 NEIL: You know before before anybody tries to respond to that with like oh but we didn't have that. We turned out fine -- YOU didn't turn out fine and also since you have come out science has happened research has happened people have experienced the world in different ways and different things have happened. So maybe be different you know maybe actually actively try to make it better. And you know like not that I'm that old because I'm still a baby but I'm definitely like I'm getting there. I'm already feeling that where I see younger queer people like undergrads and things like that experiencing the world they experience. And it's it's like my job to kind of be a bridge now where I'm bridging between an older generation and younger generation and with that responsibility comes not only everything you told but also like teaching history because it's so queer people my age and younger do not know history. So it's like that's my job. You know my job is to empower people and also teach history because the kids don't know because the kids weren't there. You know the kids didn't see their best friends die of AIDS and they didn't know what it was like they didn't they didn't know any of that stuff. So like that's kind of my job on top of that as well. So I recognize that I recognize that there's there's a lot that gay men who are middle age and older they went through a lot and they survived through a lot. And that's wonderful and I'm really happy that you're still here. But also there are things that you probably could have really benefited from so be those things.

31:09 CODY: Yes absolutely. Because if you can't get it right and not you. If we can't get it right cause I'm including myself and I say if we can't get it right on this if we can't get it right with our own people with other gay men if we fuck that up then we aren't going to get it right on race in our community. We aren't going to get it right on gender identity and gender expression in our community. We're not going to get it right on transphobia in our community. And those are essential things for us to get it fucking right on because if -- we say this every time we talk about this larger thing -- But if you care about justice for queer

people you have to get your ass in the game for every fuckin social identity justice movement because every one of those identities exists in our community somehow. You have to get your ass in the game and work. Do the fucking work.

32:07

NEIL: And that's what makes being queer magical is the fact that it is a diverse community.

32:11

CODY: Yeah we're powerfully diverse and if you think our community is simply your kind I'm getting so ranty if you feel like our community is just your fucking parties where you're dancin for pride on floats with your shirt off then you have what you have a lot to learn. You have a lot to learn about your history. You have a lot to learn about the community you really are living in and you have a lot to learn about your role in it and you are the one who needs to get with the fucking program.

32:38

NEIL: Yeah. Timothy and Michael and CHET. cody: and definitely chet. Ah that chet. NEIL: I'm sorry your name is Chet and you know if your chat we love you CODY: if you're listening if your name is Timothy or Michael or Chet you've gotten to the end of this without turning this off and sending us a nasty e-mail.

33:08

cody: So yeah. So that's that's where we are today.