

# Transcript for Bonus Episode: Election 2024 with the *Queer Kid*, *Straight Mom* podcast

[00:00:00] **Music:** [Intro theme jingle]

[00:00:05] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** Hello, listeners. I'm Sam, and I use he, they, she pronouns.

[00:00:09] **Trudy Poux:** And I'm Trudy, and I use they, them pronouns. And

[00:00:12] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** you're listening to a special bonus episode of I'm Feeling Queer Today.

[00:00:17] **Trudy Poux:** Recently we got to sit down with Sienna and Sarah from the Queer Kid Straight Mom podcast.

[00:00:22] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** Our conversation covers a lot, queerness, of course, feminism, and how it's changed from generation to generation, and finally, our upcoming presidential election.

Take a listen...

[00:00:33] **Music:** I'm feeling queer today.

[00:00:37] **Sienna Popiel:** Hi, my name's Sienna. I use they, them pronouns. I am currently in Montana for the summer, but I'm a political science student at the University of Utah, and I am the kid of the Queer Kid Straight Mom podcast.

[00:00:51] **Sarah Jones-Popiel:** I'm Sarah. I use she, her pronouns. I live in Montana, and I'm the mom on Queer Kid Straight Mom.

[00:00:58] **Trudy Poux:** So, you [00:01:00] both co host a podcast, and for those who don't know, I'm Would you give a little bit of a synopsis of what your podcast is about?

[00:01:09] **Sarah Jones-Popiel:** Um, it started with us just thinking of a topic in the news. And I really want to hear what Sienna has to say about this. See where it goes.

[00:01:22] **Sienna Popiel:** Either, you know, mom comes and is like, Hey, here's the thing I saw that I think we should talk about.

Or I'm like, here's something I've been very angry about. Let's talk about it so I can rant into a microphone

[00:01:34] **Sarah Jones-Popiel:** for a while. You know, one of the reasons we do this podcast is so I can put the parent perspective out there too, because I think, I think I had a gut reaction to Sienna's coming out as non binary as like it feeling almost like a rejection.

Of this femininity that like, I was like, but we made sure everybody knows it's amazing and now you don't want it, which is [00:02:00] an emotional reaction that's not really based in anything that Sienna said is

intended by that population. I know that parents being slow to come around is also putting their kids through something, but it was almost like a brief, just grieving.

I can't, I don't say my daughter anymore. And that was a thing that I had to let go of. I think when parents don't react the right way in a very accepting way right away, it doesn't necessarily mean, Oh, I reject that it's, I have to reframe my thinking. And I want to make sure that I do it intentionally and slowly and right.

So I'm not making mistakes.

[00:02:46] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** I find that very interesting and very topical because I was just trying to sort out a plot About, um, how when I came out to my dad, he was explaining how, like, he had built an idea, the man that I would be. [00:03:00] And I'm a junior, we share the same name, and the same face, so, like, they're kinda trying to sculpt me in his image, and I'm kinda everything but.

And I think that there's, like, the grieving of the child that you thought that you were gonna grow is something that a lot of parents deal with, even when it's not, um, queer identities. It's just things as simple as, like, she wants to play soccer instead of play basketball.

[00:03:27] **Trudy Poux:** In terms of your relationship, how has it, has it changed at all through hosting a podcast together?

[00:03:34] **Siena Popiel:** Oh, I mean, I feel like the roughest patch in our relationship was from late middle school through early high school for me, where like I was kind of trying to come out and we were like having some struggles and I think not communicating very effectively. But I think since then, really, we've had a very strong, open relationship.

And I think in this idea behind the podcast, at least from my perspective, was less Oh, we're trying to [00:04:00] work through our relationship and more like we have some really interesting conversations. We should record these because maybe they'd be a helpful model for other people.

[00:04:09] **Sarah Jones-Popiel:** From my end, I just, I think Sienna is such an interesting person.

So, you know, whether it's just talking about movies and having a lot of fun with it or like a serious political issue, it's, it's really helpful to me to get that different perspective. I think anything where you are sharing an experience with somebody where you communicate a lot and see each other's point of view a lot.

Helps the relationship.

[00:04:34] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** Do you guys often find yourselves at like polarizing different points of views because of your different identities, age, sexuality, gender expression, especially when it comes to the issues that are arising in our country today?

[00:04:48] **Sarah Jones-Popiel:** I would say the biggest point of view difference that we sometimes have to work through is Sienna, you can correct me if I'm wrong, thinking that I [00:05:00] am Not getting worked up enough about events and me at my age feeling like I've been around so long.

I know you have to like pick your battles or let's wait and see. And I know that can feel really dismissive. And I, I get the sense that that is very frustrating to Sienna.

[00:05:21] **Siena Popiel:** Yeah, I'm a very justice oriented person. I also tend to have a really hard time containing like, There is something very wrong in the world.

And why is everybody else not as upset about this as I am? And, you know, middle aged women, sorry, mom. Um, having grown up, you know, obviously having been around for a lot of the more major things like abortion rights, like equal work rights, like non discrimination rights, having worked through all those battles.

I think then there's this generational divide of a lot of times it comes across then when younger people are playing with [00:06:00] gender or more fluid with gender. I think that can come across as almost dismissing. The work that women have put into female liberation, which obviously is not the intent of, you know, young trans people and young queer people at all.

But I think that is a major generational divide that we have touched on.

[00:06:19] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** The perspective that I didn't know being socialized as a man and something that didn't even cross my mind about, youth are experimenting with gender, how it can feel like a rejection of femininity or, or womanhood. I never made that connection.

I think that the gendered fight. In the transgender fight and the feminism movement are intricately related. The patriarchal heteronormative system has kind of hit us against each other. And I think that's one of those first steps to progress is understanding that other perspective. When it comes to these issues, how you've seen the country [00:07:00] change in every four years and how we're moving forward, how we're moving backwards, you know, what, how was our experience been like at each election that we've been conscious of?

[00:07:11] **Sarah Jones-Popiel:** So I'm, I'm 47, graduated high school in 95, 2000 was probably the first election that I was like really paying attention to because I was not politically engaged as early as I was. My kids are, which is a whole different topic. That would be interesting to dive into. I found out in 2012, the political perspectives of people in my family that I just had never even considered before, like I assumed.

When we hang out, we seem like we're pretty much on the same page about a lot of things. And that was when topics really started coming up and this divide started to, to form. I feel like people started creating political identities in a way that people didn't really have when I [00:08:00] was growing up. My parents were, I think my mom would have said an independent.

My dad was a Republican, like straight line Republican. And he's like the biggest. Democratic supporter, if you can find now, because I think as those identities were formed, it started to mean something very different than like, I support lower tax. It started to be all this identity politics and those people want rights for the people I hate.

So we're on different sides now. Or from my perspective, those people want to take rights away from people I love. So we're on opposite sides and that was a really big change. I think it wasn't just, who are you voting for? Because you like their policies. It became which team are you on? Because depending on your perspective.

You care about other people.

[00:08:55] **Siena Popiel:** I, I'm a political science major. Like I happen to have always been very [00:09:00] interested in politics. So I think the first election that I have, like any memory of it all would be 2012 cause that would have been when I was in fifth grade, you know, I have vague memories of sitting on the couch and watching debates and watching election night and like the little bingo sheets and stuff.

So that's like my very, very earliest memory. But then. Where I really started kind of being more cognizant of things and more aware of what was happening would be 2016, which is a wild time to become aware of politics. And I think a lot of people my age became aware of politics around that election because it was so controversial.

People who wouldn't have really cared, probably, at that point in their lives, all of a sudden were, you know, like, having arguments about it in class. And because everything has become so extreme and so intense, I don't feel like I can trust people if we don't at least have some shared ground [00:10:00] politically, and that's like, it's sad because I don't think that you necessarily have to agree on everything policy wise to have a meaningful relationship, but because, you know, so little politics at this point has anything to do with policy, it's all, do you think climate change exists?

Do you think trans people have rights? I don't want to participate in that system of polarization, but also I don't feel like I have a choice because I don't feel that I can be in a relationship with people who don't recognize my rights or the rights of others. It's just weird. It's a weird climate.

[00:10:33] **Trudy Poux:** Yeah, I feel like something that I've noticed, at least in this generation, is that with the internet and politics, a lot of it has felt like almost shock value rather than actually trying to find something meaningful from a conversation. Um, and for both of you, how do you feel? Like your identity for both of you.

Do you feel like that has affected how you view politics? Has it become more [00:11:00] personal for you both?

[00:11:02] **Siena Popiel:** Yeah, for me, absolutely. Like I don't even have a whole lot to say on that just because like the linkage is so obvious, like even if I'm not seeing. a particular politician or a particular platform has like a really direct attack against me.

If a platform is attacking, um, people of color, religious minorities, um, if it's attacking immigrants, I'm like, those are all bound up in one another and any attack on any other marginalized community is ultimately going to affect me. I think that just awareness of our, the way that we're connected to other people makes it very, very personal for me.

[00:11:41] **Sarah Jones-Popiel:** Like I said before, like a big change that I've seen, I don't think I ever would have identified myself as anything to do with politics at a point, but it has become a pretty defining thing in my actions, my behavior, like. What businesses I [00:12:00] want to use, but you know, it feels like, well, I'm a humanitarian, so of course I vote this way.

I care about people, which is not fair. There are plenty of, I know personally, some people who will vote for Trump, who care about other people and treat other people well, so that's a generalization. And now it's like, if you're on that side, if you vote that way, you don't believe that climate change is real.

Which blows my mind. Like we used to all, at least like believe research.

[00:12:31] **Siena Popiel:** The metaphor that my dad always uses is like a sports game, right? Like you can have, you know, like, Oh, that's my team. You know, I'm always going to cheer for them. And I'm always going to have a little bit of, Oh, I don't like who they're playing.

Oh, that was a bad call because it went against my team. And it's always going to be a little element of that. There was a difference between that and, you know, one team flat out refusing to follow the rules or like punching another player in the face and not, not getting in trouble for it, right? And [00:13:00] it seems like that's almost a little bit what's happening where you've got some people who are interested in like, okay, we'll have a conversation about this.

Um, we'll have a dialogue and some people who are like, we just want to be able to do whatever we want. with no restrictions whatsoever. And this is just like the sort of metaphor that I think is helpful for looking at it through that I think is probably highlighting a little bit of that change that mom's talking about.

[00:13:23] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** As a Black kid in the South, as long as I have been aware, politics has always been about identity. And then being, being a Black person, being a queer person has always been

about my identity. I just want to ask both of you, is there anything that like, You want to say that you, that you feel that young voters should have in mind or people that are still like on the fence, anything you want to say?

[00:13:46] **Sarah Jones-Popiel:** I guess my, my I've been around for a while perspective is like, look at the long game. It's not going to be perfect. There's not going to be the person you get to vote for. That is exactly [00:14:00] what you want. And I am in Detroit right now, dropping off. My 19 year old at college, and this is related because there's a very large Arab American population here.

And it's been in the news a lot that this really large Palestinian population here is saying that they just don't want to vote because, you know, Harris has not come out strongly enough against Israel. And I just want to like. Grab their hands and say, please, please, please vote. Anyway, it's going to be so much worse if she doesn't.

When and Trump is in charge of foreign policy.

[00:14:42] **Siena Popiel:** Oh boy. I have like so many thoughts swirling around in my head because this is another point where, you know, there's sometimes some tension between the two of us. I am a bit more sympathetic to some of the people and especially, especially back before Biden dropped out of the race.

[00:15:00] I am a bit more sympathetic to the people who are protesting the democratic convention right now, because personally, I'm of the opinion that Elections exist to pressure politicians. So I, I did vote uncommitted in the primary because I made the calculation that Biden wasn't going to lose the primary, there was no challenger, like nothing was happening there.

And I didn't want my vote to be going towards someone who I felt was making a massive, massive policy error when it comes to Israel, Palestine, I want to use my voice in a way that. creates that pressure because I feel that it's important, right? I think there's this tendency to idealize politicians.

Politicians are not our friends. Um, ultimately we were choosing someone who we believe is most capable of governing efficiently and also who we believe is going to listen to our voices. And then it's also our responsibility to continue to be engaged and use our [00:16:00] voices to pressure the people in office to do what we want because, you know, That's how democracy works.

So, you know, I, I have absolutely zero problem if you think that Harris has handled, um, Israel improperly, or if you think she's handled anything else improperly, um, absolutely. I have no problem with you protesting her, but I also think it's important to vote. And I think there's this deep sense of hopelessness amongst people our age, really, who.

Have seen so much negativity and so much hate and then seen like a complete lack of accountability for so many people doing terrible things, regardless of party that like, well, why would I even like, what's the point of using my voice? Why does it matter? So here in Montana, it's actually very exciting.

We have a couple of initiatives that should be on the ballot this fall that are going to let us vote for a jungle primary system where the top two candidates, regardless of party advanced to the general election. You know, some [00:17:00] things that will make it much easier for third parties to gain traction for people's voices to be heard in a meaningful way to express support for a third party.

Those systems do exist and we can, you know, support those and we can advocate for change on a systemic level. And I think that's absolutely crucial to better representing the people who live in this country. Um, And yet also if you abandon the system that currently exists and you abandon your voice in that system because you prefer a different system that doesn't exist yet, you are complicit in whatever negative outcome may come from That situation, if you refuse to vote for Harris because you don't think she's done a good enough job on certain issues and Trump ends up winning, you are in part complicit for all of the harms to all of these various communities that a Trump candidacy would bring.

Um, that includes how he would [00:18:00] worsen the situation for Palestinians. It includes how he would worsen the situation for United States women. It includes how he would worsen the situation for refugees from all over the world. I am very, very strongly opposed to. abdicating responsibility because you don't think the system is functioning as well as it could.

I think that's similar to what mom would say but with maybe a little bit more sympathy for the people who are struggling with this. I know it feels really crappy but it's still important to engage and you can engage in a system and also fight to change it at the same time. I guess what I would really want to say to straight parents out there I think, you know, no matter how supportive you may be of your child, like there's always maybe a little bit of feeling of not understanding them.

And I guess I would say that that's okay. And that like, lean into the discomfort. And if you're having a harder time accepting and supporting your kid, like lean into the discomfort. I think that's helpful for everybody, right? [00:19:00] Wherever they might be along that journey of building this relationship with your child, um, is that it's, It's okay to not understand, you know, um, we are human beings and we don't always understand one another.

But if you can come to a place where you can say, I don't understand what's going on for you. Um, I don't, I might be worried about the challenges that you're going to face, or, um, I might think that you're making a decision that I don't agree with. Um, but you know, just leaning into that discomfort of like, it's.

Ultimately, you're my kid, and I'm gonna love you whatever, whatever you do, and that's okay. And like, we don't need to focus on, I love you, but we can just focus on, I love you. And that discomfort is something that you can process on your own, and that's okay. Absolutely fine. The most important thing for you to [00:20:00] express to your kid is just like, I love you and provide that unconditional support.

Um, and everything, everything else is fine for you to feel and your feelings are valid and, you know, okay, but it's important for you to process them on your own and not put that burden on your kid, because Yeah, the most important thing is just that, that relationship and that bond of love between you and your kid.

[00:20:26] **Trudy Poux:** Thanks for listening to our bonus episode with the Queer Kids Straight Mom podcast. I'm Trudy.

[00:20:32] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** And I'm Sam. You've been listening to I'm Feeling Queer Today. Get your voice heard and make sure to register to vote for this upcoming election at [vote.gov](http://vote.gov). Vote often and vote locally.

[00:20:43] **Trudy Poux:** Subscribe to I'm Feeling Queer Today wherever you listen to podcasts.

And if you like what you queer, I mean hear, don't forget to rate our show 5 stars on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

[00:20:56] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** And don't forget to ask yourself, how am I feeling queer today?

[00:20:59] **Trudy Poux:** [00:21:00] For more information on this episode, check out the show notes. Or visit our website, [thefutureperfectproject.org](http://thefutureperfectproject.org) slash podcast.

[00:21:08] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** If you or a young person you know between the ages of 13 and 24 is currently in crisis, visit [thetrevorproject.org](http://thetrevorproject.org) for LGBTQIA plus specific support through text and chat. Or call 1 866 488 7386. These resources will be in the show notes too.

[00:21:26] **Trudy Poux:** To learn more about the Future Perfect Project, head to our website, [theFuturePerfectProject.org](http://theFuturePerfectProject.org), and find us on social media at the Future Perfect Project.

[00:21:35] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** I'm Feeling Queer today is produced by The Future Perfect Project with support from Radio Kingston, WKNY, Kingston, New York. This episode is hosted by me, Sam Smalls.

[00:21:45] **Trudy Poux:** And me, Trudy Poux. Our theme song is performed and composed by Alex Massey and produced by Emma Jane Seslowsky episode Mixing and Mastering by Emma Jane Seslowsky

we are remembering our executive producer and mentor, [00:22:00] Julie Novak, who passed away on the last day of August 2024 after a two and a half year battle with cancer.

[00:22:06] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** Julie, we miss you so much. Your legacy will live on in all of us, in every episode of this podcast. We're feeling extra queer today and every day because of you.

[00:22:17] **Trudy Poux:** We love you.

[00:22:18] **Samuel Smalls Jr.:** Special thanks to executive producer and mentor, Celeste Lecesne, and future Perfect Project team members, Ryan Amador, Kiko Wan, and Aliya Jamil.

[00:22:27] **Trudy Poux:** Season two is on its way. Stay tuned!