

# AT Banter Podcast Episode 296 - Precious Perez

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

disability, people, artists, music, blind, grew, disabled, song, berkeley, advocate, important, tik tok, started, accessibility, write, absolutely, ryan, thinking, songwriting, week

## SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Precious Perez, Ryan Fleury

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**R** Rob Mineault 00:02  
Hey, and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

**R** Ryan Fleury 00:09  
Banter banter.

**R** Rob Mineault 00:10  
Hey this is, of course, the podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault. And joining me today Mr. Ryan Fleury.

**R** Ryan Fleury 01:28  
I am Ryan Fleury.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:30  
And the man of many voices. Was that you trying to imitate Steve?

**R** Ryan Fleury 01:35  
That was me.

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**R** Rob Mineault 01:37  
I know, but were you trying to imitate Steve?

**R** Ryan Fleury 01:39  
Well, that was your question. Was that me trying to imitate Steve? Yes. It was me.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:43  
Okay. All right. Well, hey, how are you? Oh, well, we should mention that we do not have a Steve Barclay or Lis Malone with us this week because they are busy. They're busy or on still on vacation.

**R** Ryan Fleury 02:10  
I think so.

**R** Rob Mineault 02:12  
Or maybe they're just busy. I'm I'm not even sure I can even keep track their schedules at this point. But just me and you. That's okay. That's all we need. We need mics. We need an internet connection. And we need me and you and we have a show. And usually we need a guest.

**R** Ryan Fleury 02:28  
Usually, usually a guest helps for sure if we've tried without a guest and it's a failure.

**R** Rob Mineault 02:32  
Anyways, how are you?

**R** Ryan Fleury 02:34  
You know, I was thinking about that question, because I knew you were gonna ask it today.

**R** Rob Mineault 02:37  
Oh, well, good. I'm glad you prepared.

**R** Ryan Fleury 02:38

R Ryan Fleury 02:39

I did prepare finally. Well, I was thinking, you know, it's been really warm out here in British Columbia. It's summer. It's hot. I'm very thankful. I've got a roof over my head. I've got a wife. I've got pets. I've got guitars, instruments, music. Life couldn't be any better. We live in a time where we've got so much access to information. Music. It's just a great time to be alive.

R Rob Mineault 03:19

Did someone shoot you with a tranquilizer gun or something? Last week you were talking about storming the legislature and setting the parliament on fire.

R Ryan Fleury 03:32

Well, it's not the new month yet, so Ryan's rant is still a few weeks.

R Rob Mineault 03:37

Okay. Well, this is good. I liked this kinder, gentler, more mellow. Ryan.

R Ryan Fleury 03:46

Oh, look at that. And a new leaf.

R Rob Mineault 03:50

Is it okay, well, we'll see how long this leaf is over on this side. Okay, well, I'm glad and I would I would tend to agree with all of that. We do live in a pretty amazing time. Although I will rant I you here's two things I'm sick of: climate change and reboots. I'm sick of them rebooting everything, stop rebooting things. Just think up new stuff.

R Ryan Fleury 04:15

Well there's just no originality anymore. Especially with the mainstream industries, whether it's the big box office, the same artists we've heard for decades. You know, there's just not a lot of creativity happening, it seems. So yeah, I hear you there.

R Rob Mineault 04:39

Yeah, there. Yeah. See, I knew I knew it. That was a short leaf.

R Ryan Fleury 04:44

Okay. Going back to my little thread on music. We have so much more access now to independent artists who aren't signed by big labels who are doing amazing Using work in any genre of music you're looking for. So I say, get out your pocket books, get out on Spotify, find all this new music, because there's a lot of great stuff out there.

R

Rob Mineault 05:19

So you must have been thinking up for that segue for quite a while, because that's that's a pretty good segue into talking about what the heck we're doing today.

R

Ryan Fleury 05:28

I've been thinking about this for I don't know, six months, three months.

R

Rob Mineault 05:31

Wow, you're putting my preparation to shame. Well, why don't you tell the fine folks at home just what the heck we are doing today. Because I'm very excited about today's show.

R

Ryan Fleury 05:43

Excellent. Well, today we have singer songwriter and music educator, independent artist -. I'm going to say I could be wrong, but we'll find out soon - our guest is the one the only Precious Perez. Hello Precious.

P

Precious Perez 05:58

Hi, that is correct. I am an independent artist.

R

Ryan Fleury 06:01

I got it right for once. Excellent.

R

Rob Mineault 06:05

That three months of preparation really paid off.

R

Ryan Fleury 06:12

So glad you could join us.

R

Rob Mineault 06:13

We were excited. We with you. We've actually been trying to line this up for quite a while. So we are so thrilled to be able to have you on the show. So why don't we just get the ball rolling, just give us a little bit of a background on who you are and anything else you want to tell us about.

P

Precious Perez 06:34

My name is Precious Perez. I am a Hispanic woman with dark curly hair. And I am a singer songwriter and music educator, multi instrumentalist published children's author. And I am membership chair of a coalition called RAMPD.

R

Rob Mineault 06:56

So clearly what I think what you're trying to tell us is that you just need more to do. Clearly bored out of your tree. Why don't we start with talking to us a little bit about about the music and sort of the your music background? Was this something that you were always really into as a kid?

P

Precious Perez 07:15

Yeah, so I was given an Eminem CD, and a J Lo CD when I was five years old for my fifth birthday. And kind of kick started everything. I think I also had Mariah Carey's Emancipation album, like, those were like the three that I remember, at that age, having access to. And I grew up around a lot of music. My mom listened to everything from like, hip hop to r&b to like, obvious, obviously, Latin music satisfied, I get all of that stuff. The other things I always say the genres I wasn't as exposed to as a kid were Classic Rock and Country. Those are things I'm still learning about today. But I had a lot of music around me growing up, my family loved music. And I had like this karaoke machine that I was gifted, and I used to just record myself on cassette tapes, singing along to the radio, but I was painfully shy as a kid, so I wouldn't sing in front of people. And if I did, it was very, like, soft and very quiet. But my music teacher in first grade was like, wow, you have a really nice voice. And I just stayed in school chorus, you know, throughout elementary school, because I loved it. I loved singing. And you know, I hadn't really sung solo until middle school. I started doing talent shows and open mics and things like that. started writing songs in, I would say, I wrote my first like, song, that was not very good. When I was 10 years old. I still have that somewhere. But it's very cringy. And I don't know how I feel anymore about that one.

R

Ryan Fleury 09:01

But you got to start somewhere.

P

Precious Perez 09:03

So I always say I wrote my first good song when I was in eighth grade. And it's the one disability song that I have actually, that I have out. It's called "Different" and it and it talks about, like, how do you feel when you're different? And like, you know, do you feel alone, like, you know, just because you're different. I know how you feel because the spotlights on me too, because I'm different. And like, you know, this is how people treat you, but you're not alone kind of thing. And it's very, like positive. And so that was probably the first real song I'd written. And then in high school, I actually got a scholarship, a full scholarship to get private lessons for four years through the New England Conservatory in Massachusetts. And I also got to be part of an ensemble and this was all through the Handel and Haydn Society, which I ended up working for for a while, so full circle. But it kind of solidified the fact that music was something I wanted to do, and I was going to pursue it. And I didn't quite know what specifically I was going to do until my junior year of high school. And I always thought I was going to do Music and English, because I love like, colorful language and poetry and things like that. But I soon realized that after taking AP Literature that analyzing literature properly was not my thing. I just wanted to write. So my love of English, and poetry kind of turned into songwriting. But I realized in junior year like, wait, I can do music, education, and performance, like I can do those two things that are both music related at the same time. Yeah, that's what I want to do. Because I've always had a passion for teaching, whether it be you know, other blind students or other people. And I always, you know, wanted to do that, as far as giving back to the communities that gave to me, and being able to give the same resources and the same education and the same passion that was put forth toward my education so that I could get where I am. So I knew that I wanted to do those two things, but I was primarily wanting to pursue my artistry. And so when I applied to colleges, I applied to a free how many schools it was. But what's funny is that Berklee College of Music wasn't even on the list that I initially had, I was like, everybody wants to go to Berklee, I don't want to go to I was trying to be rebellious about it. And everybody was like, You know what, it's right there, you can probably get in, just try it. So I said, Okay, you know, it's in my backyard. Sure, I'll try it. And I ended up getting in, but I got in with a minimal scholarship package. So like, I want to say, a little over a quarter, coverage of tuition, which, at that point in time, it's increased slightly since then it was like \$60,000, annually, they were giving me about 17%. So I was like, well, there's no way I'm going to be able to afford this. And ended up getting a full ride to another college. And was trying to convince myself that that's where I needed to go, because it was more cost effective. And I would be okay, and I would be happy, and it would be fine. My heart was not saying that for real, but I felt like that was my only option. Until one of my teachers convinced me to write an appeal letter, she said, All you can do is try and if you really want this, just write the letter and see what happens. So with the help of my aunt, looking over it, and myself. And you know, my mom, I wrote this appeal letter kind of explaining my situation. And you know, how money was the only thing keeping me from following my dreams, this, that and the other. And what's insane is that the day before I had to decide which school to pick, I get a call saying they're giving me enough money, so that I can with the scholarships, I already had go to Berklee with minimal loans at the end of it. And it was the craziest night, one of the craziest nights because I had already convinced myself that I was going to go to this other school and it was going to be fine. So then I was like, but wait, do I want to go to this other school where I'm going to be slightly in debt? Which, looking forward from that moment, I got more scholarships, and I was able to graduate debt free. So I'm very grateful for that. And I didn't know that then. So I was like, well, I'm still going to have to pay for college. But when you think about it, \$10,000 a year versus how like, 20,000 was gonna be a game changer. And so I was like, you know what, this is what I want to do. I want the contemporary program. I want the ability to grow my voice, not just in the classical realm, but in the belting realm and the pop genres, all these different things that I wanted to do, and I wouldn't have had access to all of that without Berklee. Berklee has its issues, don't get me wrong. I've had my fair share of discrimination, of struggling of having to advocate and fight

through all of that just to graduate. In my specific major of music ed, performance was fine. That wasn't an issue. It was the music ed that you know, being The first blind person to go through that program at that school, they didn't really know what to do with me. So I was proving myself until the very end. But with that being said, I like made so many friends that that I am going to have forever, I had so many experiences, I got to study abroad in Valencia, Spain, and that was amazing. And really helped me grow as a person and as an artist. So there's a lot, you know, with everything, there's good and there's bad. But my career really jumped started, you know, a couple years into Berklee, and I've just kind of been riding the wave.

R

Ryan Fleury 15:42

So I want to circle back just just for a minute, because you are partially sighted or blind. So can you explain a little bit about what your your vision level is, and then maybe discuss a little bit about some of the adoptions or accommodations that would have had to have been made for you to take a program like you did?

P

Precious Perez 16:08

Absolutely. So I am totally blind, pretty much I have light perception out of one eye, which you know, is not very useful in most cases. But so I read Braille, I also use screen readers. And you know, I use VoiceOver on my phones, either JAWS NVDA, or VoiceOver on the Mac and Windows, various things. I do read real music as well. And so when I went to Berklee, the cool thing about Berklee, and probably one of the greatest resources, was the assistance of Assistive Technology Lab that they have. And so the Assistive Technology Lab is designed specifically for blind students. And the professor there, Chi Kim, he teaches all of us how to use all of the software that we need to be successful going through our curriculums. So he taught me Pro Tools, he taught me Sebelius, which is a music notation software, he taught me how to even build my own website so that I could back before part of scholarship requirements used to be that you had to have a portfolio, they changed that since but the portfolio is what got me started and got my artists website to where it is now, because I just kept adding to it. And here we are. So a lot of it was the building blocks for my foundation and being able to be successful. He taught me, you know, we could take his class as a class in our schedule. And he teaches us whatever is relevant. So now students are learning how to use Logic, because it's more widely used and a lot more cost effective, and a lot more people using it. So he's teaching Logic, and he just kind of tailors to what each group of students needs. And for any individuals, if there's something specific, they need to learn, he's got office hours available. I'm very grateful for that resource. They also have a work study there that converts printed materials and music into a format that we can access. And that's something that I mean, the majority of it's not a common thing for that to exist in an institution, let alone like this specified of one. So that was one of the big things that really drew me to Berklee was the Assistive Tech lab and the fact that I would have that support. And so that was a big help. They also have some of our theory books in Braille available at the library. So they had ear training, they had our harmony book, the ear training was really helpful, because what that is, is you have to read rhythms and melodies and like, memorize them, and recite them in class along with your classmates if you're seeing them for the first time. So I was actually able to pull out my Braille copy and read along and articulate those. And so that was very helpful as helpful skill for me to have. And it was also a

helpful thing for them to have available to me and to other blind students. They also had an online book for theory, which was fantastic. So if you didn't use Braille music, you could use the audio version.

R

Rob Mineault 19:44

You know, it's interesting. We've talked to quite a few people in post secondary on the show over the years and it always never fails to shock me. Just how inaccessible some post secondary institutions still are even today. And I really think that that's, that's a huge problem. Because here we are complaining about being having inclusive hiring practices, and having people with disabilities out there in the workforce, yet, our post secondary institutions, a lot of them are still inaccessible in a lot of ways. The barriers to get into certain programs, because they just assume, oh, well, somebody who's blind couldn't possibly do this program, and they just don't bother to try to adapt it. And I would argue that absolutely, almost every single program can be adapted. You know, and it's ridiculous. And even, you saying that you were the first blind student to make it through this program, that's shocking to me. I can't believe it, you know, within music education that you went in 2022 and somebody else hadn't done that before.

P

Precious Perez 21:02

And that was not without its own barriers, either. Which is insane. Sometimes, because I had wonderful professors, I was lucky to have professors that, you know, even if they didn't know what to do, even if they had never worked with somebody like me, before, it was okay, you tell us what you need. It was the administration that I really had trouble with. There were about two or three interviews before they let me have my major interview. And then my interview for the major was 15 faculty in a room asking me how I was going to adapt this or that and how I was going to be able to do the XYZ. And my response was, well, you're the teacher. So you teach me how you know how to do things, and I will tell you how I can adapt them. But those aren't answers that I have for you right now. All I have is that we're gonna figure this out, and you're gonna have to do that.

R

Rob Mineault 22:01

Wow, that's crazy. That is really crazy and angering, actually.

P

Precious Perez 22:06

I have had my fair share of laying on the ground saying I'm gonna drop out, I'm done. I'm over it, you know, wouldn't be so bad if I just left right now.

R

Ryan Fleury 22:17

But, you know, the other side of the coin is, if you would have chosen the other school, you may not have had access to the same resources you had?

P

Precious Perez 22:23

Absolutely, yeah, that is absolutely the case, I, you know, I don't think I would have been as happy at the other school looking back. And I'm very grateful that my path led me to where I am. And where I ended up, you know, I, as much as I went through at Berklee, I don't regret it. Because it's paving the way for anybody after me who wants to do what I've done.

R

Ryan Fleury 22:47

That's just what I was gonna say, yeah.

R

Rob Mineault 22:49

It really does highlight, you know, a real problem with and it's, you know, honestly, it's the same way up here in Canada. You know, our universities we have the same problems. It's frustrating, because how many other people are out there that maybe want to take a similar path, but they just they don't have access to the right school, or they can't get into the right school.

P

Precious Perez 23:10

And sometimes it's even like a lack of support, a lack of advocacy skills, a lack of resources. I grew up with a lot of resources that a lot of blind students, you know, it's not a common thing for a lot of blind students who grew up with you know, devoted TVIs, teachers of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility instructors, teams of people that are there to support you and make sure you reach your goals, not the other way around, like reaching the goals that they think you should be at or reaching what they think you should be capable of. I had the services that I needed from a young age, and I'm very grateful for that. But I also know that it's not the same story for a lot of blind students or, you know, even just around the country. So I am lucky enough to have grown up with the support and the mentoring to learn how to advocate for myself so that when I ended up in these situations, I was able to fight through them. Not everybody is able to do that. And that's not always a fault of their own. It's, you know, fault of the systems or, you know, the fact that they didn't, they never had to do this. So how would they know how, and it's just, you know, there's a lot of factors that contribute to that.

R

Ryan Fleury 24:24

Like I keep telling Rob on these episodes, we need a disability uprising. You know, we definitely are the quietest largest minority in the world.

P

Precious Perez 24:33

Also the minority that's not talked about it's the minority that basically people society in

Also the minority that's not talked about, it's the minority that basically people society in general thinks doesn't exist, the only minority that's not talked about in any diversity conversations and in any minority conversations. And it's ridiculous, like, disability is such a huge part of, you know, the population generally and also like, people that grow older end up becoming disabled, there's a lot of, you know, there's a lot of things that can happen to anyone at any time. But people look at disability as this, first of all this bad word, like, oh, disability, I can't see that. And second of all, like, it's this whole like, pitying thing that, oh man, I could never be disabled, or I don't know how you can do these things as a disabled person, like, Oh, you're broken? No, I'm not broken. I am, who I am as I am. And there's nothing wrong with that.

R

Rob Mineault 25:34

It really does make you think because you're absolutely right. It's, it's, it's a very unique minority, when we talk about disability, because it's one of the only minorities that anybody can enter into that community at any point in their life. And, honestly, if you look at statistics, and you think about it, the likelihood that you're going to is pretty high, like, eventually, you know, Vision fails, mobility fails, you know, just just in terms of aging, let alone, you know, anything else that could happen. So I think that, you know, it's just this weird human nature that we have that we want to bury our heads in the sand and not think about things that are uncomfortable, or that we're afraid of. And I think that the, the way that people don't want to engage with disability, I think it really just comes down to fear. People are afraid when they when they look at somebody who's blind, they look at them, and that scares the shit out of them.

P

Precious Perez 26:33

Because they don't know. They're afraid of that they don't know.

R

Rob Mineault 26:36

But they're also afraid of that could be me, what if what if I went blind like, and it scares them, and they and so there's this real resistance, I think, to engage and to learn more. That's my theory, anyways, I could be completely wrong. I'm just sort of armchair philosophizing. But it is something really super weird, because you would think that if we were smart, we'd be like, you know what, let's make the world the most accessible place we can possibly make it. Because we're all probably going to need that accessibility at some point in our life.

P

Precious Perez 27:12

We don't think that long term, like I feel like a lot of it is, well, this system works for the majority of people. So I don't want to have to do all the work to go and fix it or change it. So you're just gonna have to deal or, you know, unfortunately for you, this is the way the world is and you're gonna have to deal with it. And it's really, it's really just frustrating and upsetting that, you know, we're seen as less than people because we have a disability, you're treated as if you can't speak for yourself or as if you don't know anything. Just because you have a disability.

R

Rob Mineault 27:47

Can you tell us a little bit about about RAMPD, which is Recording Artists and Music Professionals with Disabilities?

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Precious Perez 27:54

Absolutely. So RAMPD is a phenomenal coalition doing great work for disabled artists in the music industry. So our mission is to promote inclusion, elevate disability culture, and advocate for accessibility within the music industry, so RAMPD was founded by Lachi, she's an award winning recording artist, and vice president Gaelynn Lee. And I am a membership chair. So what I do is kind of help bring in and vet new membership for the new classes every year, and help build community within the organization. And it's it's amazing, RAMPD gives us the ability as disabled artists to not only uplift ourselves, but uplift each other through RAMPD and through the community and through what we're building and disability culture. It's normalizing wheelchairs and canes and disabled bodies and disabled people, disabled artists as we are as ourselves, having that representation front and center. And you know, having people see that notice that realize that it is a culture and it is a community and disability is not a bad thing or a thing to be ashamed of, or you know, to pity. A lot of us in RAMPD what we do is we advocate for disability and we are proud of our disabilities. And that's important to say because, you know, a lot in life, you know, in general, they tell you like with job interviews with anything be confident as disabled people, you know, and advocates. It's hard sometimes to feel like you know, you know, we've all been there when we've had that moment of oh man, like how am I going to do anything this that and the other day. But what's important is that you come out of it and realize like, I'm a person. And I'm a disabled person. For me, I'm a blind person. And I'm proud of being a blind person, I do things differently, but I do them my way. And I don't do them any less well than the next. So it's really uplifting each of our communities and our cultures, all disabilities within the music industry. And also, an important thing to note, under the umbrella of general accessibility is venue accessibility, making sure that award shows and concerts have wheelchair access, ramps on stages, so that people can go on stage who are in a wheelchair, ASL, and captioning for Deaf artists, and deaf audience members, audio description for blind audience members and blind artists representation on screen for disabled artists. And just in general, self description. So what I did at the beginning of this podcast was say, you know, like, how I generally look and, you know, you can always self described as meant to be short and sweet. And it's an interactive way to give a window into someone's personality, you can say what you're wearing, or you don't have to. But it's a really interactive and fun way for blind people to really interact with what's happening visually. And it's, it's a great tool. And that's something we really encourage, and we really push in RAMPD. And, you know, as part of, you know, award shows, and any consulting that's done, making sure that they know that self description should be incorporated. And when we do any kind of speaking events or anything as RAMPD members, because there are professional members, one I'm one of, of these professional members, in addition to being membership chair. So sometimes we do speaking things and presentations and we self described before we do them. There's a lot of different factors and different things that goes into advocating for overall accessibility because accessibility means so many things. Given how many disabilities there are in the world, and just nationwide, we have all kinds of disabled artists, and we advocate and aim to advocate for as many as of these communities as we can, because it's important to uplift, all disability, not just blindness, not just wheelchair users, not just deafness, everything, even non visible because

there are non visible disabilities that are not physical that can't be seen. Chronic illness, all these different things that maybe aren't visible when you look at somebody, but they're dealing with and they're battling with it.

R

Ryan Fleury 32:59

Well, look, that's the interesting thing about about RAMPD, looking at their website, you've got, like you mentioned, you know, people with various disabilities, all disabilities that are producers, arrangers, singers, songwriters, arrangers, I think there's record labels that are all part of that community. Well, I guess first, how long has ramped been around? And are you guys in communication with mainstream labels?

P

Precious Perez 33:28

So we are essentially a resource. RAMPD is here to, you know, as a directory, so anytime anyone comes to RAMPD and says, let's hire we want an artist that's in this area, we want artists that specifically this, go to our membership directory, and hire someone, because RAMPD does not book artists. But we elevate each other and push opportunities to professional members, and ramped, recently launched in January. So we're fairly new. But we have article features in the New York Times, in Forbes, and all these different areas that we've been able to advocate for and get into. Some of us are now in the Recording Academy as members. I'm in the new class this year. Very exciting. And so a lot of what we do is advocacy, but also making sure that organizations know that all of the artists in RAMPD are paid professionals. So we're professional at what we do. And we deserve equal payment just as our peers within the industry receive. So that's a big part of what we do. And what we make sure that organizations know we're really big on partnering with different organizations, whether it's, you know, for consulting for their shows or to help uplift our mission, and there's so we have partnerships packages available for organizations that are, you know, want to include disability and want to make sure that they are helping push accessibility in the industry. Whether that be labels who have opportunities for our members, or disabled artists, whether that be an organization who is doing, also doing an award show and wants ramps to consult all these different things, we are trying to cover the gamut. And I shouldn't say trying, we are covering they came in. And we are the only organization out there doing this right now.

R

Ryan Fleury 35:49

So are you guys International?

P

Precious Perez 35:52

Yeah, we have members globally. So there's people in the UK and things like that, you know, primarily a lot of like, the executive people are based in the US, but we are definitely wanting to expand as much as we can. And you know, things are growing pretty fast.

R

Rvan Fleurv 36:10

Ryan Reary 30:20

It's great, because I didn't see anything like that in Canada. And I thought, Well, it'd be great, but, you know, if there's a Recording Academy, that people can join international from around the world internationally.

P

Precious Perez 36:25

Yep, RAMPD is there for everyone, everyone who is a disabled artist, whether or anyone who wants to keep up with RAMPD, we even have a mailing list that people can join, just to stay up to date on what RAMPD is doing. But definitely, I would encourage anybody who wants to be a member, keep an eye out, we have membership class, applications opening up at the end of the year. So if you want to be a professional member and get more exclusive opportunities, and beyond committees, that's your chance. But otherwise, community mailing list, Discord, we are here as a support to uplift each other, and disability, and to be a resource for anybody in the industry looking to understand how they can make their organizations their shows more accessible, and give disabled artists more opportunities, because we should be on an equal playing field.

R

Rob Mineault 37:20

Absolutely. And, you know, I've been thinking about this a lot, actually, this week, I think it goes even beyond that, I think the importance of having representation of disability in the arts is really crucial. You know, on the show, we, we talk a lot about, we talk a lot about stuff like accessibility and inclusion, and we sort of, we usually talk about it from sort of a technical point of view, where we talk about literal things like build environments, and, you know, scream and yell about how those aren't accessible, and how we need to do better. And in terms of universal design, and all these types of things, and how educating the public is so important, but it's just not happening fast enough. And when I think about it, I really, and I think about the arts and music and acting, and movies and TV shows, that's where you really are able to really make some changes fast. And the example that I always think about is look at autism, and how far autism has come even in the past five years. But let's go back 10 years. 10 years ago, nobody was talking about autism, when, whenever, you know, the topic came up, they would just think of, you know, kids having screaming fits on the ground - there was there was so much misinformation around autism, it just wasn't a thing. But it's through, you know, obviously a lot of work with with autism advocacy, but also it's the shows that begin to hit the mainstream and begin to normalize the disability. So that's where you actually start to get the education, that's where you get people actually understanding more. That's, that's sort of what needs to be happened. We need to to normalize disability, and I really, really see that that can happen, you know, in a sort of a rapid way through the arts.

P

Precious Perez 39:31

Absolutely. Representation is so important. And that's definitely another thing that we we work towards as far as making sure that we're represented on screen that we're represented as artists, you know, on red carpets and doing these things and performing because it is important for other disabled musicians, to see people that look like them being successful. Just as it's

important for me to see a Latina musician out there doing something and like, wow, if she can do it, I can do it. It's, um, you know, there are some of us that have intersecting identities like I do. And that's important. And representation really does make a difference.

R

Rob Mineault 40:13

And it's like a domino effect. Because again, the more the more represented you are, the more people are going to look at that go, oh, I can do that, too. And they enter in. I really see that that's, the more that I think about it, the more I really I think the emphasis needs to go on the arts.

P

Precious Perez 40:32

I think an important thing to note too, is that like, as an advocate, and as somebody who is pushing to the forefront, I, you know, my personal goal is to be the first blind Latina at the forefront of the Latin music industry. You know, people see blind musicians, they think Stevie Wonder, and Ray Charles, I'm like, okay, but where are the women? And where are the Hispanic women? Like, let's change that. And so I think another thing to note is that as disability advocates, and as you know, people pioneering things and working toward different things, it's important to stay grounded and to remember that there are people coming after you that want to do the same thing. And that we should also be looking out for them and helping them up to where we are.

R

Ryan Fleury 41:21

Wow, no egos. That's a change of pace, isn't it? I guess until you get your your million dollar paycheck and your jet, right?

P

Precious Perez 41:36

And I think it's so important to not because no one gets anywhere alone. First of all, anyone who says that is lying? Why wouldn't you want to give back and make sure that the next person looking up to you, is able to take that path if they want to. I think so much, you know, we take so little with us, when we leave this world, why not give some of our fortune back to it so that I can continue growing after we're gone? Because that's really the truth of a legacy.

R

Rob Mineault 42:14

Yep, that's very true. Okay, well, let me ask you this, and let's, let's stir the pot a little bit. Now, it's like, you know, people, people with disabilities who tend to be high profile, their disability is really tied to their identity in a way that an able bodied artist doing the same thing isn't. And my thought is, is, is that fair? Like, you know, we think of Stevie Wonder, or we think of Ray Charles, and both, obviously, incredible musicians, but they're also, you know, the fact that they're blind is sort of tied to that to their identity in a way that it isn't with Elton John, or Billy

Joel, or whoever. Does that part ever bother you as a musician? Like, do you ever just want to be like, man, I just want to play my music, I just want to everything to be about my music instead of, you know, me having to sort of have this built in advocacy built into all of this.

P

Precious Perez 43:19

For me, it's very deeply intersected. So I, you know, my disability is a part of me, and it's a part of how I do my art, and what my art means. And so for me, it shouldn't define me as an artist or me as a person, but it is part of that. So, you know, I, of course, want my music to be highlighted in my art to be highlighted, and the fact that if people think I'm worth listening to, it's because of the musicianship and not because of my disability. But it is important, and, you know, if I'm able to make that impact, as a disabled artist, and being known as that, along with my other intersecting identities of, you know, being a woman and being Latina, and being low income, and all these different communities that I represent, that's really what, what gives me fuel to keep pushing for it. Because I'm able to uplift all of my communities and give them a voice and give them a platform that, you know, I didn't previously have and some people might not have. So for me, it's very deeply rooted. And it all kind of intertwines.

R

Rob Mineault 44:38

Well, so let me ask you this then. Growing up, when you when you really first built this love of music. Was that, especially when you started writing? Did that act as an outlet to sort of be able to process some of your emotions or some of the things going on with your disability? And do you think that that had a direct impact on you choosing music as a career?

P

Precious Perez 45:08

I think it's the same for a lot of musicians like it's, it's a huge outlet to be able to put something that my words can't say, into an piece of art that people can relate to. And that can take its own form once you put it out into the world. So I think for me when I was younger, um, Taylor Swift was a huge songwriting inspiration for me. I learned how to write by listening to her tell stories through songs. And I think from there, I just took my poetry that I loved to write, and said, Hey, let's see if I can turn this into music. And back then, I didn't know how to play instruments. I didn't know the first thing about music theory and what chord and what key and this, that and the other. I just knew what I felt. Sometimes I felt I, you know, felt a feeling heard a melody in my head. Had some lyrics. And I would just sit there with my little recorder on my own Braille note taker that I had terrible speaker, by the way, don't recommend if you're trying to make actual good recordings. But that was how my first album came to fruition was when my teacher from high school pulled me aside and said, hey, I think you have a gift. Do you want to start a crowd, a crowdfunding campaign and make your first album? And he connected me with his producer friend, who is still my producer today. And I'm actually going to record a new song with him next week. And we managed to do that and and so a lot of my first songs were pulled from those old, terrible recordings of me just singing with the lyrics and reading them as I was singing. And, you know, eventually I learned as I grew in my musicianship, to accompany myself on ukulele. Ukuleles my favorite thing is, you know. I can play a little guitar or a little piano, but ukulele is really my, my favorite. I can get around the others, but they just don't feel as natural, you know. And so as I grew, I learned theory I learned, you know, what's what, how

to structure a chord progression, and all of those different types of things, and could accompany myself, but it really started from just having a feeling, writing it down, or pressing record and just going for it. And if it was good, it was good. If it wasn't, it wasn't. And I still have a lot of those old recordings today. And maybe someday I'll reuse them, I actually reused one of them. And, like, completely rewrote it. to memorialize my uncle who passed away four years ago, on his birthday this past June. Was it this past year? Might have been last June, I don't know, everything's blurring together at this point. But I took an old song that I'd written and completely just kept the melody and changed the words and like, played it on guitar, and it's song I'm never going to be able to perform because it's just too emotional. But it's out there now. And so I think it's really a journey. And you know, as I've grown, my music has grown, and it's just, I've really written from a very personal place. And I'm very exciting to explore writing for other people. And, you know, I'm in a new band now called Mid-Air Decision. And we're working on our first single and it's, it's wild. The experience that I was able to have taking everybody's ideas and putting it into a melody and just taking everybody's feelings and ideas and really putting that together in a way that summed up how everybody in the room felt versus just me. And I'm excited to keep exploring that and to explore writing from other perspectives or for other people. And it's just endless possibility with songwriting. Very exciting. As far as like when I think about what's to come and, you know, I don't really know what direction I'm going in. Next, I want to I want to write a Latin record. And fully work toward that and more collaborations and things. But, you know, there's a lot up in the air right now. So we're working on it.

R

Ryan Fleury 49:49

Well, we could definitely have a whole other episode just talking about songwriting and the process, the emotions you know, the different styles. The music, you know, you don't really want to, I don't know what the right word is. You don't want to put yourself in a corner and stick to one genre, you know? Because you might be thinking of a Latin song this week and a month from now, all of a sudden, you're doing a country hit, right?

P

Precious Perez 50:16

Yeah, literally. I was, it was it happened to me, because I've been like, Oh, I just bought like this new Complete Controls, Pro Tools, software and MIDI keyboard and everything. And I was like, I'm gonna get started. Well, that's not happening until after I move. It's just sitting over there, because I just don't have the energy to set it up, because there's no place to put it right now. So I was like, oh, you know, I've gotten all these ideas. And I've wanted to work on a Latin record. Well, the other day, my friend and I were having a conversation via text, and I fully got inspired, wrote the whole song and made the demo and like three hours of this, really, like, just simple. I don't even know how to explain what this song is going to be. But it's really about like, you know, mental health. And, you know, I know you're struggling and this is how you're feeling, you know, but, you know, I'll be the first one to tell you that it's gonna be okay, even though I've been through this, all of this, and I know, I know where you're at. But there are rainbows and butterflies, even if you can't see them today. That's like one of the lines in the chorus. And very, I was just so stoked, because sometimes, like, I can't force inspiration out of himself. Like, I just can't do it. I'm not one of those people that can just five minutes crank it out. Here you are, it's a great, perfect song. Like I, I need to feel it. And if I don't feel it, it's not gonna come out good. So I was so stoked when I got the idea that I was like, I have to do this

right now. Because if I don't chase the ideas when I get them, and they're very possibly going to go away. So I was really stoked about that. And for me, like as an artist, I don't like to be put in a box, like people have tried to say, oh, your voice is more R&B or it's too sweet for this. I'm like, excuse me. Have you heard me belt? No. Have you heard me do this, this and that? No. I'm purposely versatile, because I want to be able to do as much as I want to, and lend my voice or whatever my songwriting skills to whatever project that comes up. Like, I do not like to be thrust into a mold. Because I can't be molded. Like, especially as somebody with a disability like as a disabled artist. I can't be molded into something somebody else wants me to be because I've had to advocate for myself. I've figured out who I am as an artist and what I need as far as accessibility and nobody else can dictate that for me.

**R** Rob Mineault 52:49

Well said. Well, listen, I think that Ryan's gonna have to contract you out to write him a protest song.

**R** Ryan Fleury 52:57

We're gonna we're gonna have a chat.

**P** Precious Perez 53:00

Here for it. Let's go. Let's do it.

**R** Ryan Fleury 53:03

If you're willing to talk, I'll definitely reach out to you.

**P** Precious Perez 53:06

I'm always here for it, yes! Let's do it.

**R** Ryan Fleury 53:11

Perfect. Thank you.

**R** Rob Mineault 53:12

What rhymes with 'burn down the legislature'? Get out the rhyming dictionary for that one.

**P** Precious Perez 53:18

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We got this. We'll do it. It'll be great.

R

Rob Mineault 53:24

Ryan, I kind of felt like I hogged part of that there. So any questions that you've got?

R

Ryan Fleury 53:30

No, not at all. I'm gonna talk to Precious offline. We'll arrange a chat at some point. Well definitely want to we know you have upcoming nuptials, we want to wish you all the best.

P

Precious Perez 53:43

Thank you so much.

R

Ryan Fleury 53:47

Where can people find you and your music?

P

Precious Perez 53:49

Yeah, so my website has all of my latest press coverage, anything like that? All of my socials Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, [www.preciousperezmusica.com](http://www.preciousperezmusica.com). My Instagram is [precious\\_PuertoRican20](#). My Facebook is [preciousperezmusica](#). You can go to my artists page. Twitter is at [pulyperez1](#). And then of course Precious Perez on Spotify and wherever else you stream your music on.

R

Ryan Fleury 54:24

And I think by accident I went to [preciousperez.com](http://preciousperez.com) I think it's available for sale you might want to grab it.

P

Precious Perez 54:33

Might have been expensive

R

Ryan Fleury 54:41

Grab it before the show airs next week.

---

R

Rob Mineault 54:47

And hey, maybe you can help us with our Instagram account. We suck it.

P

Precious Perez 54:53

I got you.

R

Ryan Fleury 54:57

Tik tok, how to use tik tok

P

Precious Perez 54:58

Oh well Tik Tok is, is its own beast to because it's sort of accessible, but only if you can work to figure out the workarounds. And so far, I've only kind of figured out how to upload premade videos and scroll through and like videos that I watch. So I mean, I'm not like a super huge tik tok user, but whenever I post something to any of my socials that also goes up there.

R

Rob Mineault 55:22

Yeah, because we we have a whole plan for Tik tok.

P

Precious Perez 55:26

Always forget about my Tik Tok. It's also linked on my website. Same thing as same name as my Instagram.

R

Ryan Fleury 55:34

So yeah, perfect. Well Precious we want to thank you so much for taking the time to join us.

P

Precious Perez 55:42

Absolutely. It's been a great time.

R

Rob Mineault 55:46

Listen, anytime you want to come back, we'll be happy to have you. Yeah, I mean, I feel like we have a ton more stuff that we can we talk to you about. Please don't be a stranger and come back.

P Precious Perez 55:59  
Sure. Well, I'm here for it.

R Ryan Fleury 56:01  
Let's do it. All right, right. Wait, wait, wait before you go. Sing a little bit of the chorus to the dinosaur song.

P Precious Perez 56:13  
I'm cracking up in my heart right now. Okay, okay. (Sings) Very nice. Very nice. Very nice. Thank you. That's the most popular song out of all my discography. The first thing that anybody sees is my kids song. And I'm like, Wait, that's not all.

R Ryan Fleury 57:05  
My favorite song yours is Language. But the Dinosaur song was cute. I've heard about all of them now on Spotify.

R Rob Mineault 57:15  
Well, listen, it wasn't nearly as bad as Baby Shark. Way better.

R Ryan Fleury 57:24  
Anybody can write a Baby shark.

P Precious Perez 57:30  
And they're making so much money right now.

R Rob Mineault 57:33  
True. True

R Ryan Fleury 58:02  
Keep in touch.

R Rob Mineault 58:04  
Take care.

P Precious Perez 58:05  
Okay. Bye.

R Rob Mineault 58:08  
Oh, well, that was great.

R Ryan Fleury 58:09  
Yeah, there's so many directions we could have went in.

R Rob Mineault 58:13  
I know. There was a we can literally talk to her for another hour. I didn't even entirely got all my questions that I had for her.

R Ryan Fleury 58:22  
No, it was good. We need to have her back. Such a talent.

R Rob Mineault 58:24  
Holy cow. That voice? Wow.

R Ryan Fleury 58:27  
Well, definitely check out the RAMPD website. You know, watch the video that's on their main page. I forget how long it is. It might be half an hour long or some. But there's different personalities with disabilities on there. And like I've mentioned you before some of work with Snoop Dogg, other high profile artists as well. Just a very, very diverse, talented group of people with disabilities that are working to change the music industry.

R Rob Mineault 58:55  
Yeah, and I really do think that RAMPD is doing some incredible work. And I'm heartened to hear that even after such a recent launch, they've made so much progress. I think that that is exciting. Because, uh, you know, again, the more that I think about it, you know, the fact that

exciting. because, um, you know, again, the more that I think about it, you know, the fact that we scream every week about accessibility and just about, you know, being so frustrated. The arts, I think is really the key. That's, that's where you're going to actually reach people. You can't legislate people to, you know, be more educated about about disability. You have to you have to hit them where they live, which is on Netflix.

R

Ryan Fleury 59:37

Yep. Yeah, absolutely. Disney Plus, Netflix, you know, media is, is allowing persons with disabilities, or it's allowing the mainstream to almost except the person with a disability on the screen as a normal member of society. Look, they are no different than me. They're doing the same job. They're living the same life that I live, like there is no difference.

R

Rob Mineault 1:00:05

Yeah, that's right. And I think that's the key I think it's it's normalizing disability as opposed to showing that people with disabilities can do extraordinary things like when you when you get into like inspiration porn. That doesn't really do anybody any favors either because then you're, you're putting way too much pressure on it. What we want to do is actually just normalize it, just make it so that it is almost invisible, it doesn't matter. Right? And because then and then the more that we realize, you know, people, people with disabilities are out there and doing things and that they need adaptation and accessibility, I think that all of that will come if you know as as sort of part of the natural process of acceptance.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:00:49

And again, you know, society is changing values. Attitudes are all adjusting. So we're getting there. Slowly.

R

Rob Mineault 1:00:57

Because man, look at the look of the difference in you in a week. I'm positive you are, clearly listen to a bunch of Precious's albums before the show.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:01:08

Or maybe it's because there's no Steve or Lis here. I'm in a better mood. I don't have to share the spotlight.

R

Rob Mineault 1:01:15

Something different that's for sure.

—

R Ryan Fleury 1:01:20  
Alright, let's get out of here.

R Rob Mineault 1:01:23  
All right. Hey Ryan.

R Ryan Fleury 1:01:26  
Rob.

R Rob Mineault 1:01:28  
Where can people find us?

R Ryan Fleury 1:01:29  
They can find us online at [www.atbanter.com](http://www.atbanter.com)

R Rob Mineault 1:01:33  
They can also drop us an email if they so desire at [cowbell@atbanter.com](mailto:cowbell@atbanter.com)

R Ryan Fleury 1:01:44  
And they can find us on Facebook and Twitter. And wherever you listen to your podcasts.

R Rob Mineault 1:01:52  
I tell you a funny story before we go. Yep. So I nearly died yesterday. Like Like seriously legitimately like, I may have been close to death. And the culprit was a granola bar. So I was eating this granola bar was one of these like, I don't know, Nature Valley is really it's like crumbly, crunchy. And I was I was I had a mouthful of granola bar. And I suddenly had to sneeze.

R Ryan Fleury 1:02:21  
And you inhale the part of the granola bar?

R Rob Mineault 1:02:22



ROB Mineault 1:02:23

I did. I sucked in like a bunch of the crumbs. Then started coughing and then I sneezed. I was coughing and sneezing and all that was exploding everywhere. And I was choking. Like it was a whole thing. And for like, yeah, like 45 minutes. Like I was like hacking.



Ryan Fleury 1:02:47

Jenny's like, who's gonna feed me?



Rob Mineault 1:02:50

Yeah, well, so just a warning to everyone. Yes, granola bars are hazardous. There should be a warning on them. At least the crunchy ones. Yeah, absolutely.



Ryan Fleury 1:02:59

Well, glad you're still with us.



Rob Mineault 1:03:01

Yeah, thanks. All right. Well, hey, that I think is going to about do it for us this week. Thanks, everybody for listening in. And of course, huge thank you to Precious Perez for joining us, and we will see everybody next week.