

Channing Power: A really good friend of mine who had her child with a surrogate and a donor egg and she said to me, "How can you consider adoption? You don't know what you're going to get." And I was like, "Well, you don't know what you're going to get with any." Here's the thing. Any child is like a seed and you plant that seed in the ground and you give it light and water and air and you hope that it grows into something beautiful and amazing and formidable. And some seeds don't grow the way you expect them to grow.

Channing Power: But there's no guarantee, no matter how you... As a parent, you want to open your heart to a child that needs love and that's what I feel like we did. We opened our hearts to children that needed love. I couldn't imagine our family any other way. I feel like we are parents the kids we were meant to be the parents of.

Jason Lee: We're Jason and...

Yvonne Lee: Yvonne Lee. Wife.

Jason Lee: Husband, father.

Yvonne Lee: Mother.

Jason Lee: Actors.

Yvonne Lee: Producers and seekers.

Jason Lee: Educators. Explorers of identity.

Yvonne Lee: You're listening to Lagralane Spirits, a delicious podcast where we invite you into our living room for a family spirit symposium. A real talk meeting of the minds over reverent cocktails.

Jason Lee: Join us as we dive back in time to examine the legacy of our ancestors that have shaped the stories of our shared cultural history. You can find all of our cocktail recipes and show notes on lagralanespirits.com and as always, please enjoy.

Yvonne Lee: Responsibly.

Jason Lee: Welcome to episode three, part two of Lagralane Spirits. This episode is a three part series where we deep dive into three very different adoption stories to explore the topic of biological identity and origin. Today we bring you a very special part two.

Yvonne Lee: In part one of episode three, we interviewed Hank and Sueann Fortener, the founders of a wonderful organization called Adopt Together. This three part series is about exploring origin stories and adoption through four very different stories including that of my husband, Jason.

Jason Lee: In part one, I revealed that I learned my birth father was not my birth father. I'd held onto that truth of origin for nearly 20 years only to find out the real truth via the work and research I was doing on ancestry.com. That led us to asking the

Forteners the big question of how do you maintain truth within the adoption story knowing there are opportunities to do otherwise, even at the risk of protecting children? Please go back to that episode to hear what they had to say. It was truly fascinating.

- Yvonne Lee: Today, we speak with our friend and colleague Channing Power. After a journey through infertility and relinquishing her dreams of being a birth mom, she became an adoptive mom. For those that have experienced this, you know how excruciating and joyful this journey can be. Listen in to Channing's very vulnerable story which has a bit of a twist that Jason resonated with strongly.
- Jason Lee: Join us for what became a beautiful discussion and remember to pause here and make this episode's cocktail, the Old-Fashioned. Our recipe is in the show notes. Let's begin.
- Yvonne Lee: Hi, Channing.
- Channing Power: Hey. How are you?
- Jason Lee: Hey, Channing. How are you doing? We're good. We're good. How are you?
- Channing Power: I'm really good, really good. Glad to see you both.
- Jason Lee: You too. You too. Thanks for being here with us.
- Channing Power: Absolutely.
- Yvonne Lee: Let me just say that Channing is one of those women who you can easily call a friend because she is so giving of spirit and of smile. Professionally she is a powerhouse. She is the chair of Warner Bros. Television Group and before that, she was a VP at Netflix and prior to that, President of ABC Entertainment.
- Channing Power: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Yvonne Lee: I absolutely love knowing that Channing has had something to do with some of our favorite shows like Bridgerton, American Idol, and so many things Shonda Rhimes. But as a mom myself, I would say, and I think we would both agree, that her most important role is being a mom. Our family is very connected with her in that our families were created through adoption. Jason was adopted and Channing and her husband have adopted two beautiful children. Our daughters also go to school together. And she and her husband have also supported Adopt Together and we spoke with Hank and Sueann Fortener, the founders of Adopt Together on our last episode.
- Yvonne Lee: So lots of beautiful intersections at play here. How we create family is the focus of this three part series. And so Channing, we are so grateful you're here to talk with us about something we don't always get to talk about as openly as we'd like to. The dominant culture of families have children through the traditional means and the hopeful stories of families created in this way aren't always told.
- Channing Power: Yes, yes.

Yvonne Lee: You don't really get to put adoption on the platform like this. So this is really great. So we welcome you Channing. We're so happy you're here.

Channing Power: Absolutely, absolutely. You picked my favorite cocktail for the night. I love an Old-Fashioned. I also like tequila but an Old-Fashioned is quite delicious.

Jason Lee: I had Oaxaca Old-Fashioned yesterday on Father's Day. The Oaxaca Old-Fashioned is, if you're a tequila fan, give it one and a half ounce more of añejo of choice, along with a half ounce more of mezcal and put some bitters in there and some sugar. It's a fantastic variation of the Old-Fashioned, highly recommend.

Channing Power: I love it. I love it. Now here's a question for you: What is your bourbon of choice right now in your Old-Fashioned?

Jason Lee: Right now, I'm sipping on a High West.

Channing Power: Okay. Love High West.

Jason Lee: American bourbon. Yes, yes.

Channing Power: Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

Jason Lee: How about you? What [crosstalk 00:06:51]?

Channing Power: Mine is something called Heaven's Door which I got as a gift from someone and it's quite lovely.

Jason Lee: Bob Dylan's whiskey.

Channing Power: Yes.

Jason Lee: Knocking on Heaven's Door. It's Bob Dylan's whiskey.

Channing Power: Yeah, it's quite delicious so I was like, "Let's try it with this one."

Jason Lee: It's fantastic.

Yvonne Lee: We are so happy that you're here. Would you like to share a little bit about your adoption story?

Channing Power: Sure, happy to, happy to. First of all, thank you for having me on and I do think this is such an important conversation to be having. I wish it was a conversation that we had more often. One of the things that I have been so impressed by, you mentioned Adopt Together and I know the Forteners have been on and we became involved in Adopt Together after having met Hank and Sueann.

Channing Power: And part of what I love about what they're doing with Adopt Together, it's not only about helping people who financially can't make adoption happen for themselves, but it's also bringing adoption into the conversation in a way that I feel it just hasn't been. And even at our school, having World Adoption Day,

having the parents who have adopted children come in and talk about their journeys. We shared books when they were in second grade which was amazing. And it starts to normalize the conversation and I think for so long, it's been such a taboo subject.

Channing Power: So you had asked about my journey and my husband, Scott, and I, we were married. We wanted to start a family. We embarked on that journey the old-fashioned way and were not having a lot of success. I know, see what I did there? Were not having a lot of success and discovered that I had some medical challenges that were going to make it impossible for me to carry my own child.

Channing Power: Fortunately, being in a financial place where we had a lot of possibilities and decisions open to us, did we want to have a surrogate? Did we want to find a donor egg? Did we want to consider adoption? Adoption for both of us felt like something that made a lot of sense. We'd knew that there were so many children who, for various reasons, did not have a home of their own. And it felt like if we weren't able to have our own biological child the old-fashioned way once again and we were going to walk a different path, for us it seemed to make sense that that felt like a path that we wanted to walk.

Channing Power: We went and we met with an adoption attorney and after that initial meeting, I was like, "Yes, let's go. Let's do this," and my husband was a little bit more unsure. He was nervous about the various challenges that potentially could lie ahead and he was very worried about what might happen if we walked the path and got down it a certain way through the journey and then the birth mother changed her mind or the birth father decided that he wanted to keep the child. Some of those things really was unsettling for him.

Channing Power: And then we decided to try one more time, to get pregnant on our own. We actually did get pregnant. And then we lost that baby. That was sort of the lynchpin for my husband because I think it really cemented for him that he wanted to be a dad.

Yvonne Lee: Oh, yeah.

Channing Power: Yeah, I know. It was the hardest thing that's every happened to us but I think that it was such an important part in the formation of our family because I'd known forever that I wanted to be a mom and I think he wanted to be a dad in the way that you want to be a dad but it doesn't feel real until it feels real and I think he had really bonded with that baby. And then he was like, "Okay, I'm a little afraid of this journey but I'm willing to take it with you." And so that started us on our path.

Yvonne Lee: [inaudible 00:10:34] cry.

Jason Lee: That's beautiful. Thank you for sharing. That's everything.

Yvonne Lee: That's beautiful.

Channing Power: And our daughter is adopted. She was born in 2012. And our son is also adopted. He was born in 2017.

Jason Lee: Okay.

Yvonne Lee: Wow. And it's so interesting when I see pictures of you guys and I look and I go, "She looks like her and he looks like him." There's something about the spirit also that's kind of coming through as well.

Channing Power: Yes and when we went through the process, we had said that we were open to children of any racial or ethnic background. We even took the classes. What would we do if we ended up with a Korean baby for example so that we would understand how to talk about histories and heritage that might not be our own. And as it so happens, both of our children are bi-racial, black-white and I'm black, my husband's white. So it's interesting that that's the way it ended up but that wasn't necessarily the path that we set out to walk which was kind of remarkable.

Jason Lee: Yeah. I'm processing that because anytime I get into an adoption conversation, of course I'm hardwired into the adoption conversation. I was adopted by a white family in the Mid-West in the 70s. And every part of my adoption was closed. In Nebraska and from '71 to '77, well let me rephrase that, prior to 1977, adoptions were closed. So when I conducted my search in the late 90s, early 2000s, my search to find my biological parents that is, I had to go through the state of Nebraska. And what that meant to me was basically ensuring to my parents that I'm doing this with love and my hopes of their blessing because for me, being black raised by a white family, there was never a question of were you adopted or not? It was a known quality. But Yvonne, a conversation we often have is my father who raised me, when Yvonne and I got married, she was like, "You could be his son," and I think that's what starts to happen in family. We pick up each other's mannerisms and sometimes physicalisms.

Channing Power: It's so interesting that you say that because we spent time with, a considerable amount of time actually, with our daughter's birth mother. She chose to have a baby here in California so we had brought her out from her home state and she stayed here for the last two months of her pregnancy. So we spent time with her and with the other two children that she had. We took them to Disneyland. We never knew anything about our daughter's birth father. The mother had chosen not to disclose. We never got that information. She was a bi-racial young woman. Her mother was white. Her father was black. So that's how we know that our daughter is bi-racial to that degree because she didn't disclose anything about the birth father. All I can say is that he probably was very, very tall because she was about my height and my daughter is already almost there and she's a lot younger.

Channing Power: So I know that there will be inevitably questions about that from my daughter at some point. With my son, and I'm just saying my because my husband's not here, it's obviously our children, but with our son, we spent time with both the biological parents, the mother and father, and got to know them a bit. And actually, our son's birth mother wrote a letter to our son that she gave to me. It's

in a sealed envelope. I have not opened it. I promised her that I wouldn't. That she says talks about her reasons for giving him up for adoption and there's a whole thing there. And she said, when he's old enough and when he asks, I want you to give this to him. I'm getting a little teary about it.

Channing Power: Because it's one of the hardest things as an adoptive parent to think about how to explain the fact that you're adopted. We were given this advice as we went through these classes to become adoptive parents about how you want to normalize the conversation about adoption and that it should be no different than wearing glasses or having red hair or freckles. It's like, you're adopted. We started that with my daughter from day one. We had books and we would talk about it. Before she was even verbal, we were talking about it. She has cousins who she's very close with who are older than she is by a couple of years and they knew. They came and met her when we first brought her home.

Channing Power: So it's always been a conversation and I think for our daughter, who is four years older than our son, she understood it in the abstract. She didn't really understand what adoption meant until one day, she didn't have her brother and then the next day she did. We talked her through that and it became real for her in a way that it isn't yet for him because he's still young. But it's always been such a normal conversation in our house. And I think they've each internalized the idea of adoption but because neither one of them yet really understands where babies come from, the more complicated parts of those conversations, are still not in the vernacular, but we talk about it a lot. What are we going to say when the time comes and I'm trying to get our daughter's birth mother to write a similar letter for her so that she has from her mouth why she felt this way.

Channing Power: I hope that our children don't have... I hope that they don't struggle with the notion of not being wanted because I hope that they have felt in our family the love and the fulfilling part of being a part of our unit. But there certainly will come a time where that question will be asked. Why did this happen? How did this happen? We talk about that a lot. How do we handle those conversations? How will we feel if they want to meet their birth parents which we're certainly open to? And how do we handle those conversations?

Channing Power: In a weird way, adopting both of our children was a long and complicated journey and conversation and now we're in what I feel is sort of deliciously uncomplicated moment because the adoptions are behind us and these children are legally a part of our family and they're not yet at the point where the hard questions come and that's going to be the next phase. So it's something that we talk about quite a bit.

Jason Lee: Channing, you just touched on basically everything that I've been grappling with for the past 20 years honestly, open versus closed adoption. My mom, her last words to me in '02... She passed really young back in '02. So she knew I conducted my search and she knew I successfully met my biological mother. She knew that I was going to do this. But she said to me, this was a couple of months before she passed away, she said, "You've had my support Jason. I've always been all about you doing the search." But she said, "Now that you have

successfully found your birth mom," she said, and I quote, she said, "I'm jealous as hell."

Jason Lee: An only regret that I have, I don't believe in regrets, but if I did, one would be that they never had the chance to meet and get eye to eye. It's heredity or environment. But you also touched on the idea of normalizing adoption and I love that's at the core of what Adopt Together is all about. It's the core of what we're all about with Lagralane. I've written a short film that we are going to be rolling out called Lifeline and it's about my birth search story and at its core is so many times in storytelling, the foster care or adopted story is literally used in horror genre. It's Freddy, it's Jason.

Jason Lee: The foster care system needs to be addressed in a deep and profound way. There are some very dangerous environments out there but there are also some awesomely loving families that give a child a new lease on life and that needs to be normalized. That needs to be talked about. That needs to be celebrated. That needs to be honored. That needs to be embraced. Whether we are adopted or not, we all go through the various searches for who we are, where we come from, [inaudible 00:19:14] exacerbated if you're not connected to the biological roots. If my mom had a letter tucked away in a shoebox under the bed, I would write that story out right now. Open that up when you're 18, that's a beautiful gift of identity of where you're from but also the environment that you are in informs you as well. And so it is that question of heredity or environment. It's both from the adoptive lens and that's a big part of the identity. And so I think we're built up and ready for, Channing if you are, for your first Lagralane Spirits cocktail confession. Are you ready?

Channing Power: I think so.

Jason Lee: All right.

Yvonne Lee: You've made your own Old-Fashioned. You took a couple sips. You said it was good. So I think you're ready.

Channing Power: It's good. I did an okay job.

Yvonne Lee: So Channing, what has been your search for identity?

Channing Power: Wow. It's a really complicated question. Yvonne, you and I were talking a little bit about the experience of being part of the DEI group at our school and I was telling you about how we had... Each person who has been part of that committee confesses and talks about things, why this work is important to them. And part of what I shared when it was my turn was that I am black. I was raised in basically an all white environment and without going too far into the history of it all, my mom was raised in Brooklyn. My dad was raised in Chicago. Both of them grew up in very thriving vibrant black communities. They never had any real question about their identities. My mom is very fair-skinned but never felt anything other than black her whole life. And both of them, the culture and the music, the traditions, both of them steeped in it.

Channing Power: For various reasons, they each left home, found each other in Nashville, Tennessee, married, and then moved about the country for a bit. We ended up settling when I was five in northern California in Sacramento. And my parents' big focus was on education. We want our kids to go to the best schools. We want to do this. We want to do that. They weren't as focused... and they obviously moved to a place where my dad had found a job but they weren't really focused on the importance of establishing a black identity. We went to a white church. We went to a white school. We just did all the things that were just in the neighborhood and all the things...

Channing Power: And I'm grateful for that because that gave me the opportunities that have led to me being who I am and the job that I have and all of the rest of it. But I didn't really know how much I was missing out on not having peers who looked like me, not having the ability to relate to people from my own culture. And it wasn't until I was in college. It wasn't until I went to UCLA and with my white friends, rushed a white sorority, the whole thing because these were my touchstones.

Channing Power: Every once in a while you'd bump up against certain things. Like when I was in high school, my hair doesn't do the same things that my white friends do and you just brush past it and move on. There are lots of micro aggressions. But I was raised at the time, this is the 70s and 80s, where it's like, you got to assimilate... It's like that line from Scandal, "You got to be twice as good as everyone else [crosstalk 00:22:56]." So that was my focus and you just sort of go past it. You don't really realize the shell that you're building up around yourself because of all these things. I don't blame my parents for it and it wasn't as though there wasn't culture in our house and music and things. But it's not the same as being surrounded by it in a real way.

Channing Power: So it wasn't until I was in college, that I started delving into what it means to be black and taking classes and reading books and creating my own education that I had not been given by my parents. And to be clear, I'm super grateful for everything that my parents gave me, but they were more focused on how to move forward and how to assimilate and how to be successful by playing in this world. And those were valuable tools but it's like you're only playing with half the deck and it wasn't until I was in my 30s that I felt as comfortable in a room full of black people as I did in a room full of white people.

Channing Power: And being comfortable in a room full of white people is very handy especially in my job where as I have climbed the ladder, it's oftentimes I'm not only the only person of color but the only woman. So I'm glad that I have those skills but it's weird for me to have been in rooms where there's a bunch of black people and feel more out of it because I don't have the right references and I don't have the right context and I don't have the right slang and I don't have the... And the idea that I had to come to all of that so much later in my life than I wished that I had.

Channing Power: In terms of identity, I feel like I have come to my pride in being a black woman and what that means and the fullness of what that means so much later in my life than I wished that I had. I wish that I had had... And it wasn't just my parents. It was also the world in which I lived. When I was growing up, there was no Beyoncé. There was no Rihanna. There was no Kerry Washington. There was

no Shonda. That we all came of age together and so I'm grateful that my children are growing up in a different world than the one that I grew up in where there are lots of different role models that they can look to.

Channing Power: My daughter watches Simon Biles every time there's a new thing she does. There are so many black gymnasts out there right now. It's like, [crosstalk 00:25:14]. So I'm grateful for that but it's a really complicated thing for me from an identity perspective to have come to the realization of my full self and the notion of how many things I was overlooking, disregarding, hiding as part of my journey. And that's something that I definitely don't want my children to have to walk that path. I want them to be their fullest selves in all their brightness and color the whole time.

Jason Lee: Wow.

Yvonne Lee: Wow.

Jason Lee: Yes.

Yvonne Lee: That's amazing. I'm black and Filipino and so for me, when I talk about... And my dad wasn't always around. In terms of being black, it's because people would look at me and say, "Oh, you're black." I didn't grow up in an all white neighborhood. I did go to a school where it was diverse but maybe like 20%, 30%. There were maybe four or five kids who identified as black on the street. But because my dad wasn't around as much and so we didn't see his side of the family as much, I relate to you in that way that my understanding of my blackness by being surrounded by people wasn't really until I got to college and I decided to become an AKA and I did all of those things. And I remember when we were kids-

Channing Power: I wish I would have done that.

Yvonne Lee: Yes.

Channing Power: Black sorority is the one thing I really, really miss, yes.

Yvonne Lee: Right, right. I loved doing it and even in our little sorority that we had at University of Arizona, there was other people who maybe did not identify as black but just identified with blackness so that was something interesting. And I remember when I went to Macon, Georgia for the first time, from Arizona, me and my brother and my sister and we all went there. Being surrounded by all black people and thinking to myself, "I've always had this thing in my life because I'm black and I'm Filipino. Am I black enough?" And then being an actress and being in the industry going, "Okay, let me see." I had to educate other people about what it means to be black in America and that we really just have... At that point, I felt like we only had one definition and it didn't include me.

Yvonne Lee: Meanwhile, there are many definitions. They just don't have a platform. They just don't have a story that's being told about them. So I identify with that in

terms of being identified as a black person also identifying as Filipino but knowing that I learned a lot of it by seeking out those communities, especially moving to Chicago. I was like, "Where's black theater in Chicago?" And then it all just kind of started then and I actually felt at home. I did have a different experience when I was there and maybe it was because it was Chicago because they just like, "You black? Come over here. You black? Come over here."

Channing Power: Exactly, exactly. No, I remember the first time somebody called me an Oreo and I had no idea what they were talking about. And then I was like, "Oh God, I think maybe they're right." Do you know what I mean? And not for any reason but I liked all the same music as my friends in high school. It was Duran Duran and the Go-Go's and all that so of course, Michael Jackson but that's because everybody listened to Michael Jackson.

Channing Power: Yeah, you only work with what you're given and I think that's the real... that's the thing we're all grappling with which is what's being taught in schools and what's the conversation and what's the... because children can only react to what's being put in front of them and so I think it's incumbent on us in this generation and as leaders in our schools and leaders in our communities to make sure that we're putting the right things in front of our children so that they have the whole Smörgåsbord of which to choose as opposed to this is the only thing you have to choose from. You're like, "Oh, well if this is what's on offer, I guess I'm going to go with that."

Channing Power: But there's so much more that should be on offer and that's the thing that I think is... That's the work that's happening right now which is exciting. It's exciting to be here now in the world at this time to be a part of that work. I'm grateful for the opportunity for that but it's heady.

Jason Lee: I strongly connect to what you both are saying. From my lens, I was raised in all white environments. I'm talking Mankato, Minnesota, Galesburg, Illinois, Decatur, Illinois. I'm talking sundown towns. Decatur literally is a sundown town. And somehow in those environments... I oftentimes talk about just the idea of being raised with love and support beyond wildest imaginations and with that understanding and backing, then you can go forth into any environment, a board room or a back alley, and navigate your way around.

Jason Lee: I remember when I was in fifth or sixth grade, a girl I had liked came up to me, black girl I liked came up to me. She was a couple years older and she just said to me, "Whaddya do?" And I was like, "I don't know what that means." I didn't have it in my ear about how to translate that and I just sheepishly walked away. But then I went home and I was like, "Let me think about that. Where did I hear that? Let me study that. What is that? What's that about?"

Jason Lee: DuBois called it double consciousness. In order to navigate this place that we are in, we have to be able to move with that flexibility and dexterity. It's an interesting game to play. But for me, what navigated me throughout... So I was African-American history major. Again, I was raised... Yvonne, my loving wife, often calls me the... What do you say Yvonne? The darkest...

Yvonne Lee: You never get it right.

Jason Lee: The blackest light-skin, the darkest... What do you say? The darkest [crosstalk 00:31:18].

Yvonne Lee: You had it first. You're the blackest light-skinned man that I know.

Jason Lee: I've had to overcompensate many times but that's meaningful for our experience. Male or female, black man or black woman experience in America from the second half of the 20th century on. We can go back further into history. Identities [inaudible 00:31:42] what I have learned is what the dominant culture, how they look it. And how I can either embrace that or reject it.

Yvonne Lee: That brings me to our second question of our Lagralane cocktail confession is: How do you maintain truth with your adoption story in terms of your family and adoption? Because we know that you're not adopted but you have adopted your kids. How do you maintain truth within your adoption story when there are so many opportunities to create stories that are meant to protect? So you said you're about to come upon this time that you know that's coming which is probably honestly, now that I have a 12-year-old, you're like a year and a half away from the question.

Channing Power: Yeah. Honesty I think is the key and we've always tried to be really honest from the beginning. I was charmed when my daughter at around four or five was telling her adoption story to someone else and she was basically saying... She says, "My mom and dad wanted a baby and they couldn't have a baby and then they went to a park and they saw a woman there who had two kids and she was going to have a baby and they said, 'Can we have that baby?' and she said, 'Okay.' And then they went to Disneyland and then I was born."

Channing Power: All these things were true because she had seen pictures because we had pictures of the birth mom and her two kids at a park and she'd seen pictures of when we took them to Disneyland. We didn't actually just walk up to a woman in a park and say [crosstalk 00:33:28]. But I love the fact that she had taken what we'd shared with her and also her knowledge of the pictures that she'd seen and sort of created her own narrative around it. We were like, "Yeah, that's kind of how it happened," because at four, that's really all you need to understand.

Channing Power: But we've always tried to be very honest and answer any direct question with as much truth as we can given the age of our child when they're asking the question. I think already I can tell, even though he's still very young, it's going to be my son who's going to be the big questioner. He's going to have a lot of questions. I feel like my daughter may have some but she is a little bit more like, "That's the abstract and this is my reality and I feel pretty grounded in my reality."

Channing Power: Whereas I feel like he's a guy that's questioning... He questions everything all the time and he always wants to know more and more and why this and why that and how this. So it's going to be interesting because I think they're going to both have different attitudes towards it and my suspicion, and I may be wrong about

this, but that she's going to be pretty chill about it until the point that he gets old enough and starts asking a lot of questions and then that's going to spur her to ask a lot of questions. That's kind of what I think is going to end up happening.

Channing Power: His curiosity is going to make her feel like, "Maybe I should be more curious. I'm going to be more curious." I think that the main thing is I don't ever want either one of our children to feel any shame around the fact that they are adopted and I think that's part of what we've been trying to ground them in this truth. We celebrate World Adoption Day every year and we're part of Adopt Together so we do the hands and draw the smiley face on and they understand what that all means.

Channing Power: Right now, my daughter is excited about it because she feels like being adopted makes her special and I want that to be the thing that she feels always. I know there will probably be a point where someone in her life will try to throw it back at her as a negative and my only hope is that we've given her enough grounding in it that she'll be able to handle that with grace and not feel as though it is the insult that they intend. Because there are still, even now, so many people that have really complicated...

Channing Power: A really good friend of mine who had her child with a surrogate and a donor egg and she said to me, "How can you consider adoption? You don't know what you're going to get." And I was like, "Well, you don't know what you're going to get with any." Think of all these people, the parents of Columbine kids. I don't think that they expected that that was going to be the outcome for their family. Here's the thing. Any child is like a seed and you plant that seed in the ground and you give it light and water and air and you hope that it grows into something beautiful and amazing and formidable. And some seeds don't grow the way you expect them to grow.

Channing Power: But there's no guarantee, no matter how you... As a parent, you want to open your heart to a child that needs love and that's what I feel like we did. We opened our hearts to children that needed love and we were so grateful that we were... And quite honestly, I couldn't imagine our family any other way. I feel like we are parents the kids we were meant to be the parents of if that makes sense.

Jason Lee: Absolutely.

Yvonne Lee: I was at the park with our son and he's really good friends with his preschool friend and his grandmother was there. So I know her daughter, who is her biological child, but then I didn't actually know that she had an adopted brother and she told me this very simple story of how they always raised him through normalcy of being adopted and that he asked his sister, "Well, where's your other mom? I have two moms. Where's your other mom?"

Channing Power: That's right, that's right.

Yvonne Lee: He thought that she was missing out because she only had one and he had two. So I thought that that was... I was very touched when she shared that story.

Channing Power: I love that.

Jason Lee: The normalizing of it is what it's all about. The hate does exist. The hate is out there.

Channing Power: The hate and the ignorance because I think a lot of people just don't know. They just don't know and that's the thing that you have to combat.

Jason Lee: It's teaching our kids how to be mentally strong, filled with love and support, and then go take on the world like, Channing, you have done and are doing and what we're doing. It's empowering our kids to get after it.

Channing Power: Yep, that's right.

Yvonne Lee: I have a question. I know Scott's not here but how is it for him being a white dad with these... the world will see them as black children. Are there conversations that you guys have to have in terms of this idea of protecting and this idea of identity? Are you allowed to speak for him in terms of what he... All of a sudden the light bulb comes on in a different way than maybe it would have before?

Channing Power: It's funny because as we have been going through this, I'm like, "Why isn't he in this podcast? I should have totally had him be in this [inaudible 00:38:42]." But it's been interesting over the past 18 months. There's been such a different level of conversation about race and ethnicity in America and that has spurred some very interesting conversations for us. I think that I don't want to speak for him but it's been interesting because I think he has sort of, in ways that I don't think he had necessarily even thought about before, has become aware of his own privilege and of doors and things that have been open to him that he wasn't even aware were open as he was walking through them. So this conversation has been very illuminating and I think in the microcosm of the conversations that have been happening within our school and some of the stuff there that again, has been hitting him differently than I think it would have were he not the father of these two children. So it's an interesting journey to be sure and one that I'm proud to say he is meeting head on and is very interested in and concerned about.

Channing Power: We had a whole conversation about how you can talk to black women about their hair, what is or not okay to say [inaudible 00:39:59]. He was like, "I was just saying I like it this way." I'm like, "You cannot [crosstalk 00:40:06] preference. You have to just be there. [inaudible 00:40:10]." It's such a complicated... because black women and their hair, it's like there are so many nuances tied up in all of that.

Yvonne Lee: Oh, so much history.

Channing Power: So much history and so much things and that notion of coming to a place... For every girl, no matter what you are, race or ethnicity might be, the wrestling with your looks is a struggle that is, I think, mostly uniquely female. I don't think that men generally speaking are as self analytical about their look and their presentation and their body and part of that's the society that we live in where

from a very young age, boys are taught... You say about boys, he's so fast, he's so strong. And it's always like she's so pretty, she's so cute.

Channing Power: That's just culturally how we do. Then it's more complicated when your looks don't match the definition of the standardization of what is beautiful in whatever culture you live in. In Korea, they have a whole different set of standards and the people that don't hit those, they feel isolated. I do think that it's changing because we now have so many role models. Shonda posted on Instagram the other day, one of her followers sent a photo because Shonda's on the cover of Forbes this month and sent a picture and the newsstand, nine magazines in a row all had black men on the cover. And she was like, "I don't think this has ever happened before." It's a pretty astonishing photo when you look at it together. It's Shonda and Lena and Issa and Viola and I can't remember all of them but they're all currently on a magazine stand right now.

Yvonne Lee: I only saw that in Ebony or Jet. The only time I would see that would be in one magazine like Ebony or Jet.

Jason Lee: There's been a seismic shift for sure, absolutely.

Channing Power: That's right, that's right. So I think that's all helpful but we still have so far to go to get to the place that we want to go. So anyway, it's a complicated conversation and it's an ongoing one, but it's one that I'm glad that he and I are engaged in together.

Yvonne Lee: The whole reason of this podcast is about that search for identity. It's about understanding our history about where we come from, about where we're going, and to teach ourselves the things that schools never taught us so that we can understand ourselves better. So we can have those moments that you were talking about Channing, those moments where you realized you had a wall around yourself and then all of a sudden, that broke away and you were like, "Oh," now you can be in all of your fullness as a black woman in all of these ways that you feel like now you can embrace those. That's what's so beautiful about this whole conversation is that we're still continuing to grow even after being parents and having jobs and all of these children. We're still learning and growing in our identity and that's the joy of it. At 89, we'll still be going, "Oh, wait a minute, I have one more thing I need to find out."

Channing Power: Exactly, exactly. I'm just so grateful for you for having me on. I'm so grateful to have been a part of this conversation and I'm so glad that you guys are asking these questions and having this dialogue and bringing it in to the public. So thank you for that. Thank you for this work.

Jason Lee: Thank you for being so open and sharing with us.

Yvonne Lee: And gracious.

Jason Lee: Yeah. We really strongly appreciate it. And so I don't know where you are with you Old-Fashioned. I'm about out.

Channing Power: I'm out! I'm out. I have one last tiny sip that I can take. This is it.

Jason Lee: Let's take that tiny sip. Let's do it. Cheers.

Channing Power: Let's do it.

Jason Lee: Thank you.

Yvonne Lee: What we're made of, who we come from, and why are what little boys and girls hold onto. Because it is these truths we hold to be self-evident. Please join us for part three of our three part series on origins. In part three, we interview Lisa Cole , a mom who first met her adopted daughter in a dream.

Jason Lee: This podcast is produced by the Lagralane Group. We would like to thank Lagralane Spirits co-producers and writers, Courtney Oliphant and Peppur Chambers Soraci, co-producer Matthew Soraci, podcast coordinator Amanda Dinsmore, sound designer David B. Marling, The Launch Guild, and Tobi Gad for his original piano improvisation.

Jason Lee: We'd also like to thank Podcast Haven and our guest, Channing Power. Remember to grab our Old-Fashioned recipe and show notes by going to lagralanespirits.com, that's L-A-G-R-A-L-A-N-E-S-P-I-R-I-T-S.com. And we'll see you next time. And if you loved the cocktail or the episode, make sure you rate, review, and subscribe on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen.