

# AT Banter Podcast Episode 252 - Andrew Gurza

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

disability, people, disabled, talk, podcast, conversation, mom, great, sexuality, sex, community, hear, ableism, sex workers, language, documentary, listen, andrew, hire, queer

## SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Andrew Gurza, Ryan Fleury

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Ryan Fleury 00:00

Hello everyone. This week's episode of AT Banter may contain course language and will contain mature subject matter. Listener discretion is advised.



Rob Mineault 00:53

Hey, and welcome to another episode of AT Banter



Ryan Fleury 00:59

Banter, banter.



Rob Mineault 01:00

Well, you changed it up there.



Ryan Fleury 01:01

I did. Look at that. Wow, spontaneous.

R

Rob Mineault 01:05

Yeah, clearly. You've got a little pep in your step today.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:11

If you say so. Yeah.

R

Rob Mineault 01:16

Or maybe you stepped in something?

R

Ryan Fleury 01:18

No, not. Not yet. Anyway.

R

Rob Mineault 01:20

I hear you're letting Benji in the guitar dungeon. So that could very well be a thing.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:25

Yeah, no, we usually make sure he's done his business outside before we let him down. So but you never know. Accidents happen.

R

Rob Mineault 01:31

Yeah, exactly. Um, hey, wait, did I say I would tell people who I am. I'm Rob Mineault And you are Ryan Fleury. Wow, we're just changing. Throwing everybody for a loop. Yeah, and no Steve Barkley this week. He fishing.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:57

Well, we are we have to assume

R

Rob Mineault 01:59

Who knows? Who knows what, Steve is up to?

R

Ryan Fleury 02:04

He could be just taking a really long nap.

R

Rob Mineault 02:07

That, that that has an appeal to it. I can get behind that. could use a nap. No. Hey, what's, what are we doing today? Let's talk. Let's talk about that.

R

Ryan Fleury 02:21

Let's talk about that. today. We are talking with disability awareness consultant, and fellow podcaster Andrew Gurza.

R

Rob Mineault 02:30

Yeah, this is gonna be cool. I was I watched a documentary that was that he did, or I guess he didn't do it, I guess CBC did it about him. And the work that he's doing in the - get ready for this Ryan - disability and sex field?

R

Ryan Fleury 02:50

That's not a thing. Is it? Dun dun dun.

R

Rob Mineault 02:54

No, I say, bow chicka bow bow.

R

Ryan Fleury 02:58

Yeah, you don't hear a lot of people talking about that topic. And so it's gonna be really interesting to kind of talk to Andrew and just see how he approaches it.

R

Rob Mineault 03:07

Yeah, well, it's interesting. Because originally because I was doing some reading, and originally this is podcast, which is called Disability After Dark, I guess Originally, it was. It was all about disability and sex, but like us it sounds like he started it up and then did that for a while, and then eventually just opened up the podcast and went in some different directions. So it'll be interesting to hear that story, too.

R

Ryan Fleury 03:32

Absolutely. He's definitely got as long a run in the podcast field as we do now. And so definitely check out the Disability After Dark podcast because there's a lot of good content there.

R

Rob Mineault 03:44

Yeah, that's right. What else is going on?

R

Ryan Fleury 03:49

What else is going on? Nothing really. It's pretty quiet. Things are gonna start picking up now. People are talking about school starting up again here soon. So looking forward to getting busy. It's always you know, fall hits.

R

Rob Mineault 04:06

I honestly, I don't know where the summer's gone. This is crazy to me that it's almost over. It's like the 18th of August. It's ridiculous.

R

Ryan Fleury 04:16

Pina coladas on the patio.

R

Rob Mineault 04:17

No, we could have fried bacon on the patio this summer. Nice now that's it a bit cooler.

R

Ryan Fleury 04:27

Absolutely.

R

Rob Mineault 04:29

Um, all right. Well, listen, if we don't have anything else really Banter about you want to bring Andrew on. All righty. Joining us now is Andrew Gurza.

R

Ryan Fleury 04:41

Andrew, thank you so much for joining us. I am Ryan Fleury. Joining me as usual is the host Rob Mineault.

R

Rob Mineault 04:48

Hello. I always feel weird about that intro. Besides, I thought you said it was a host with the most?

R

Ryan Fleury 04:58

Not this week.

A

Andrew Gurza 04:59

Oh wow. shade.

R

Rob Mineault 05:02

Okay. Wow, okay, we're starting I told you he was grumpy Andrew. I mean this is already going real well. well I'm really excited about this conversation. This is something that we've been we've been sort of kicking around talking about on the podcast for a while now. But we really have, honestly, we've been a little bit hesitant to pull the trigger. So I'm excited to just go ahead and do it. Because I think this is gonna be really important and interesting conversation. But why don't we just start out and just tell us and the audience just a little bit about yourself and and what you do, and a little bit about the podcast?

A

Andrew Gurza 05:41

Sure, sure. My name is Andrew Gurza. I am 37. I live in Toronto, Canada with Cerebral Palsy. I'm a full time wheel power wheelchair user. I'm queer. I'm disabled, I am professionally a disability awareness consultant. So I give talks, speeches, presentations around disability and the lived experience, and I also host an award winning podcast called or not an Award nominated podcast, almost winning that winning almost called Disability After Dark where I share the stories of disabled people.

R

Ryan Fleury 06:19

At least you've been nominated.

A

Andrew Gurza 06:23

I was honored to be nominated but fucking hell I want to win one day.

R

Ryan Fleury 06:27

I'd like to be nominated.

R

Rob Mineault 06:31

How do we do that? Who do we got to find to grease some palms? I didn't even realize that there was the possibility.

A

Andrew Gurza 06:37

Oh, absolutely.

R

Rob Mineault 06:38

Making a note of that. Yeah, I, how, geez, you know, this, is I've got so many notes. I got so much I don't even know where to start. Well, okay, let's start at the beginning and kind of walk us through what got you into this space about talking about sex and disability? Was it sort of something that that was planned? Or did it just kind of happen?

A

Andrew Gurza 07:05

It just happened. I had no plan to be to do what I do. I just did just have and I was finishing school, I finished my master's degree, have a degree from Carleton U and I was like, oh, nobody wants to hire me to work because of my disability. Great, I better make a name for myself, better make a job for myself. And so I realized that I had a story to tell around disability and queerness as well, I can use that as my, like springboard to talk about this stuff. And then I just started putting myself out there and going to outlets like Huff Post and P Advocate and a bunch of queer outlets, saying I want to do this now. So it just kind of happened. It did snowball from there, but I made a conscious choice because I was like, no one will hire me to do a regular job at a school and so if no one's gonna hire me, I need to make money somehow.

R

Ryan Fleury 08:06

Did you always have the open attitude, the bluntness about facing the issues related to

your disability, and, and sex in that regard, as well, because listening to some of your podcasts and watching your documentary, there is no filters with you. And that's not my appreciate hearing. And it's not something we hear a lot.

A

Andrew Gurza 08:27

I mean, I'm shy, actually, I'm in the public eye. And I know that seems weird to say, but I am I'm very shy, and very awkward. The public persona that I've kind of crafted for myself, was a way for me to get to get people to notice me. So they would hire me, so that they would pay attention to me, but I am also that gregarious person, but deep, deep underneath all that I'm shy.

R

Rob Mineault 08:54

And so what is the what's that process been like, over the years? In terms of like, personal growth, or, like, as you as you sort of dove into this sphere, and sort of talking more about it, and, and, and developing the podcast and all the other media, that that you've created through this conversation? What's it sort of meant to you personally?

A

Andrew Gurza 09:17

it's just so cool to see other people resonate with what I post, or talk about, or podcasts about to see other people say, you know, your podcast makes me feel not feel alone or your show makes me feel happy are what you what you talk about is what I feel about disability. Or like, you know, thank you for being out there to see community members come to me and say like, this is what I feel to. That's what it means to me and the fact that I can do all this also from my bedroom and make an impact like that. That's cool.

R

Rob Mineault 09:51

And I have to say that, you know, talking about sex and disability and having that conversation, it's it's it's hard Because I feel like with the mainstream audience it's already hard enough to to talk about disability there's there's a real discomfort level with with the mainstream to enter into that discussion, but then again, and then you layer on top of that, talking about sexuality, which is also uncomfortable for some people to deal with what's what's served sort of some of the reception that you've got talking about this. I, you know, I know that you've, I'm sure you've gotten positive impact from the community. Have you gotten any sort of negative pushback or anything from people?

A

Andrew Gurza 10:37

Some people don't like how outspoken I am. Some people don't like that I've said certain things. But I'm always open to learning. And if I've made a mistake, I'm always willing to, to correct myself and be corrected. Some people haven't liked kind of what I've talked about and how I've talked about it, but you know, that's on them. And that's not my really not my problem. And I tried to just keep doing what I'm doing with love and honesty and hope that it resonates for people.

R

Rob Mineault 11:07

Yeah. And it seems to me that, like, when we're talking about disability, it that's kind of that kind of resonates with me, because I feel like the important thing is people are talking about disability. Do you kind of see it like that? Or...

A

Andrew Gurza 11:22

I think that in our, in our social media, cancel culture, ask kind of world. I think the old adage, any press is good press is not necessarily true. I think that we have to be very careful what we accept, especially on disability. I think we also have to be very, like, I don't like a lot of the infighting within the disability community that that's the part of being a disabled community member that I hate the most. Why do we have to tear each other down all the time when we use the wrong language? Or say the wrong thing? Or maybe we're learning about disability in a different way? Why do we have to hate on each other so much? That's the stuff that I have a problem with. And I think we need to talk about disability in a much more nuanced away, then, oh, if you're not disabled, you're in a blessed like, No. Because deeper than that, we need to talk about disability in a way that's like, everyone has a right to learn about this. We need to make these conversations accessible to everyone.

R

Rob Mineault 12:28

Yeah, I think that's a really, really interesting point. And I know that as you know, an able bodied person that that, you know, hosts a podcast, you know, around the disability community, I do feel that sometimes it is hard because we want we want the conversation to be pushed forward. We want people to engage and, and learn. I mean, that's really the main push of the disability community is is teaching people educating people on what that lived, what that disabled lived experience is is like it that's hard to do when people are feel either uncomfortable about that, which they already are anyways, but especially if they're uncomfortable, because they're afraid of saying the wrong thing.

A

Andrew Gurza 13:15

Yeah, I totally agree. And I think everyone has the right to say the wrong thing. And I wish that people would know, there's a difference between being offensive for the sake of being offensive. And for the sake of saying something edgy, but if you're just trying to learn and you fuck up, I think that's okay, too. Like, I think that's valid. I think we, in the disability community have to soften or soften a little bit. We have to learn to build a bridge instead of burning them. And I don't think we're doing that enough.

R

Rob Mineault 13:49

Yeah, and I think that that extends out even you know, past the disability community. I mean, I think it's just this. It's this toxic social media outrage culture, that, you know, it feels really good for people to sort of, you know, attack other people.



14:05

I think on social media, it's become a little bit of a it's a game almost, yeah. Who can I bring down today? And like, I'm not saying that disabled people or other marginalized people shouldn't be angry. Of course they should. We've been through some shit, of course. But my caveat to that is, what are you doing to mobilize your anger? What are you doing to turn it away from anger into something positive? What do you turn What are you doing to make yourself feel better? Because I, for a couple years of my activism, I was that angry disabled person who was like, mad at every bloody person for this thing, but then I got sick. From that, physically ill from that. So it was helping.

R

Rob Mineault 14:51

Yeah, and I want to talk a little bit about about that. Because I really do feel like lately, you know, we have had Some some movement in a lot of different spaces like we've had, you know, Black Lives Matter, we've had a huge movement in the LGBTQIAS2+ sphere. We've had different movements that have sort of provided a little bit of traction, but I still feel like when it comes to the Disability Rights space, I feel like we haven't had that moment yet. What's sort of your feeling? You know, we're having your boots on the ground?



15:30

My feeling is, we have to be we have to stop in fighting with each other. Disabled people have different things and have different feelings around stuff. And you know what, that's

okay. But the way disabled people talk about disability rights on social media, is it it's one way or it's no way. And that's just not true. And I hate that about it. Like, for instance, I'm asked all the time to do image descriptions for poster transcripts for the podcast. And due to my energy levels, and due to my disabilities, a lot of the times I can't I don't. And when I don't, I am raked over the coals because I'm a public figure about how dare you not be accessible to Xyz community. And I always say like, cool, if you want to pay for me to get a transcriptionist, so that they can do all that. Amazing. Otherwise, I'm doing my very best here, like sorry. And so I think, you know, we have to just be softer with each other and also softer with non disabled people that are trying to learn. We're never going to move the needle for the needle forward in Disability Justice, if we keep unintentionally dividing able bodied and disabled people from each other.

R

Ryan Fleury 16:46

Yeah. Make love not war, right.

A

Andrew Gurza 16:50

I mean, you can have a war but just don't tear each other down. You got to pick your battles, right.

R

Rob Mineault 16:56

Yeah. Okay, so let me ask you this. How do you see talking about sexuality? How do you see that fitting into sort of the larger conversation about disability in general?

A

Andrew Gurza 17:11

I would say, sexuality is a disability rights issue. We're always talking about in disability rights, the right to access. Well, what if I couldn't access my own body? What if they couldn't access the right to masturbate? What if they couldn't access the right to someone else's body with their consent and loves? Like, what are they couldn't do that sexuality needs to be a part of disability rights? And it isn't right now. Most Disability Rights justice, people don't talk about sex, if you notice, most of them don't. And they need to be.

R

Rob Mineault 17:48

Yeah, I thought it was really interesting. When I watched the documentary, the piece about you're talking a little bit about support workers, and how there's really no

mechanism in there their job to really factor in the idea of sexuality. And I thought that that was a really, really interesting point. Where do you see the main part of the work to be done,

A

Andrew Gurza 18:12

We need to recognize, like, overall, that all of us are going to become disabled. Let's start there. Every single persons that is on this earth, if they're not disabled, already, they're going to become disabled at some point. So we got to start there, we have to talk about what ableism is, first, we do need to include sexuality into disability supports. Because that's a part of life. So of course we do. But we have to be able to sit in our discomfort first, and talk about why it makes us uncomfortable.

R

Rob Mineault 18:49

Yeah, I think that that's a really, really good point. People always I think, in their heart of hearts, just go "this that could be me, like, or that could be me like", because really

A

Andrew Gurza 19:01

Not could be, it will be you.

R

Rob Mineault 19:03

Yeah, right. Right, exactly. Like why don't I forget about the stat is, but we've talked about on the show before where, you know, it's like three or four people or four out of four people eventually in their lifetime, at some point is are going to be quote, disabled in some way. And so do you think that that's where that discomfort comes from is that people are just there, they're afraid about how they are going to handle it? And so that just creates this, this level of discomfort or what do you think that's about?

A

Andrew Gurza 19:38

Well, look at the history of disability, the history of discrimination against disabled people goes back 1000s of years. Look at you know, we've been institutionalized we've been killed. We've been named, we've been told that we're, you know, demon people, we you know, that goes back 1000s of years. So, there's The huge history in us not being included, and not being seen as human even. So, people that are afraid that by becoming disabled, they'll become an other and and that lack of privilege scares a lot of people.

R

Rob Mineault 20:18

That's so counterintuitive to like, sometimes humans are just, we're just stupid. Like, honestly, like, if that's a real fear of people, you think they're well listen, let then let's be inclusive, let's build a society. That's, that's great for that, because we're all going to be there at some point in our lives. And yet, we don't we stick our heads in the sand. And we, we don't, we don't want to engage in that conversation.

A

Andrew Gurza 20:42

And that's unfortunate, because by engaging in the conversation, you can learn what your own biases are. And you can learn what the things you have to work on. And that's all we have to do. I'm not saying that everybody tomorrow has to be NDA blessed. And like, wake up knowing all the right things to say about disability, I'm not saying that I'm saying, just work on it better, try a little bit harder, trying not to hurt somebody.

R

Ryan Fleury 21:12

And since we know that talking to people, or about people with disabilities is such a big fear or an issue with some people, how do you then introduce the topic of sexual disabilities or sexual identity on top of that conversation?

A

Andrew Gurza 21:29

It's a loaded question. I mean, I mean, the way I've done it is to be very forward, like you saw me in the documentary, you saw what the character that I've created for myself, even though I'm shy, like the character that I created of Andrew Gurza that is very forward very, very forthcoming with my sexuality. To say like, this exists, this is important, pay attention here. And I think just being playful with it, and making it part of who you are, like I play with the fact that I'm disabled all the time. It's part of my sexuality. And like, I call myself a bear in a chair, or like I say, like, hey, do you want to play with my big joystick? Like, I play with it? Because it's, it's fun. And I think the way you introduce that conversation is through fun.

R

Rob Mineault 22:17

Yeah, absolutely, more fun and humor. And I think that that generally disarms people and puts the puts them at ease.



22:26

Yeah. And I think that when people are at ease, they're more willing to learn.



Rob Mineault 22:34

Yeah. Talk to me a little bit about how you like podcasting? This might be a stupid question, but I'm just curious.



Andrew Gurza 22:41

It's, it's been a journey for me when I first started the show. Five years ago, the tagline was, the tagline was shining a bright light on sex and disability. It was purely a sexuality and disability podcast. And now it's an everything about guest. So over the last five years, it's morphed into something completely different. I love it now, because it allows me to sit with people and get them to share their stories and tell stories and really shine a light. The reason why it's called disability after dark now, five years ago, when I created that name, that was to be like, ooh, sexy, that's a sexy like, after dark. Yeah, now it's like, let's talk about all the things that we don't talk about about disability. And let's shine a light on that. And so I love doing that. I love sharing stories. I love bringing non disabled people on the show, and asking them questions about disability and getting them to learn. I love just having those conversations and having that platform to bring those conversations to life.



Rob Mineault 23:48

That's so interesting. We are so much alike. Actually. It's funny, our podcasts are very close in age. And we say exact same thing happened to us. When we started out we were we were just going to be strictly a podcast that talked about assistive technology, it was going to be a real tech based show. And within about five episodes, we kind of strayed from that and started talking to people in the community. And we just found that that was so much more interesting for us. But I think that much more engaging for the audience, and there was much more of a potential to reach people who we could educate about different different issues in the disability community.



Andrew Gurza 24:33

Yeah, and I mean, that's what I love what I do, and I do that I've had, I did, I did a couple shows recently, where I talked to like, teenagers about being teenagers with disabilities. I did a show where I talked about, you know, somebody with disabilities wrote a children's

book that I you know, these are all episodes that are up and coming, but then I'll do shows where I talk with like, Dan Savage, or a porn Star like, you know, so I love the breadth of stories that I can share. And I love how it's changed into something completely different than what it originally was. And that's exciting for me, also, because like, there isn't a lot of popular disability media out there. And I'm poised and quite thankful and grateful that I get to do that, that I get to put something out there in the world. And the thing with your show, like, these kinds of conversations are valuable, and they, I'm glad we're able to create content to give them a space.

R

Ryan Fleury 25:34

Yeah, listen to one of your sound bites you and your mom did on CBC and you know, Rob was mentioning the documentary, we both watched it as well. I think I want to get your mom on the show. I think she'd make an interesting guest.

A

Andrew Gurza 25:44

It's funny, she just texted me five seconds ago. She probably would be. So she probably totally would tell us all about Andrew. Well, yeah, tell us a little bit Andrew, all the things that he's going to say on the air, go!

R

Rob Mineault 26:00

Well, actually, no, but actually, that is that that totally is a not a bad idea. Right? And make a note of that. Because the other thing that struck me about the documentary, and especially the part about your mom, that I think that part of education, I think the really important people to hit are parents of, of children who have either just recently, you know, been born with a disability or been diagnosed, because I really feel like those formative years are so important. And so you know, it really struck me when your mom was talking about how she treated you just like any of the other kids and, and that you got no special treatment.

A

Andrew Gurza 26:47

Yeah, and my mom, and my whole family really never treated me any differently. They treated me like a disabled person that needed help, because that's just the truth. But when it came to like, going places and doing stuff that was never, that they were like, okay, we have to find a way to bring it or let's figure out a way. And I am very grateful for that. And I'm very grateful that like, my mom never caught me. She never, like overdid it. She's like, oh, you're gonna fall in your face. Cool. You're gonna learn that that hurts, like,

move on. And so like, but she always, she always had to be harder on me a little bit. Because, you know, she wanted to show me that, like, yeah, I have to be stronger in the world.

R

Rob Mineault 27:36

Yeah. And I think that, that, you know, when you develop it at that sort of age, it builds in the confidence that you really need to, let's face it, like breach this world that has all these barriers in place.

R

Ryan Fleury 27:51

Well, in the fact that you know, TV and media have villainized you know, persons with disabilities, right? We've always been kind of the bad guys or the evil,

A

Andrew Gurza 27:59

or like the superhero that like could do no wrong, and it's an angel. And it's great. Like, right, well, I can be somewhere in between. Sometimes I'm an asshole. Like, why can't we show that part of it? Things like, sometimes I'm a real dick.

R

Ryan Fleury 28:14

Just listen AT Banter. You'll hear an asshole all the time.

A

Andrew Gurza 28:17

Amazing. Good. Yes.

R

Ryan Fleury 28:19

That's me, Rob. Not you.

28:21

As a queer man that I like assholes. So I guess I guess that's okay.

R

Rob Mineault 28:27

You know what? Okay, so I do want to touch a little bit on this because I this is a quote from the documentary that I loved.

A

Andrew Gurza 28:34

Oh no, what did I say?

R

Rob Mineault 28:37

Now this I thought this was really insightful and, and really interesting. So, but you said, disability needs to be sensationalized in order to be newsworthy, and I thought that that is a really, really interesting point. And the more that I thought about it, I thought, you know what, you're absolutely 100%. Right. And that's maybe part of the problem. Because if you think about it, you know, it's it disability is it's either it's inspiration porn, or it's somebody getting sued, or somebody that's fucked up some way where everybody is going to be angry at them. Yeah, never. You never hear it in any other context.

A

Andrew Gurza 29:15

Yeah, you really don't like, like, I'm not I don't I don't know what you guys are recording from right now. But I know in Halifax right now, they had a protest the other day for like, you know, disability housing, and some of the some of the horribleness that's happening there. Which is, which is newsworthy, of course, but like, when you love it, if it was just First of all, wouldn't you love to see a disabled news caster? Yeah. Wouldn't it be amazing? If you turn on like, CTV like 11 O'Clock News, and instead of us are in Canada, right?

R

Ryan Fleury 29:51

British Columbia. Yep.

A

Andrew Gurza 29:52

Okay, so instead of like Lisa laflamme at 11pm, wouldn't be incredible, if usually like, or if you saw a field reporter in a wheelchair that was like, you know, out there doing it. But at the same time, like to put it in context, where you guys are like there's wildfires happening there. Where's the like, disabled people trying to survive the welfare stories were those, you know, were the everyday people with disabilities just trying to live stories. We need more disabled people behind the camera, in front of the camera, in the writers rooms, creating these stories, because I think if you hire disabled people behind the scenes, you got a whole different story that is grown out of a knowledge base that able bodied people

don't have.

R

Rob Mineault 30:53

Yeah, you're so right. And, you know, I want to think that we're, we're slowly getting better. I mean, we hear more and more stories about things like representation in, in media, you know, hiring actors with disabilities, you know, for roles that that feature disabilities, that type thing, or even, you know, even better yet, hiring an actor with a disability, that the role does even have anything to do with a disability. So, yeah, so you know, we're starting to hear more stories. But yeah, you're absolutely right. I mean, that would really move the ball forward, I think. And we have we have, you know, a long way to go. But at least I think I feel like from my perspective, we're starting that process.

A

Andrew Gurza 31:44

Yeah, we're starting, but we're not doing good enough. With it's way too slow. We need. We need more dislike. The the biggest example of this that I can see is special with Ryan O'Connell, when he made that show on Netflix, about being gay and disabled, to have either of you seen it?

R

Rob Mineault 32:10

Yeah.

A

Andrew Gurza 32:12

And so, yeah, I think it's, it's the big, it's the like, the only real show on Netflix, that is about disability and queerness. So like, what I love about that shows that he was behind the camera, he wrote it, he produced it, he made it go, and he was in front of the camera, like, that's a great thing that he did, but also how tiring for him that he had to do all the things to make you go. We need more. We need different representations of disability, in front of the camera and behind the camera. So the different stories are told all the time.

R

Rob Mineault 32:50

Yeah, for sure. And, you know, I feel like there's some way some days, but do you ever feel a little bit overwhelmed, because there seems to be so much work that needs to be done in all these different spaces from, you know, we constantly throwing up our hands and aspiration over something like the Accessible Canada Act, which on its face, it's it's great that it exists. It's wonderful that we've started that process, but same time, there's really

not much to it.

A

Andrew Gurza 33:21

But I could say the same of the American Disabilities Act

R

Rob Mineault 33:24

100%. Yep.

A

Andrew Gurza 33:25

There's not much to it. It was designed to stop lawsuits in businesses like which didn't do that's what it was really for. And so, you know, they just had their 31st anniversary recently. And I think it's great that they have this law there. But listen, that still doesn't it doesn't tackle discrimination doesn't tackle the everyday stuff and the accessible Canada act, whatever the hell we're gonna call it. I hate the accessible Canada act. Can we can we say disability? Can we I call it the Canadians Disability, whatever. Like, if they call it the Accessible Canada act, I'll get a screen because we always keep connecting disability to accessibility, when what we're forgetting is a disability is a cultural itself. It's its own experience. And it doesn't have to be tied to access all the time.

R

Rob Mineault 34:26

Yeah, that's really interesting that you make that point because I I really think that people are afraid of the word disability.

A

Andrew Gurza 34:33

Oh yeah. They're terrified. That's why they use euphemisms like, you know, handi-capable euphemisms like special needs. But at the same time, it was just funny because I was doing a podcast just before I got on here with you guys. And I was saying that I listened to the way people use language. So if somebody uses the word handicapped, I could as a disability activist, Stop them and say, Excuse me, that's not the right language to use. How dare you or I could listen to what they said, how they said it, determine for myself if the word handicapped is being weaponized against me. And then decide if I want to say, Excuse me, can we change King? Would you mind using this language? Because I think in our communities, we spend so much time in fighting about what is the correct language to say them, like, my mom, for instance, you know, when she was raising me, the language she used she, she had for disability was special needs. So to this day, when she's talking to

somebody about me, or the disabled community, she'll say, people with special needs. And initially, I was like, Mom, you can't use that language anymore. But if you if you listen to how she's using it, who she hurting, how, how is it hurting anyone,

R

Rob Mineault 36:07

But I do feel like, you kind of shoot yourself in the foot when you're when you're not picking your battles, and you're not attacking the people that are say, are weaponizing the language against you, and you're just sort of muddying the waters or confusing people.

A

Andrew Gurza 36:22

Yeah. And I think what's unfortunate about that, is that in the disability sphere, we're not allowed to have that conversation. We're not allowed to say, you know what, I'm going to let somebody call me a special needs person, cuz it doesn't hurt me. Like, we're allowed to ask for that nuance. Disability Rights has made it so that anytime a non disabled person is learning, and they make a mistake, we're supposed to pounce on them. That's, in my view, what social media Disability Justice has become. And I think it's a shame because what we're doing is we're removing someone from the conversation when we should be including them.

R

Rob Mineault 37:10

Yeah, I know. Exactly. And, and again, it's it's this where we're shutting down, people who actually want to engage they, they want to join the conversation, and then they're told, well, you're, you're doing it wrong, and they get attacked, and, and they completely, like, just shut down.

A

Andrew Gurza 37:27

I don't blame them for shutting down, I would shut down to if somebody attacked me, because I'm learning and I made a mistake, like, I have made mistakes and other communities where I've said stuff that I totally shouldn't have said, and when I was corrected, I was like, Oh, thank you, for telling me, I'm gonna do my best. And I still sometimes make mistakes. But if you show to me, I'm not going to want to learn anymore. That's just that's how humans are, unfortunately. And I think disabled people, we have a right to be angry. But like I said earlier, what are you doing to mobilize that anger? What are you doing to turn it into something positive? And so my job as a disability awareness consultant, and as a podcaster, is to it's never my responsibility to educate you, but it

damn sure is my opportunity. And I'm gonna take it wherever I can.

R

Ryan Fleury 38:15

Yeah, you have a lot of experience, you know, and, you know, I think we could probably talk for a couple hours. But from listening to some of your experiences, as someone who is queer, dealing with sex and disability issues, finding sexual partners, how does that affect your, I guess, your your ability, your confidence, your, your promoting of the podcast, you're educating of people like how does that influence who you are and how you approach that topic, design, which by the queerness, all of it, again, do seminars. It's important to let people know that, you know, sex and disability is a topic that doesn't get talked about a lot, and how, you know, we did talk about how you can kind of approach that through humor, and make it fun and kind of set people at ease. But, you know, what are some of the challenges that you face? And how do you overcome them?

A

Andrew Gurza 39:19

Well, the challenges that I face are just getting people to see that I'm sexual period, the end, like, just getting them over the hump of like, that guy in the wheelchair is really hot, maybe I want to fuck him later. Or maybe like we want to hang out, or we should we should go on a date. Or maybe like, getting people over that hump is hard. Which is why I've resorted to working with sex workers and service providers that way. And like, I've been working with it with sex workers now for five years. And it's one of the most transformative, powerful ways that I get to access my sexuality. Because I found that the ableism I was experiencing in the queer community on a day to day level and try anime guides and apps, I'm trying to do all that stuff. It just wasn't happening. So I was like, Fuck, I'll pay for it, then let me see how that goes. And I had experiences that didn't go so great. But I've worked with people that are amazing providers, and it gives me a confidence in my body and my sexuality that I wouldn't have otherwise.

R

Ryan Fleury 40:18

And so how difficult was it for you to take that step?

A

Andrew Gurza 40:22

I definitely was like, Oh, I you know, live on social assistance, which I know in BC is less than it is here in Ontario. So, you know, I would always think like, well, do I want to I don't want to pay for that really hard to read there? Or should I feed myself. And so it's really hard to take that step because I thought this money that I'm getting from the

government, it should be used for feeding myself. But I'm lucky in the work that I do, I can make enough to support a good sex work session. But it was really hard for me because I didn't want to be ashamed of my sex life.

R

Ryan Fleury 41:05

Yeah, and one of the things you know, one of the other reasons, I think it'd be great to get your mom on the show is because you broach the topic with her mom, I'm, I'm by young working with sex workers. And she kind of took a pause for a moment and went, Okay, this is a whole new realm, you know, I didn't really sound like she had thought of before, you know, how are you going to be safe? Are you you know, that whole, that whole discussion, that whole concern that a mother would have for a son, you know, queer or otherwise? How has that been?

A

Andrew Gurza 41:37

Like, how is how Has she come around to the understanding of, of your needs and your identity? We have, we're very close my mom and I, and I'm sure you can tell from just listening to us, and then the podcasts were very close. So I was scared to tell her because I was like, I don't know how I'm gonna tell him this. But I had been lying about this and not lying, but just don't meeting the facts or parts. I'd say like, I'm going on a date with a guy later by and I wouldn't say that I'm paying him 300 bucks an hour to like, blow me. But, um, you know, once I told her, like, she was like, the very first thing she said was, Oh, good for you. If I was in a bad situation, I would do the same thing. And that was it. And that was it. And then we had like, conversations about safety and about money and about how much it costs. And we had those conversations. And it was very honest. And so I was very, I'm so happy to tell her. Because now, like, I show her. I show her texts between my worker and I like she's seen a photoshoot, he and I did like she's supportive. And so I think that was really powerful for me, because it showed me that like, it's okay, that this is an avenue you're doing and people support you.

R

Ryan Fleury 42:57

Well, I think that's one of the takeaways I got from watching your documentary and listen to the sound bites with your mom is, it sounds like you have a very supportive encouraging group of friends, your mom as well, it, you know, you're not alone in this endeavor.

A

Andrew Gurza 43:12

Yeah, I mean, I talk about sex work. And being a client of sex workers quite openly on line, and then what I do I talk about it all the time. Because I think it's important. And so like, when I told her when she told me that right away and said, Good for you, if it were like, if it were me, I did the same thing. I just took a fair leave. And I told her everything. And we now we just now she knows. And she, we she said to me off the cuff like, and happy for you to hear that you're getting your needs met. And like that's really affirming to me, because I was worried about what she would think. And now I know that she's okay, that's great. I can be the whore that I've always been. i'm a slut, Mom, yeah.

R

Rob Mineault 43:58

But it does bring up an interesting like so, you know, you talk about piling stigmas on top of stigmas in terms of this .. you know, what, what a lot of people are comfortable with. I saw a documentary not long ago about and I think it was, I think it was about a an agency, an escort agency in Ontario, I think, but they built built it so that they specialized in clients with disabilities,

A

Andrew Gurza 44:25

Is it, are they Essential Solutions?

R

Rob Mineault 44:27

It could have been? It may have they're actually..

A

Andrew Gurza 44:30

They are in your Province, and I did an interview with them. I can connect them you to them.

R

Rob Mineault 44:38

Actually, that's a great idea. Okay, I will talk off Yeah, let's let's, we'll email you about that. That's a great idea. But so I but I just want to get get your thoughts about that. And and you know, do we need more of that? And is there a real case to be made for having sex workers that have been trained in a specific way in helping meet specific needs, because I think that people with disabilities there, there's a gradient of what they may be looking for. Because there may be some people that just, it's just about touch, or it's just about intimacy more than actual sex. And so there's probably a gradient. Do you think that we need a more agencies like that? And do we need training? Or what? How do you see that

space?

A

Andrew Gurza 45:27

I think training is really hard. I think it will give every single like you said, every single person's experience with disability and how they like to be things done is different, right. So I think that I think that we need agencies, yes, but not maybe not a standard training, maybe like, just Hey, are you willing to give working with a disabled person shot cool, go and give it a shot, try, that person will tell you what they need, because we as the client know what we need. So when I started working with my worker, like, I found him on an escort site, and his, like photos, were him looking super hot and psycho. And so like, I emailed him and said, Have you worked with the disabled guy before? He said, No. And then, and then we, and then we, we've figured out a session, and he learned on the go, and there was something really powerful about that. And really, like, it bonded us because I was his first, like, disabled fuck. So that's, I think, too much training as a problem. The willingness to learn on the fly is the important part. And you know, that that requires, I think, I think it requires a lot of conversation, it requires a lot of discussion, it requires the worker to think about their own ableism. So maybe not training, but maybe there could be like, a course. Right? Around ableism. Like, what is ableism? What is sexual ableism? What is like, you know, that's actually a great idea. I've been thinking about ever while like maybe doing a course, for sex workers, about how do you become a client to disabled people? Yeah, like, how do you do that? And not of course, we like train on stuff. But just a course where you sit in on interrogating your own ableism to be able to help somebody else. Right? Yeah. So anybody who wants to hire me to do that course? You can hire me at andrewgurza.com

R

Rob Mineault 47:37

I love it. No, no, yeah, plug away. Always. We are plug sluts as well.

A

Andrew Gurza 47:45

Me too, but in a totally different kind of way.

R

Rob Mineault 47:50

Right. See, I felt like we had we had to, we have to, like earn that that warning that we're gonna put at the beginning of the podcast.

A

Andrew Gurza 47:56

Yeah. I mean, we really do.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:58

I'm trying to dig into the deeper consciousness of sex and disabilities here because

A

Andrew Gurza 48:05

I like things deep.

R

Ryan Fleury 48:11

You had to go there.

👤

48:12

I really did.

R

Rob Mineault 48:16

Yeah, exactly. I totally understand that. I sorry. I'm going to talk a little bit about the podcast again. Because I'm always curious. Cuz you know, we've been doing this for what do we what do I keep forgetting Ryan? Are we in our your sixth year?

R

Ryan Fleury 48:34

yeah,

R

Rob Mineault 48:34

So we've been doing this you know, and we're doing a weekly podcast and sometimes it is a real grind and it can be a real a real chore to to do a weekly podcast it's a lot of work. How do you find it?

A

Andrew Gurza 48:46

It's a lot of work. Yeah, it's it's hard. I have said quite openly on this video. That's why I don't edit anything. I hate to edit, editing is so like, not only tiring, but also I don't have the

dexterity for that shit. I don't know how to crop this little piece of audio into this little, I don't know how to do that. No, I don't have a team around me like well, what the mic I'm talking to you on is like in my bedroom and I'm recording it from my house. I have a group of people doing it for me. And so it's a lot but I love the final product is people you know, coming to me and saying thank you for your show. Thank you for doing that. Thank you for putting it out there like I'm that's powerful like that's that. I couldn't ask for anything better. Like, I've also created a podcast network called, you know, wheels on the ground and not that I want to toot my own horn there. But if you guys don't have a network you're on and you need one let me know.

R

Rob Mineault 49:56

We will talk.



49:58

All right. Well, I started a network And by started I mean, I literally have my friend, you make that bumper that you hear at the beginning of my show that says you're listening to "wheels on the ground" production. I had somebody make that for me. And I've literally been, you know, I wanted to create my own network because we need more podcasts by disabled people, and why not have a network just for that. And so, I'm saying to anybody listening right now, who has a show idea. I've been doing my show forever. And I want to kind of pass the torch and give people the chance to create their own show. So if you're disabled and you have a podcast idea, I can help you make one and bring you on my network. As long as you don't say horribly offensive things.

R

Ryan Fleury 50:45

There's a whole nother network for that. There are networks for that totally.

R

Rob Mineault 50:53

Okay, listen, before we before we do wrap up, where can people find you?

A

Andrew Gurza 50:59

They can watch they can follow me on Instagram and Twitter is my most active, they can find me at andrewgurza underscore, or they can follow my website andrewgurza.com, I don't use it so much anymore because because I feel like social media is how everybody

connects now. But you can book me at andrewgurza.com for speaking opportunities and gigs like that and consulting stuff and cool things all around. You can also follow my Award nominated podcast, Disability After Dark, which is available weekly, sometimes bi weekly. If I'm bored and want to put on a bonus episode, there's a whole bunch of series on there that you can go wherever you get podcasts go there to get it. There are no transcripts cuz I don't have the energy or time to do those as regularly as I'd like to. So when I get some more money to support the show, I will. They can also follow me. Yeah, yeah, those are other places.

R

Rob Mineault 51:58

Listen, it's been an absolute pleasure. It was so much fun talking to you. I want to have you on again.

R

Ryan Fleury 52:04

Get your mom on with you

A

Andrew Gurza 52:05

let's do it. I would love to do that with my mom.

R

Rob Mineault 52:08

It's a deal. Okay, we'll do it. We'll set it up. It'd be great.

A

Andrew Gurza 52:11

Okay.

R

Rob Mineault 52:12

It's a done deal.

A

Andrew Gurza 52:13

Amazing. Thank you for having me. Thanks. It's been fun. Bye. Take care.

R

Rob Mineault 52:21

Man, that was fun. Oh, it was really cool. I love talking to other podcasters and other people in the disability advocacy space. So very interesting, really interesting guy. I can't wait to have his Mom on.

R

Ryan Fleury 52:35

He's definitely got stories to tell, and a lot of educating to do. I think, you know, probably you and I gained a lot out of this week's episode like we do out of a lot of episodes. Yeah, there's a lot of information to be gathered.

R

Rob Mineault 52:50

Yeah, very true. And I'd really highly recommend watching the CBC documentary picture. We will include a show link in the show notes. It's really good. It's really interesting and really thought provoking. Definitely check out his podcast. There's reams and reams of really great content in there. And he talks to a lot of different people, including, we might add friend of the show, Alexis Hillyard, who appeared on the on the show not too long ago. So yeah, it's definitely worth a listen if people aren't already dialed into it.

R

Ryan Fleury 53:26

Absolutely.

R

Rob Mineault 53:27

But no, it was great. I can't wait to talk to him again. Cuz there's so much to say. And I thought, you know, some really thought provoking stuff. I especially like the stuff talking a little bit about some of the the infighting in the community, which I thought was a was an important topic to bring up.

R

Ryan Fleury 53:49

I think the problem? Well, I can't say I think the problem is I know, the problem is that no two parties are ever going to get going to agree on how they want to be identified. Right? So, you know, we've talked about vision loss as a spectrum. I have no sight, I'm totally blind. People call me visually impaired, I don't get offended. Why would I be offended? You know, that it's their lack of knowledge. And it would be the same with autism spectrum or learning disabilities, you know, we can battle within ourselves within our own

within our own communities, till the cows come home, there's not going to change anything. We're never going to agree. So let's just let that go. And again, if somebody does make a comment to you, that offends you, take that moment to turn that into an educational moment. Don't get offended, don't get pissed off. Don't berate them. Educate them.

R

Rob Mineault 54:47

Yeah, exactly. Don't berate, educate.

R

Ryan Fleury 54:50

There you go. great slogan.

R

Rob Mineault 54:57

Start passing that hashtag around. Although None of our other none of our other hashtag campaigns really went very far

R

Ryan Fleury 55:05

Because we haven't done anything Our hashtag #WhosIsShan never got started.

R

Rob Mineault 55:15

Our audience just isn't into Twitter.

R

Ryan Fleury 55:17

I guess.

R

Rob Mineault 55:21

Don't blame them. Hey, Ryan.

R

Ryan Fleury 55:25

Yes, Rob. Where can people find us? They can find us online atbanter.com

R

Rob Mineault 55:33

Hey, they can also drop us an email if they so desire at [cowbell@atbanter.com](mailto:cowbell@atbanter.com),

R

Ryan Fleury 55:43

They can find us on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

R

Rob Mineault 55:49

I forget what's after that. Is there anything after that? No. Wow. Man, see, Steve. I'm telling you, man, Steve being away. It really throws the outros off. Just like I don't know, where do I jump in? What am I saying? What's up? Okay, well, then that is going to about do it for us this week. Thanks, everybody for listening in. Big thanks to Andrew, for joining us, and we will see everybody next week.

R

Ryan Fleury 56:16

Bye bye.