**Maya:** Wait, what?

**Leila:** My gender is actually 10,000 ants.

[Laughter]

**Maya:** That's a concept. You just made up a--

**Leila:** Gender is literally a concept. It's fake.

[Laughter]

**Maya:** I mean it's--

**Leila:** Podcast over, bye!

[Laughter]

[theme music]

**Molly:** Welcome to Gender Reveal, a podcast where folks of all genders answer intrusive personal questions and hopefully get us a little bit closer to understanding what the hell gender is. I'm your host and resident Gender Detective, Molly Woodstock.

[theme music ends]

**Molly:** This week on Gender Reveal, I'm really excited to bring you the wise and important thoughts of Leila Haile and Maya Vivas! But before I do, I need to tell you about the folks who are making this show possible.

First of all, a huge shout-out, as always, to our monthly donors on Patreon. You're all my heroes. As you know, if you're up to donate some change, you can head to patreon.com/gender, and if you donate $5 or more, I'll send you some rad Gender Reveal stickers. And if you donate $10 or more, I'll send you a handwritten thank you note filled with stickers! Another way you can genuinely really help this show is by using our coupon codes to buy super cool products from our super cool sponsors.

For example, TomboyX makes underwear in all sorts of styles and patterns, in sizes extra small to 4X. They're all ethically-made in eco-friendly factories, and if you don't absolutely love your first pair, TomboyX will give you a full refund, no questions asked. This episode is your very last chance to use offer code 'TOMBOYS' at checkout for 15% off your order! So, don't forget, go to tomboyx.com and use offer code 'TOMBOYS' for 15% off your new favorite pair of underwear.

As always, I wanna thank GladRags. GladRags is a woman-owned company that sells eco-friendly cloth pads and menstrual cups, and I cannot recommend them and their products highly enough. GladRags has been so generous in their support of the show, and their website is super, super trans-inclusive. If you're trans, you know how amazing it is that GladRags uses the word 'menstruator' instead of 'woman' to market their products! Show your support for them and for us by signing up for the GladRags newsletter for discounts and contests, or using coupon code 'GENDER' to get $5 off your purchase at gladrags.com.

And with that, it's time for a segment we call "This Week in Gender":

[trumpeting news music]

This week was a week filled with firsts for transgender folks. First of all, director Yance Ford became the first openly transgender filmmaker ever nominated for an Oscar. He was nominated for a documentary called "Strong Island," which follows Ford's investigation into his brother's murder.

In other Oscar news, the Chilean film "A Fantastic Woman" was nominated this year for Best Foreign Language Film, which is exciting because it stars an actress named Daniela Vega, who is the first openly transgender actress and model in Chile.

Finally, actress Laverne Cox became the first openly transgender woman to appear on the cover of Cosmopolitan Magazine. She's the cover girl of the magazine's #SayYesToLove issue, which features 18 LGBT advocates. You can tell it's the LGBTQ issue because on the cover, the word 'Cosmopolitan' is in a rainbow font.

This has been "This Week in Gender".

[trumpeting news music ends]

**Molly:** This week I'm so excited to bring you my conversation with Leila and Maya, the co-directors and co-founders of Ori Gallery. Leila Haile is an Afro-Queer dancer, tattooer, and community organizer. They tattoo out of a private studio serving queer and trans people of color, as well as folks living with disabilities. They currently serve as a board member of both Trans Lifeline and The Q Center, which is Portland's LGBTQ community center.

Maya Vivas was born to immigrant parents in Miami, Florida, and grew up in a mixed culture filled with Cuban and Trinidadian food, music, dance, and an appetite for creative expression and travel. Their ceramic sculptures have been featured in an array of local Portland galleries, including venues in association with the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts. They are an active member at Radius Community Art Studio.

As we mentioned, Leila and Maya are the co-directors of Ori Gallery, which is a gallery in Portland, Oregon. Its mission is to redefine "the white cube" by amplifying the voices of queer and trans artists of color. We recorded our interview in the Ori Gallery space, which by the way, opens February 1, and honestly, because we interviewed in the gallery, the sound quality is frankly, not our best work. And because of that, I considered not airing the interview at all, but Maya's and Leila's words are so smart and important that it really felt like it would be a disservice to them and to you to not air them on the show. So, I'm asking you to please give it a shot; I think that you'll love it despite the sound quality. If you hate it, please don't unsubscribe, please don't give us a one-star review, we'll be back next week with our usual production studio, but I really think you're gonna love this interview, and maybe you won't even notice. Maybe I'm making a big deal out of it. Let's find out right now!

With no further ado, Maya and Leila.

[theme music]

**Molly:** So, thank you so much for coming on the show; I really appreciate it. We're recording in the space where you're about to open your new gallery, and I'm really excited to talk about that, but the way that we always start the show is by asking: with regard to gender, how do you identify?

**Maya:** I guess I'll start. My name is Maya Vivas, and I identify as queer, which is something that I, like, just decided pretty recently, that queer is just the perfect word for all of the things. All of the gender feelings and all of the sexual orientation feelings.

**Molly:** That resonates with me, but for folks who are listening and are like "How can your gender be queer? That's a sexual orientation," can you talk a little bit more about what that might mean?

**Leila:** Yeah, this is Leila. I also identify as queer; I specifically identify as Afro-Queer.

**Maya:** Afro-Queer.

**Leila:** Afro-Queer. I feel like both an African identity and queer identity are political identities, and people don't really pull it out that queer is a gender, sexual, and political identity. So it's like a trifecta.

**Maya:** 100%.

**Molly:** Can you talk a little bit more about that?

**Leila:** Yeah, for me, queerness comes with a, a social justice lens, I suppose, that is a little more geared toward liberation as, like, a lifestyle or a core concept of being if that makes sense.

**Maya:** Queer is definitely more politicized than, like, bisexual or lesbian. Like, queer--queer definitely exists in a very political space that I feel like I am--I am proud to exist in, happy to exist in.

**Molly:** Yeah, I mean it goes as basic as that saying "Not gay as in happy, queer as in fuck you."

**Maya:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Molly:** It's that kind of attitude.

So, speaking of which, generally speaking, people would say that Portland is pretty good place to be a queer person, and they'd also say it's a pretty bad place to be a person of color, and I was wondering how that shook out for both of you?

**Leila:** Oh yeah, white queers are horrible.

[Laughter]

**Molly:** Talk about it!

**Leila:** Love y'all!

[Laughter]

**Leila:** I find that, like, when white people hold any sort of marginalized identity, it turns into this like "Ooh I'm part of your club now" sort of thing, and especially as like, I'm a Black, queer, disabled human being, and like all of those identities, when I encounter a white person who shares one of those with me, there's like an assumed camaraderie where, like, folks think they don't have any work left to do because we're oppressed by the man, and it's really frustrating some--all the time. [Chuckles] not just sometimes, but, yeah. So in Portland, like, yes there are safe places for me to be queer, there's almost no safe places for me to be Black, and that leaves me kind of at contention with my own community a lot of the time, and I'm like, okay yeah you say this thing is for queers, but here again you've done this problematic thing that leaves us all, like, isolated and alienated.

**Molly:** Yeah. What's some of the problematic stuff that you've seen in queer spaces?

**Maya:** I feel like there--there are a lot of spaces where people, like Leila was mentioning, like because this is like a queer space, then everybody feels like rainbows and butterflies and hippy-ness, and like, we're gay and everything's cute and funny until they encounter some real shit. And then you try to, like, bring it up, and then they're like, "Well just burn some sage about it, and like, kumbaya and it'll be chill," and you're like, "No, you have some unpacking to do, like, you have some serious unpacking to do, and it's not just a, like, a one-time event that you can just, like, have a circle about it and then it disappears. It's continual work." And it's work that--that we, as like, queer, Black people can't escape from, like we are constantly, like, being bombarded by things, so like, we need our community to step up and do--and be in that continual process of growth in order to, like, make safe--like safer spaces. For us.

**Leila:** I think specifically, like, when you and I encounter, like--'cause we, like, go out dancing all the time--

**Maya:** Yeah.

**Leila:** --We're both dancers, and like we're both artists, so like we go out, we take up space, we're extra, and people assume that that extra-ness, or just that Black body-space is something that they have access to now.

[Inaudible]

**Leila:** Well because we're sharing the space as marginalized folks, "Ooh I get to just touch titties now!" Like--

**Maya:** Yeah, you've been--we've been--

**Leila:** --I've had like--

**Maya:** --grabbed a number of times.

**Leila:** Yeah.

**Maya:** Yeah.

**Leila:** Like what was it, two Prides ago? I had some, like, cis, gay, white dude like grab both of my tits, and I had to like grab him by the tendons and remove his hands from me, like--

**Maya:** Yeah, and a big circle of us were like "Aw, hell naw."

**Leila:** Right, like the people who were with me, like had my back, and I was sure that if I hadn't had the situation, he would have, like, left there in shambles, but like--we just always have to be ready--

**Maya:** Yeah.

**Leila:** --and assume that someone's going to violate our physical if not at least our psychological space.

**Molly:** Yeah. So I guess in the reverse, like as queer folks, do you feel welcome in Portland's communities of color?

**Leila:** It's a little tricky. I feel like I, specifically, have like--I'm an organizer, so I've done a lot of work specifically in the Black, queer communities, so, like, I feel welcome because I have those connections and I've like, like, built that community for myself, but I feel like for a lot of new folks coming in, it's--it's a little harder for them to find their niche.

**Maya:** It's hard to find a period, I feel like. So I, I feel like in the past two years, three years, how long? I've fully come into my queerness, and I was, like, nearly five years in like a hetero relationship with a white dude, blah, blah, blah. And, like, I always identified as queer, then we broke up, and I was like, "Sorry, I'm just gayer than I thought I was" [laughs]. And then, I was homeless, for like a second, and then I met Leila, and Leila was like "Move in with me!" And I was like "Cool, I need gay friends!" And, like, if you--if you know the right people, like, the whole world is opened up to you, and like, a whole--like there--there was just like planes of existing that I, like, had no idea about, and I was like oh my god. Like, there's like a kinship there that is unexplainable, and I didn't--I never knew that, like I could be that fulfilled with my friends! But yeah, I mean, definitely if you're, like, fresh, and you're like coming in and you're looking for Black, queer community or, like, POC, queer community, it's--it's hard to find, I feel like.

**Molly:** Yeah. Well speaking of that, can you talk about the gallery and the space that you're making and why it's important?

**Leila:** This is like--I wrote my first application for a non-profit organization when I was 16, so this is, like, the culmination of like all of that work and passion and, like, this is creating the space that we need. We wanted to have someplace where we could see ourselves reflected because, you know, even working in the social justice field, there is just like, whiteness all abound, especially in, like, the very roots and logistics of the way that organizations are put together. And then, in the art world--

**Maya:** Yeah.

**Leila:** --like, again, like, I'm a tattoo artist and Maya does ceramics and illustration and--

**Maya:** Yeah.

**Leila:** --you know, we both have multidisciplinary practices, where we are fighting tooth and nail to be seen, and to see ourselves reflected and to find camaraderie with our people.

**Maya:** Yeah, to echo that, yeah I'm--I'm a ceramic artist, and I make sculptures, and just trying to get my foot in the door in, like, art institutional spaces, it's--I mean, everything is a boys' club, and art is no exception, like the art world is no exception. Like when you think of, and when you see who holds the power and, and who is on the artists' roster of these galleries and like even artists' residencies--you look at past residencies--I don't see myself there at all, and it's hard to--to be what you can't see. And I was constantly--I'm just--I was just tired of constantly being overlooked and feel--and when I am brought into the spaces, I'm usually brought into the space as like "the Black one" or like, the Bl--"the queer one" or like, "the Black, queer one," and I'm like, consistently feeling like the odd one out, and I wanted to create a space where the artists who come in here don't feel tokenized; they are the norm. I feel like this--this is like, my reach for institutional power to be able to make space for people who otherwise would not have it.

**Leila:** Yeah, I mean like the need for the space, I don't feel like, is unique.

**Maya:** No.

**Leila:** Like, the need is there, it's vacuous even, like--

**Maya:** Yeah.

**Leila:** I feel like it's so powerful that even the folks for whom it is for have trouble accessing it--

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Leila:** --because it's so rare, and we're like, "No really, we mean it!" And like, a lot of part of what we're trying to do is to, like, break down that gate-keeping. Like it's cool if you meet, like, you know, me or Carlos or like Emilly Prado, and you're like "Okay cool, I found this, this nugget that is connected to this like outer web of community," but like, that shouldn't be how it is, like, everyone should have access to this, and like--

**Maya:** Yeah.

**Leila:** --it shouldn't take, like, you know, a handful of activists and organizers, like, making these spaces, like creating these spaces and making them available, so like, a part of making this space is allowing people with no experience to come in, or like, artists who have never shown before and don't know what the process is, or young artists who might not be considered legitimate.

**Maya:** Yeah. I, I feel like we're doing a lot of meeting people where they're at, and like Leila said, even though we've created this space specifically for this, like, demographic of people who share our experiences, a lot of the times they approach it with, like, and air of caution and are unsure because the word gallery, you know, is in our name, and it doesn't--like, when does that ever feel like a place for us? And we're like, "Really, no." And so, I'm like, messaging with people on Facebook back and forth, it's like, I understand the need for, like, formal systems and stuff, but a lot of times those can be barriers. Even a simple, like, contact form that we have built into our website can be daunting for people when you're like, wow, this is the easiest way I can think of to collect, like mass information, but it--like I--we need to check ourselves and know when we are creating like, bureaucratic barriers for people. There's a lot of folks who are like, don't know if they can pay their rent, you know, and I'm, and I'm like well you know, "I will send you a Lyft ride if you need something," or like, "I'll SquareCash you some, like 20 bucks, or whatever, if you need, like groceries," you know? So it's like, that deeper level of community and like, pulling every--like, going where everyone is and, like, raising ourselves up together as one.

**Leila:** Which is hella African. Like it is getting back to those like African principles of community and connection.

Ori means--ori's the name of, like, a meditative facial decoration that is practiced by folks in, like, the Yoruba diaspora. And what it is, is it symbolizes the connection between us and the Orishas and recognizing that the creative practice is a sacred one, and that is what connects us to our ancestors, and it is--it's a huge responsibility to hold this space and to make this space a thing, and we're constantly having to check ourselves in that way.

**Maya:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah. So I think that's something that we're going to, like, continually keep in mind.

I mean, that's, that's down from, like, our programming, like Leila--we do, Grant Writing for the People 'cause even the thought of writing a grant can be daunting for folks, so this is like--the course that we offer is like a grant-writing 101 where we just, like, just talk to people about the process, and like, if somebody has a project in mind, they can bring it to us. I do, I facilitate a POC Figure Drawing course. I mean when I was in school, I never got to draw a Black body--

**Leila:** Never.

[Laughter]

**Maya:** --and so I am trying to create those spaces and pay people! I, like, I wanna see variation in bodies, and I want to see people of all skill levels, if they're interested, engage in art practice if they want to, and not have it feel like it's some hoity-toity thing. It's--it's literally just like paper and pencil, you know what I mean?

**Leila:** Yeah. And we write grants so that we can provide these things for free for the community--

**Maya:** Exactly.

**Leila:** --because that should be free [laughs].

**Maya:** Yeah, POC Figure Drawing is funded by a grant.

**Molly:** That's great!

**Maya:** Yeah.

**Molly:** So, I'm so psyched that there is now going to be a gallery focused on queer and trans people of color! I also worry that certain white folks can now point to that and be like, "See! We're not a racist town. We have a queer and trans person of color gallery." [Laughs]. I'm wondering if you often have that experience with, like, certain white, liberal folk, that they feel like because they're not, like, actively racist, they're not part of the problem?

**Leila:** Oh, yeah. But people don't realize what active racism is.

**Molly:** Right, absolutely. That's what I'm trying to say.

**Leila:** There's no such thing as like, like, inactive racism. It's like, what? [Laughs] Is that you just like, not talking to me on the bus, like I don't know what that looks like.

I've worried about that a little bit, and there's certainly, like, from jump, I think we were really--when we were, like, sitting in our living room being like, "Wouldn't it be funny if we opened up a gallery?"

[Laughter]

**Maya:** That was like a year ago, I think.

**Leila:** Yeah. And like--

**Maya:** Here the fuck we are, though. Anyway.

**Leila:** Yeah, we were definitely like, oh my god, what are we gonna have to deal with? Like, white nonsense, what like, caucasity--

[Laughter]

**Leila:** --will we have to deal with? Like, and yeah, we have to debrief about that a lot. And even our, like, best community partners are still, they're still white folks, and they're still working on their stuff, and, yeah. We pushed back really hard against token-ism; I think our narrative has been very much one that like if y'all weren't horrible, we wouldn't need to be doing this.

**Maya:** Yeah.

**Leila:** [Laughs] like.

**Maya:** I mean, when, when there's no longer a need for us, great. Less work. Maybe I can sit down finally.

**Molly:** Absolutely.

**Leila:** Right? Oh my god.

**Molly:** Yeah. How--it seems like you both do so many things, you're doing a lot of organizing and classes and getting this gallery going; what do you do to--I mean like, I hate to use self-care because it's now been completely co-opted, but you know, what do you do?

**Maya:** I mean, we had a nap before we got here.

[Laughter]

**Leila:** We did. And I actually skipped dance rehearsal to nap because I was like, "I'm gonna burn out and not be a person." But yeah, we bug each other a lot about our self-care. We're always bugging each other about drinking water and whether or not we've had a snack. I feel like that's a foundational part of why our relationship is so good [laughs].

**Maya:** I know. I'll be in the studio for hours and hours and hours, like, covered head-to-toe in clay, and then I'll just get, like, bzz-bzz, and I'll look at my phone and it's like, "Did you eat?"

[Laughter]

**Maya:** And I'll be like, "No! Why am I so dizzy?"

**Leila:** I don't understand why I've turned into a monster.

Yeah, then our fucking community keeps us alive.

**Maya:** Oh. My. God.

**Leila:** I can't count how many times I've had, like, coconut water delivered to my door 'cause I'm on a deadline, or someone has brought me food 'cause my legs aren't working that day, or, you know? Yeah. People, people show up.

**Maya:** That's real, that's real. I mean, if we don't take care of each other, who's gonna take care of us?

**Molly:** Yeah.

Leila, so, in addition to all of this other work, you have a tattoo practice, and it says on your website that you have a trauma-informed, anti-oppressive framework, which is a phrase I'm familiar with, but not as it relates to tattoos specifically, so what does that look like for you?

**Leila:** For me, that looks like having an in-depth conversation with each client about their body, and how they experience pain, and what their trauma is, and because I serve a lot of Black and Brown--I serve primarily Black and Brown folks and queer folks and disabled folks, so I'm always checking in because we all have trauma. So, I just make sure that I make that a part of their design, and how I approach their body, and that that informs their healing process as well because we are all carrying stuff, and that all comes out in different ways that I think folks don't usually think about. And like, the anti-oppressive piece is basically like, I'm not going to put an Om on the back of your neck [laughs], like, I'm not going to put a dreamcatcher on your butt unless you're like, an Indigenous Person for whom that is part of your culture, like--and that's something that's really contentious and just starting to be raised as a problem in the tattooing world, and there is so much pushback from all the trad dads about, like, you can't tell me what I can do or can't do, and like, all this stuff, and how you just need to calm down, and like, hi, you're stealing an Indigenous practice, to begin with, so, maybe think a little further about it. I definitely, like, didn't make it through tattoo school as fast as I could have, and like, that entire experience is traumatizing because I was stuck with a bunch of cis white dudes who didn't know their ass from their elbows, and I had to deal with that, and like, if I pushed back against that transphobia and that fucking racism, and the fucking homophobia and like--that's why I'm really excited about our group show in Maine that's gonna feature all tattoo artists of color!

**Molly:** That sounds so good!

**Leila:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Wow, I'm so excited for that.

**Leila:** I'm so excited about it.

**Maya:** Yeah, this is gonna be Leila's first show they're curating.

**Leila:** Oh my god.

**Molly:** So, can you also talk to me about some of the organizing that you do? You organize with The Q Center, as you just said, and The Trans Lifeline, and all these groups where it's like, specifically queer and trans focused groups. Can you talk about why creating those, like, queer-only spaces or trans-only lifeline is necessary?

**Leila:** Yeah. I mean, I recently, I led a cohort of--that was all folks with various disabilities stepping into organizing and leadership and that sort of thing, and like, it was really magical because I had never worked with people who share that particular marginalization, and it's really, really powerful to, like, break the isolation that comes with a marginalized identity, and I feel like that's the crux of why those spaces are important. Like, folks who occupy, like, whatever dominant, like, narrative identities in our society don't know what it's like to be the only face in a room that looks like you.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Leila:** And how, how on a very, very elemental psychological level that affects somebody. And like, we were organizing the POC Soak Night at Common Grounds and talking with our white allies there about how--about the pushback that we know we're going to get about like, "Oh this is racist, that's so blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," like because those people don't know. They don't know what it's like to never, ever, ever be surrounded by people that look like you. Like I went to Afropunk this summer, and I looked around and I was like, "I think there's more Black people here than in Portland and Seattle." And it was just, like, so mind-changing just to, like, stand there for 30 seconds, and I was like, "People from Atlanta probably think I'm an asshole right now," and they're like, "What the fuck is this bitch doing in the middle of the street?" [Laughs] And I was like "Oh my god!" And like--yeah, you have to like--isolation is a killer. It will kill you, and I feel like destroying that is, like, the center of my activism.

**Maya:** It's--it's easy to call reverse racism when you don't know what it feels like to be isolated in that way, in that particular way.

**Molly:** Your ceramics are really beautiful. Could you just talk a little bit about what you do and what influences your work?

**Maya:** Yeah! I started off as--as a painter, generally doing, like, photorealistic paintings and drawings, and then I started drawing this particular texture that originally was, like, from, like, influenced by the movement I saw in, like, trees and, like, agate and rock formations, and like, the motion of waves and being really interested in like, creating something that looks like it's in motion, but it is a still object. And then eventually, I happened upon clay, and that specific, like, feeling, that specific motif just, like, naturally continued, and I've started to feel a connection to clay that I did not have via pen and paper. It's-it's like the tactileness, the like, its direct connection to nature because it's literally from the ground, that was a unique experience, and I started to relate the clay body to my own body and so those motifs began to translate into like, like meditations on my own body and how I exist in the world.

I mean, I primarily work in series. I guess I could talk about my most recent completed series. It's called "Black: Articulated & Dissected," and so it's using black clay, like the clay itself is black, and so I was thinking about Black body internally, so I--the sculptures are based off of the silhouettes of internal organs, so there's heart and lungs and liver and kidneys and such. But they're, of course, they're abstracted through the texture that I continue with. That has been, like, a motif throughout my--like all my work.

This was the time that--around the time that, like, Leila was sick a couple times, and I was thinking a lot about Black bodies in, like, the medical--in like, I don't know--

**Leila:** The medical industrial complex?

**Maya:** That's the word! The medical industrial complex. And like, I'm a bit of a hypochondriac, and I deal with like Post Traumatic Stress and like, anxiety and stuff, and there was this really intense fear of something being wrong with me, and it being overlooked because statistically, Black people get less pain medication, Black people die in hospitals. And so I'm like, "What if there's something wrong with me and because of the body I inhabit, I'm just ignored and overlooked?"

It fucking happened to Serena Williams! Like, nearly died because she knew what the hell she was talking about, she knew her body, and she had to advocate for herself as she was dying, and they were not listening to her.

Yeah, so that intense fear of, like, of my body failing me and the people who are there to help me not being able to help me because of institutional racism. So it was basically just like translated into, like, what it was like navigating a Black body as abstracted through abstracted body parts.

And the clay itself has a high--there's like a second part to it--so the clay has a high manganese content, and if--like prolonged exposure to the dust form of manganese, like, when it gets settled into your lungs, like, causes psychological damage, like shortness of breath and all these things, and so it got me thinking about like, "I can't breathe," and it got me thinking about like, to have breath in a--in a Black body is hazardous to your health.

**Molly:** I'm excited for people to go look at them because it's really, really incredible, and even more so having heard the explanation, so thank you for sharing that.

I haven't asked a lot of questions about gender because there's so much other stuff going on with y'all, but what else about gender or queerness do you think it's important that we talk about?

**Leila:** White, masculine people stop using b-o-i.

[Laughter]

**Leila:** I just, like, that was like, my internet, like bitch for the day, is just, like I see all these transmasculine folks using b-o-i, and I'm like, "That was created by Black and Brown folks before you knew what a gay was," and I'm just like--I feel very possessive over our cultural creations that are always being taken--

**Molly:** Right.

**Leila:** --and like, that's just one--gender is one form of that. Like, it happens everywhere. That's another alienating thing about white queer and trans circles is that, like, y'all keep taking our shit with like, no acknowledgment.

**Maya:** I mean, I think it's not even necessarily acknowledgment. I think that it's so far removed that they don't even know anymore like where the fuck it came from.

I have a complaint. I feel like there's a "correct" way to be genderqueer, and that is androgynous.

**Leila:** Mmmm, yeah.

**Maya:** Thank you. Yeah, so, like, I feel like there's a "correct" way to be genderqueer, or like, non-binary, you know what I mean? Like, one can be femme and non-binary. One can look traditionally female, like quote, unquote, whatever, and like, be a non-binary human. So that, that--I think that that is one of my frustrations, like, androgynous isn't the correct way.

**Leila:** Yeah. I feel like the '90s got us really stoked about androgyny, and that was like, a gateway for a lot of people into, like, the wonderful world of gender variance. And like, people are still like, stuck on that point a little bit, and be like, "Oh yes, that's what that looks like. I can't name it; it's Pat." Like, [laughs] you know, like, that's super frustrating, and I feel like--yeah--the whole like--I feel like being non-binary in general is still something folks are like, grasping with.

**Maya:** Yeah. I mean, it's something I'm still grasping with.

**Leila:** And it, like, sucks, like as a general thing, being trans and non-binary and trying to get trans-related healthcare services [laughs], and doctors are still like, "Trans Broken Arm Syndrome is still a thing," like when--

**Molly:** What's that?

**Leila:** When like--say you go into a hospital with a broken arm, and it magically becomes about your junk instead of your fucking broken arm, [laughs] like--

**Molly:** Yeah. It's--that's, like, also the same with fatness, right? It's the same thing?

**Leila:** Yeah, yeah. I had so many people ignoring my diabetes because I wasn't fat, and ignoring all of my health problems because I look fit, and I'm like, "I'm literally dying. I haven't had a period in nine months. No, I'm not pregnant." [Laughs] What is a sperm? Give me healthcare. Like what?

**Maya:** Oh my god. Remember when--oh, I don't know if you want me to go into that story.

**Leila:** No, go ahead! Yeah, well, no, we were in the emergency room, and Maya was using my pronouns--

**Maya:** And I was like trying to be like, "they have"--'cause they don't know--"they have diabetes. They're an asthmatic," you know? And then--[squeaks]--and then the nurse cuts--"you keep saying they, they, they. Is she pregnant?"

**Molly:** Oh no!

**Maya:** And I was like, "No! Just fix my friend!"

[Laughter]

**Leila:** And I'm probably sitting there like totally out of it, and there like [grumbling].

**Molly:** Yeah. It's really hard to access healthcare as a trans person no matter what, but especially as a non-binary person, because trans-ness is so looked at as like, "We can fix this with surgery and hormones," and if you're non-binary and you don't know what you want of that, if anything, it becomes even more confusing, I think, for healthcare practitioners than even binary trans people, which is also incredibly confusing to healthcare practitioners, so I'm sorry that you had to go through that. That's really frustrating.

**Leila:** I mean, it's one of many, I'm sure, to come, still. [Laughing] I still have a body that I inhabit. Yeah, healthcare, in general, is fucked, and I think that's a lot--it's a lot of the reason I, like, try to prioritize, like play and healing space. Like, self-care is labeled as bubble baths and like, I don't know, plucking your eyebrows, or whatever like, white ladies do in their free time. But like, self-care is like, also like, rolling out of bed and washing your ass when you haven't been out of bed in ten days [laughs] or like, you know, taking care of your infected injection spots, or like, you know, like all these other things that we just don't think about because of the way we're taught what health is or how to think about health. Yeah. I could--that's a whole other scenario I could go off on for a half second [laughs].

**Molly:** I'm like, well I'm interested. [Laughs] Go on.

**Leila:** Yeah, no, people give shitty healthcare A of all, when they think that you're a woman [laughs] because healthcare is, like, built to fix the problem of being a woman, to make you a dude [laughs]. Like, everything is treated as if it is, like, a symptom of not being a cis, straight, white dude.

**Maya:** I mean, all those--I mean, even down to, like, when medicines and such are tested, they're like traditionally tested on dudes--

**Molly:** Right.

**Maya:** --and so, you're just like--

**Leila:** Also, yeah. Except for the HeLa cell, which for folks who don't know what the HeLa cell is, a Black woman in, I believe it was the 1930s, but yeah, look up the HeLa cell, do your Googles. But this Black woman had a really, really aggressive form of cancer, and instead of treating her for it, they just kept stealing her cells to experiment on, and she died in horrible, agonizing pain at, like, the age of 32 or something, and every single cell that we use in medical research today is a descendant of that cell.

**Maya:** Whoa.

**Leila:** So, you have Black women to thank for everything [laughs].

**Molly:** As always.

**Leila:** That's why I steal speculums every time I go to the gynecologist.

**Maya:** I was gonna bring it up--

[Laughter]

**Maya:** I was gonna bring it up, but I didn't know if you wanted me to!

[Laughter continues]

**Leila:** I don't care. I'll tell that Dr. Stevenson, "I stole all your speculums" [laughs] like--because those are ours. Like, speculums were developed on the bodies of slave women.

**Maya:** Listen.

**Leila:** It started off with two rusty spoons and went from there, and so, every time I'm at the gynecologist, I steal one because that's from the blood of my ancestors, and that belongs to me.

**Maya:** We got our friends stealing speculums for you.

**Leila:** I know, I got a fancy metal one!

**Maya:** Ooh! Collection.

**Molly:** I did wanna go back to something that Maya was talking about with regard to androgyny being the only societally-accepted form of being non-binary. I think that for lots of non-binary folks, there's sort of pressure to dress more androgynously than they would naturally be because they're trying to get gendered correctly. They're trying to get people to look at them and stop and think about who they might be before they talk about them. Is that something you've ever experienced?

**Maya:** I feel like that's something that I've thought about, but I, at this point I don't care [laughs].

**Molly:** Good, I'm glad!

**Maya:** I really don't care.

**Leila:** I'm on your page where, like, I really don't give a fuck anymore, but also, I came into my non-binary identity on the flip side of that. Because I felt that, like, as a Black human with a vagina, I would never be considered an actual woman--

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Leila:** --and there's lots of shit to back that up, like--and I feel like that even, like, Black men aren't considered men, they're considered animals, so like, that was my path into the non-binary, and be like, no, this, like, gender is racialized and race is gendered, like [laughs], so like, I just wanna fuck all of it, and so like, coming into my African identity was a part of coming into my non-binary identity because I feel like African gender and sexuality is a whole other creature that is not given its own right and its own place, like, my, my sexuality and my gender as an African human look different and that's fine, and I need to find ways to step into that outside of the violence that is put upon them. So like, that's how I stepped into, like, my non-binary identity, so it was kinda like, opposite. Like, people are always going to question what I am and come to me with all sorts of prejudice before I open my goddamn mouth, so I might as well just say fuck it.

**Maya:** Yeah. Just do whatever the fuck you want.

**Leila:** Mm-hmm.

**Molly:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Leila:** It's 2018. Do what you want. [Laughs]

**Molly:** The way we always end the show is by asking: What would the future of gender look like?

**Maya:** I feel like we, like our generation is a--I mean, every generation feels like they're at the forefront of something--

**Leila:** And they are at one point [laughs].

**Maya:** --and they are. And so, I think we are just at the forefront of our generation to explore all the things that gender is and isn't and gender--I mean, we started off the show by saying gender is fake. You know what I mean? And, I would like to get to a place where we can get healthcare without somebody having to--like, well Leila--I like--I would like to get to a place where we can join a gym and somebody isn't asking us what's between our legs. You're just like, I'm just here to lift something heavy and go home.

**Leila:** Right?! Like, I just--I'll call 24-Hour Fitness out on this, like, I just joined the gym and like, my partner is also non-binary, and I was signing them up at the same time, and I was just hit with the question [loudly] FEMALE? And I was like, [confused grumbling] if those are your only options? That was like, the first thing that came out of my mouth, and that made everyone really nervous [laughs], like--but like, dang, literally, like, trying to get my body--my fucking broken, disabled, Black body to a place where it can function on a regular basis, like I can't even join a goddamn gym without like, getting flack for--

**Maya:** Yeah.

**Leila:** --you know, just having to go through gendered violence. And I--to actually answer your question, I'll piggyback off of what Maya said, which is like, the children are the future and like, youth work is a really, really huge, important part of my activism because you're doing things for the next seven generations. We're not--we're not gonna see shit. We're not gonna see liberation in our lifetime. I'll be lucky to live past 40. But I want the children of the youth that I'm working with right now to know something better than we've ever known, and to like take it, like, I want them to be like, what is that phrase? We are our ancestors wildest dreams.

**Molly:** Oh! I love it.

**Leila:** Like, that's what I want, like, I want them to do shit I can't even imagine.

**Maya:** Right, yeah. And I'm sure they will. They will achieve things that we can't even begin to fathom right now.

**Leila:** We have to do the work.

**Maya:** And I love that.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Maya:** And I'm totally fine with being the building block.

**Molly:** Yeah, yeah. Thank you both so much for coming on the show and sharing so much with me; I really appreciate it.

**Leila:** Thanks for having us!

**Maya:** Thank you!

[theme music]

**Molly:** Alright, that's gonna do it for this week's show. If you have any questions or thoughts or feelings, you can find us on Twitter @gendereveal and by email at gendereveal@gmail.com, that is Gender Reveal with one 'r'.

Thanks again to our sponsors and to our Patreon supporters and to anyone who's ever recommended the show to a pal, or Tweeted about it, or posted about it on Facebook, or put a sticker in a public place. It really, really, really helps us get the word out, and we absolutely could not do it without you.

Today's show was edited by me, Molly Woodstock, and Liza Yeager.

Our logo was created by the talented Michelle Leigh, and our theme song is by the legendary Breakmaster Cylinder.

We'll be back next week with more feelings about gender!

[theme music ends]