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MK: Hello and welcome to *THE CHILD AND ITS ENEMIES*, a podcast about queer and neurodivergent kids living out anarchy and youth liberation.

Here at *THE CHILD AND ITS ENEMIES* we believe that youth autonomy is not only crucial to queer and trans liberation, but to anarchy itself. Governance is inherently based on projecting linear narratives of time and Development and gender onto our necessarily asynchronous and atemporal queer lives, and youth and teens are at the center of this form of oppression.

Our goal with the podcast is to create a space by and for youth that challenges all forms of control and inspires us to create queered, feral, *ageless* networks of care.

I'm your host, mk zariel; I'm fifteen years old, and I'm the youth correspondent at the Anarchist Review of Books, author of the blog Debate Me Bro, and organizer of some all-ages queer spaces in my

city and online. With me today is ISABELLE SANTIN of Chosen Few Software! Hello, Isabelle!

ISABELLE:

Hello there! My name is Isabelle, but you can call me Isa. I go by she/her, they/them pronouns and primarily help as an facilitator/leader for the Madison Area Transgender Association. Within that organizing space, I've helped to foster social connections between transgender adults living in the Madison, Wisconsin area, provide technical assistance for projects such as the yearly Holiday Trans Care Package Drive, and more recently aid my teammates with critical decision-making for local queer events such as the Trans Joy Event.

Apart from volunteering for MATA, I am self-employed as the HoO of my own software brand, Chosen Few Software, which I hope to eventually convert into a successful business venture, and use as a leading example of how the software industry can become an agent of positive change in the real world.

MK: So, you founded the tech company CHOSEN FEW SOFTWARE, correct? And y'all are a predominantly youth and teen space?

ISABELLE: Indeed, I founded Chosen Few Software initially as a way for me to self-publish my software applications in a way that was recognizable and visible in online spaces I participated in. I created the brand before coming out as a transgender woman in 2022, and I must say, my overall vision for what I want to achieve through the enterprise changed significantly alongside me. Before coming out, the brand lacked two crucial components of successful branding: mission, and focus.

In a way, accepting my own truth and identity helped my brand find an identity of its own. My vision for Chosen Few Software is to

on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter (I refuse to call it by the new name‼)

MK: Thank you so much for sharing your youth liberation journey! If you want to learn more, or join us on Discord and Signal, our website is https://thechildanditsenemies.noblogs.org/. I'm mk zariel, this has been Isabelle Santin, and you're listening to THE CHILD AND ITS ENEMIES.

their scars, show their weak points. Its a point of inflection that intersects with our reliance on digital computing and computer networks. We're all still just trying to figure out how to move forward in a society that is changing too fast.

That said, I think that putting effort and energy into decentralized networking technologies, especially those designed for social communication, is a really important goal of mine as an anarchist software engineer. The principles of decentralized trust and control, these have benefits within the realm of computers that are analogous to the same benefits we observe in decentralized societies.

MK: What advice would you have for kids and teens who want to create software, and do so in a trans-positive and anarchic way? Or, what would have been useful for you when you were younger?

ISABELLE: My advice to young folks wanting to get into software is to start exploring as soon as possible. There's so many resources out there for varying skill levels. However, its important to also go into it, especially as a beginner, knowing that *computers, are really freaking dumb.* You have to tell them how to do every single little thing, and even with the advent of generative AI, that's not ever going to go away. So its about learning a new model of thinking, restructuring the way you solve problems so that it fits into the mold of what computers are capable of handling.

In other words, don't be afraid to take chances, make mistakes, and get messy! Errors will occur all the time, its what makes us human :)

MK: That idea of tech as iterative is also so true of anarchy…I love the idea that our imperfections are human and beautiful, and that software can be accessible for anyone. Shameless plugs?

ISABELLE: Visit our website! Type chosenfew.software into any browser and you'll find it. You can also find the CFS brand

not only inspire, but actively cultivate positive social change purely through the software engineering process. This is represented by our motto of "changing the world, one line of code at a time." Furthermore, as a young expert in my field, I'm using my brand to build a platform for amplifying youth voices. A great example of this is Chosen Few's very own "Voices" audio blog, which releases monthly with a focus on creative writing, and sharing the inspiring voices of tomorrow.

All of this is to say, yas! Chosen Few Software is built different. We strive to create a space where young engineers and creatives (including myself) can not only share those crazy, big ideas, but also be given the resources to implement them in a real, meaningful way.

MK: What has it been like to be a youth-led and trans-liberation organization in tech spaces? Because when I think about the mainstream tech scene, I tend to picture broey straight men on their computers, as I'm sure a lot of our listeners do—but of course, tech is for everyone. And it seems like what you've created with Chosen Few is collective and queer and a negation of all that straightness is.

ISABELLE: For all intents and purposes, I have seniority in my field, namely software engineering. However, due to my relatively young age, and because I'm a woman, I'm not taken as seriously as I should be, at least by my older peers. I find myself constantly going against the grain, against the advice of the older generation. I'll hear "That'll never work." or "You shouldn't approach it that way."

I use this as my very reason for leading the Chosen Few. Our method is risky, its experimental, always treading into unproven

grounds. But always, through ingenuity, and a shared sense of purpose, of taking on big challenges, we define our own successes, and achieve our goals.

Now, I do realize, that makes my company very unattractive to invest in, haha. But at this stage in the brand's development, my goal is more to fulfil myself and my team creatively, rather than be profitable (or even break even). The most important thing to me right now is not the money and logistics, but the vision, making our dreams come true. Because the only thing between hopes and dreams and positive change is the willingness to act towards it.

MK: On that note—as a younger person, did you have access to tech spaces like this that were age and gender inclusive? What about organizing spaces? Were you ever into transhumanism, or other stuff at the intersection of queerness, anarchy, and technology?

ISABELLE: When I was much younger, I was very much a "lone wolf". I had a few close friends through public school, and later on, online school. But I found it quite difficult to relate to my peers in terms of maturity. In a lot of ways, I was less mature than other kids around me because of my ADHD. But in a lot of other ways, my ability to hyperfocus, and my talent for mathematical and computational thinking made me unrelatable to my peers, who barely grasped a lot of the abstract thinking that computer programming requires.

That said, I'm privleged. My parents ensured that I always had access to the technology, software, and educational resources I needed to fully explore my interests and goals. My dad, who is a senior software developer, has always served as a guide in my explorations, always there to steer me in the right direction, but never stifling my unconventional workflows and solutions. In this

much power to too many people; the gatekeepers at the top need to savor the little temporal influence they have left.

My company is a reflection of this personal belief of mine. Kids can make a difference, and they can make a difference *now*. That's super important, and its what I want to exemplify as I move forward with this brand.

MK: Speaking of making global change, what is your relationship to anarchy like as a trans- and youth- liberationist organizer?

ISA: Anarchy is something that I want to do more research on. I want to read more about anarchist theory, I want to see how our societies could really make ways for us to implement more anarchist ways of living and producing. My relationship to these concepts is nebulous, but I'm drawn to anarchist spaces because I have a vested interest in researching and understanding how decentralization can play a role in dismantling harmful structures of control and power in the modern informational age.

MK: how would you say the tech world intersects with anarchist organizing? I know we talked a bit about hacking as activism and that sort of stuff, and I'm so curious to see how you view that overlap.

ISABELLE: Anarchy is the purest form of decentralized control. In my mind, its the ideal way to organize a massive network, whether that network is made out of computers or people, it makes little difference to me. The reality is that the computers we build are just as failable as us. They just tend to do more and more of our thinking for us, as they become more powerful and reliable. I think its an important part of the future of human evolution, but we live at a point in time where our societies are beginning to show

Additionally, my younger brother, Eli, is still in his teen years, and he's had a large influence on critical design choices for our gaming related projects such as Super Patrick, our flagship mobile game. In fact, he was quite literally guiding the early prototyping process over-the-shoulder as the game began to take shape. Now, its our most popular product, ever! This is proof that teens and young adults not only have great ideas, but have the power to make them a reality.

Furthermore, the Chosen Few hosts a monthly audio blog, Voices, with a focus on lifting up the young, inspiring voices of tomorrow through creative writing. You can also speak to the involvement of teens in the Chosen Few Software brand, Mk, as you recently starred on the Voices blog for its January 2024 entry!

All of these are concrete examples of how youth involvement in the Chosen Few Software brand has had an extremely positive impact on its ability to fulfill its mission and goals.

MK: I love the way y'all platform people who are still in the education system, and the way you've worked with your brother on creating mobile games…that is so deeply wholesome and just brings me joy. On a related note, what have your experiences with this company taught you about youth liberation? And more broadly, what would you say youth liberation means to you?

ISABELLE: Youth liberation is central to human survival, at this point. Think of how many more years it will take for people our parents age to actually get seats in political office and be able to influence governmental policies in a (hopefully) positive way. Meanwhile, our generation has all of the talent, all of the ideas, all of the willingness to *do* that can make those things happen much sooner. So why not persue that? Why not enable younger folks to make real global change? We all know the answer, that gives too

sense, my parents served to create learning spaces around me in ways that encouraged the natural progression of my tech related skills.

I've only ever been involved in queer organizing spaces since I came out in 2022, and by that point I was well into what is legally considered adulthood.

MK: I'm so sorry about that lack of inclusion when you were younger—as a fellow ADHDer, I can attest to the many challenges of having an ungovernable mind in a controlling society, especially as a kid. In terms of inclusion and opportunities to follow your passion, what types of resources or organizing spaces would have been helpful for you?

ISABELLE: I feel that if there were more coding related lessons and clubs in elementary and middle school, I would've thrived on that. I'm always eager to share my latest software creations, hence the reason why I even created my brand. A lot of what I do now I feel like, in a joking sense, stems from that childhood dream of waving at the camera and saying "Look at me ma! I'm on TV!"

MK: We so need liberatory education…I've heard about anarchist "free schools" and other projects that prioritize science and technology, and it should absolutely be centered in radical education spaces for those who are interest. This could even be an argument for homeschooling and unschooling—outside compulsory education, kids and teens are more free to follow what brings us queer jouissance, whether that's technology or anything else. So about that sharing of software creations…can you tell me more about Chosen Few? What kind of software do y'all make? And how can people connect with your software if they want to use it?

ISABELLE: That's an interesting question. In short, we're still figuring it out. We have a few open source projects that we maintain for absolutely free, but to support the development of those

projects, we have a few (very niche) software products that we currently offer via a subscription to our Patreon page.

The biggest one at the moment is SAVE, the Software Analog Video Emulator. Think about how many times you've seen that cheesy fake VHS filter used in YouTube videos. Now think about what it might be like if that filter that everyone used, actually looked *good*, and *authentic*. That's the major design goal for SAVE. At the moment, the product has made dozens of sales, and has a few features that we've developed as stepping-stones to the bigger goal of full VHS tape emulation. What makes our product different, however, is the fact that it mathematically models the real, electric signals that transform and move through analog video equipment, such as VCRs and tape cameras. Its a really unique product, and there's nothing else out there quite like it.

Also on the horizons is Surge, our custom image format for the Web that serves as Chosen Few's response to the global issue of bandwidth disparities. In a lot of marginalized and developing communities across the globe, people have limited access to rich educational resources such as high quality videos, podcasts, and images. Surge for the Web is basically a custom image format that we designed to solve this problem, not by making images smaller, but by creating a way for them to display sooner, and in lower resolution. The format allows for dynamic on-demand downloading of *just enough* image content to keep interactive webpages usable, and accessible for people with low bandwidth connections.

Information about both projects is available right now at chosenfew.software, so check it out!

MK: What makes Chosen Few so inclusive for kids and teens? In my limited experience, "hacktivist"spaces tend to be mostly adult professionals, yet they're supportive of youth who are just

getting into tech, or need help with digital security, or just want to be in anarchist community. Given the increased digital surveillance on trans kids, as well as anyone trying to access reproductive healthcare, multigenerational spaces that can support kids and teens with our tech concerns have never been more important. I know there are probably anarchist tech people listening who'd love to make their tech spaces actively youth-liberationist, and it's so awesome that y'all are.

ISABELLE: The answer is simple, we believe that teens, and young adults can make a difference. You don't need a degree, or a diploma, or decades of career experience to have good ideas, and make them real. So much of young people's thinking is pushed towards "when I grow up, I want to do XYZ!" But Chosen Few throws that out the window, and says "Why wait till then? Let's scale this down, lets make this tangible so you can make that dream real, right now." That's what I'd say is at the very core of what Chosen Few does. We don't wait for change, change waits for us.

MK: I love the atemporality of this—waiting for adulthood is so often about asking us to change ourselves for some idealized Future, and it's so meaningful to see a youth liberationist space that empowers teens to realize our dreams now. I used to think as a kid that when I grew up, I wanted to be an activist—but now I've realized that anyone of any age can do community organizing, and the same is really true of tech. So in what concrete ways are teens and youths involved in Chosen Few?

ISABELLE: Teens and youths are involved in every aspect of the Chosen Few Software design, engineering, and marketing process. For example, more recently, the Surge for the Web project has been throughly stress tested on various platforms and kinds of hardware by my online friends, all of whom are still college age students without a degree, or even a job.