[*Gender Reveal* theme music starts]

**Molly:** Welcome to Gender Reveal, a podcast where we hopefully get a little bit closer to understanding what the hell gender is. I’m your host and resident gender detective, Molly Woodstock.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music stops]

Hello everyone. I hope you’re all hanging in there. This week on the show, I spoke with podcast host Callie Wright about the intersections of trans activism and the Atheist movement, buying a lot of flannel shirts, and exploring butch trans lesbian identity and aesthetics, crying on your own podcast, and re-re-exploring your gender.

**[Excerpt] Callie:** It was a simple choice before. In my head, I only had two options and one box felt definitely more comfortable than the other. And now I know that I don’t actually have to pick that box. I can be adjacent to that box, I can be somewhere in between the two, or I can be on a different plane and that’s all okay. And so that makes it harder, I guess it’s like choice paralysis, I guess?

**Molly:** But first, thank you so much to everyone who’s joined our Patreon or sent us PayPal donations in the past two weeks. Y’all are so, so incredible, I’m just always blown away by your generosity. Special thanks this week to new patron, Jane. Jane, you know why. And now, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender intro music]

[Peaceful uplifting background music]

This Week in Gender, it’s license updates… again. Last Wednesday, New Hampshire became the 14th state to offer gender-neutral “X” gender markers on driver’s licenses in some capacity. Interesting to me at least, the Republican Governor, Chris Sununu, I think, vetoed 10 bills last week and 23 bills this year alone, but did allow this legislation to become law. He didn’t sign it, he let it go by without his signature, but he did not veto it. So, starting January 2nd, 2020, New Hampshire folks will, I think, be able to self identify as nonbinary, I’m not seeing anything about needing a doctor’s approval. Notably, the New Hampshire House of Representatives includes at least two trans representatives, Gerri Cannon and Lisa Bunker, who were both voted in last year. Voting in local elections is so important. Trans representation in our political system is so important. Which brings us to our other news.

Activist Sarah McBride has announced that she is running for Delaware state Senate. Sarah spoke at the Democratic National Convention in 2016, becoming the first openly trans person to do so in American history. She’s also largely credited with the passage of legislation in Delaware that banned discrimination on the basis of gender identity in employment, housing, insurance, and public accommodations. If elected, she would become the first openly trans state Senator in United States history.

And I want to add that I realize that this This Week in Gender segment is often sort of in the weeds about U.S. state policy and driver’s licenses. If you’d like to hear something different in this segment, whether it’s a different piece of political news or a different topic altogether, please always feel free to throw it into the This Week in Gender Slack Channel on the Gender Reveal Slack, which you can find at [bit.ly/genderslack](http://bit.ly/genderslack). I check that every week before I write the segment, so if you have any ideas, you can add them there.

But speaking of non-U.S., non-political news, our final item today is about an incident in Australia and I’m just going to read this little bit of a [CNN article](https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/09/australia/australia-gender-reveal-party-scli-intl/index.html) to you.

“A gender reveal party on Australia’s Gold Coast took a dramatic turn as a car used to spew blue smoke suddenly ignited. The Queensland Police Service released footage of the incident, which took place on April 18 last year, to warn about the dangers of ‘burnouts,’ an increasingly popular feature of gender reveal parties in Australia. On several occasions over the past year, gender reveal ‘burnouts’–in which cars emit billowing clouds of pink or blue smoke–have resulted in flaming vehicles and arrests. In the latest drone video released by police, the big reveal initially goes as planned. After it comes to a stop, however, the car bursts into flames, and the driver and guests are forced to abandon it. It sits in the middle of the road on fire, amid plumes of smoke that are now black.”

The more I sit here and just think about the cloud of black smoke as some kind of metaphor for gender, the more I like it. Anyway, this has been This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender outro music]

[Interview intro music]

Callie is the host of Queersplaining, a podcast that aims to break away from the mainstream narratives about queer and trans people that aren’t made by us or for us. Quick heads up, this interview does acknowledge the death of a trans woman, I think it’s about 10 minutes into the interview.

**Molly:** The way we always start the show is by asking, in terms of gender, how do you identify?

**Callie:** Just strictly speaking gender, I identify as a trans woman. Part of that, I think, has to do with me unpacking what my societal programming around gender is versus what my actual identity is and figuring out if there’s a separation between the two, if one is influenced by another, if that even matters, and so I’m a trans woman. There’s lots of stereotypical womanhood and femininity that doesn’t really resonate with me and that makes me question myself in a way that cis women never do, and so I understand some of it is probably toxic societal programming, but some of it may actually be an issue of identity, and that’s something that I’m actually still kind of working through.

**Molly:** Yeah, what does that look like to still be working through that?

**Callie:** So I had bottom surgery coming up on two years ago, and that got most of my trans-related body stuff out of the way. I feel like I have body issues but those are like… this is such a bad way to say it, but I have the body issues that I feel like most people have. There’s just little things that I’m not happy with, whatever. But most of it’s not having to do with trans-related dysphoria. And I went shoe shopping and I didn’t see anything I liked in the women’s section and I walked over to the men’s section and I was shopping there for like 10 or 15 minutes before I realized, “Woah, you know what? A year ago I would have been terrified to do this because to broadcast our gender, we have to like–I have to buy all of the pink things and I have to wear dresses all the time and wear makeup all the time, and I realized that I didn’t care about doing that anymore. And, you know, my immediate thought was, “Well, does that put me closer to the center of the gender spectrum or does that just mean that I’m a slightly more masculine presenting person now? Am I discovering a part of myself that I didn’t know what there before or is that fluid now that I don’t feel the need to perform femininity to assert that, now that I’m comfortable in my body? Do I just care less about those things?” And those are questions that I still think I have, but the answer is less important to me because obviously the most important question to me is, “What am I comfortable with and how do I wanna present myself to the world?”

**Molly:** Yeah, I actually had a related question. I heard you say, I think, on your podcast at some point that you fit into sort of stereotypical masculine boxes when you were presenting as a boy, as a man. I’m curious, was that because you felt like you needed to in order to conform? Were you wishing that you could take a dive into the pink feminine things or do you feel like you’ve always had this less feminine expression?

**Callie:** Yeah, that’s actually a really good question. I feel like it maybe is a little bit of both, because I definitely threw myself very hard, because I used to play in metal bands when I was in my 20’s, and I definitely had the, you know, gym shorts, metal band tee shirt, super big, thick, giant beard and long hair that was good for head banging on stage [chuckles], and a lot of that definitely was projecting because there was some knowledge of who I was inside and I definitely wanted, like, I wanna be pretty. It actually gave me an outlet to express that a little bit because the kind of metal that I played, people started caring a bit more about fashion, so skinny jeans became a normal thing and v-necks became a normal thing and taking time to do stuff with your hair was a thing and I was like, oh cool, this presents me an opportunity to present in a way that makes me a little bit more comfortable where I don’t necessarily have to out myself as feeling like that’s actually a part of identity instead of just being the fashion that I have to take on as a person in a band. And so yeah, I think it *was* that. And I think I still just had so much to unpack. It’s really hard to tell how much of that was subconscious, how much of it was conscious. Yeah, it’s just weird.

**Molly:** I’m curious if you feel like reexamining your gender identity and your gender expression for the second time is more or less hard than the first time.

**Callie:** Oh god, definitely harder, but I think for good reasons. I think it’s harder because I know now that the gender binary is not a thing and I was very much in that mindset before. I had heard folks say, “Oh, I’m nonbinary. I don’t identify as male or female, you know, somewhere in between,” and I’m like, “Oh, cool, that works for you. That’s not where I’m at.” But when I was able to sort of internalize that and say, “No, I don’t actually have to fit into the gender binary if that’s not what feels right to me.” So I think I just had a wider pool of things to choose from as far as who I was. It was a simple choice before and in my head, I only had two options and one box felt definitely more comfortable than the other, so it wasn’t really a tough question as to where I would end up. And now I know, no I don’t actually have to pick that box. I can be adjacent to that box, I can be somewhere in between the two or I can be on a different plane and that’s all okay, and so that makes it harder. I guess it’s like choice paralysis.

**Molly:** It super is. I think that a lot of folks, when they are transitioning into a more nonbinary identity, they wanna get exactly the right wording out of the, you know, 57 thousand possible options and I felt like at some point I just had to step back and be like, “I can’t think about this anymore.” [laughs]

**Callie:** Yeah, and that’s exactly what it came down to for me, because I think about, it’s always good for us to learn more about ourselves, right? But for my own comfort, what I really need to know is how I wanna be treated by other people. So let’s think for a second about pronouns. Okay, I’m a he, that feels terrible. I’m a she, that feels good. I’m a they, I don’t know. So she is the option for me. And so it was really that kind of, you know, after I’d gone through days and days and weeks and weeks of rolling all of this stuff over in my head, you know, it’s not that these questions don’t matter, right? Because I like to know myself, but at the end of the day, to get on with my life, what do I have to figure out? How do I wanna present myself to the world? You know what, I don’t really like wearing dresses or skirts anymore. I like wearing skinny jeans. I like wearing band tee shirts and tank tops. I like wearing flat bill hats. Okay, I look like a stereotypical lesbian with a swoopy side-shaved haircut, that’s how I’m comfortable so that’s what I’m gonna do. And I can continue to think about what, if anything, that means for my identity, or what it doesn’t mean for my identity, but that’s not the most important thing, I guess.

**Molly:** Yeah, totally. You do look powerfully gay, I really appreciate it.

[both laugh]

**Callie:** Thank you! It seriously happened without a lot of thought. My wife and I would go to Torrid and we’d be looking around at clothes and I’d be like, “Oh yeah, there’s a flannel I like, gonna grab that while I’m here.” I get home one night and I had subconsciously amassed a collection of flannel and I noticed I had these dresses that I used to love wearing. When I’m getting ready for work in the morning, that’s just not what I wanna wear anymore. I really like these black skinny jean-looking, not denim so they fit with the dress code pants and I like these flannel shirts and these polo shirts and I was just like, “Oh, so I guess that’s where I’m at now. Does that mean something different in me has come to the surface or is that just fluid? Has my preference changed?” I don’t know, because when I first came out, lots of folks who come out as trans women feel that huge pressure to perform femininity, right? You gotta paint your nails and get a pretty haircut and that sort of stuff. And I felt that, but I had lots of great mentors who were like, “This is not how you have to be. If you’re a woman who likes short hair, that’s okay. There’s nothing wrong with any of that.” But I was like, “No, that’s actually how I wanna be. I really like stereotypically feminine and girly things.” And so I was cool with that, and looking back on it now I wonder, was that my cultural programming speaking to me as if it were me or was that genuine then and my preferences have changed because that’s okay too, right?

**Molly:** Yeah, I honestly ask myself the same question. I’m sure it’s some of both. Life’s a mystery!

**Callie:** Right.

[both laugh]

**Molly:** I could be totally wrong about this, but it’s my impression that you got into LGBTQ activism and Atheist activism at roughly the same time. Is that correct?

**Callie:** Yeah. I had been an Atheist since I was 16 or 17, but for me it wasn’t really activism related at that point, it was just like, “Wow, lots of people have been telling me this my whole life and I looked into it and I don’t think it’s true anymore, cool. Checked that box, I figured that out, and let’s move on.” And about the same time that I had started to feel a little bit more activist-y around that issue was when my gender issues came to the surface and I started really exploring transition and stuff like that. What it really came down to was that I had some really uncomfortable experiences in queer and trans spaces where I live in Cincinnati around religion, and I had thought to myself when I would go to support groups and stuff, “I know there are plenty of religious folks in the queer and trans community, but given the queer and trans community’s relationship with mainstream religions in the United States, I figured they’ll at least *get it* if I’m someone who’s an Atheist and not particularly interested.” And I did find some of that, but I also found some really, really uncomfortable proselytization and entitlement and just complete disregard for people, not just for atheists, but people of other religions.

One in particular was when Leelah Alcorn died. That happened in Cincinnati, like 20 miles from where I live, and we were planning a vigil and I was on the planning committee for it and they were like, “Oh, we need to do this at a church,” and I was like, “Have you seen her Reddit posts? She was very vocally an atheist, I don’t think that would be a right thing for us to do.” And then I was on the planning committee for a Transgender Day of Remembrance ceremony, and they handed us this proposed program and there were like 4 different prayer breaks, or like a word from pastor so-and-so, and I wasn’t even actually the first person to speak up. It was someone who was sitting next to me and she was just like, “This is really kind of oppressively Christian and if we’re trying to speak to the entire community, we need to understand that there are people of all religions and no religion, and our program should reflect that.” And I just kind spoke up like, “Yeah, I’m not saying eliminate it from the program entirely, but it would be nice for there to be some acknowledgement that that doesn’t apply to everyone.” And I ended up getting into a screaming match with someone over it. And so it just kinda came down to, obviously queer and trans activism is necessary and at the very least, there is some activism needed for there to be spaces for folks who aren’t religious, because that seems to be a problem, at least in my local community.

I was a huge podcast listener and I had an audio engineering background, like I went to school to learn to run recording studios, and I just thought, “Okay, so what am I gonna do? I know that I wanna do something about both of these things, so what does that look like?” And I was helping out with this fundraiser that one of the bigger Atheist podcasts at the time was doing, and I was looking at the guest list and I was like, “Okay, so there’s one queer woman on a list of 20 people, no trans people,” and when I really thought about it, I could only think of one person who had any visibility in the Atheist movement who was doing trans stuff and I was like, “I guess I’m gonna start a podcast. I guess that’s what I’m gonna do.” And so I kind of filled a niche, not that there was no one else doing it, but there were, I think, two other people doing it at the time, and I just happened to know some of the right folks and I got guest spots on all the big shows very quickly, and I was really, really fortunate to start getting invited to speak at cons and all of that sort of stuff, and it just kind of swelled, and I actually met my wife because of my podcast, which is fun.

**Molly:** Oh, amazing!

**Callie:** [laughs] Yeah, she was my third or fourth patron.

**Molly:** Incredible!

**Callie:** Yeah, it’s pretty awesome.

**Molly:** That’s amazing. Do you wanna tell us more about your podcast, the format that it had when it started out, and then also how you’ve transformed it in the last few months?

**Callie:** Yeah, definitely. So when it started, I did it basically a lot like the shows that I listened to, and so I would come up with ideas for segments. When I first started, I had two cohosts and we would just throw ideas around and we did the stereotypical Atheist Bible study and we would talk about the queer and trans stuff in the Bible and sort of talk about the debate around that and we even had a Bible scholar on once to like, “Well, what do you think this actually means, because there’s a debate on this,” and that was it. It was a largely interview-based show for a long time and I just started getting more interested in narrative and storytelling, and so I actually started a second podcast and then realized that I didn’t have time to do two podcasts. And so I kind of shelved that and then I felt like this narrative thing, this is really where I wanna be, this is really what I wanna be doing, and I started to become kind of unhappy.

I didn’t think I was putting out bad stuff, it was just not the stuff that I wanted to be making. And so I was like, “You know what, I’m gonna do a few episodes of The Gaytheist Manifesto just narrative style and just see what happens and see how I like it.” And I did it and I was like, “This is what I wanna be doing.” And I hadn’t really talked specifically about Atheism in quite some time, not because I don’t care about it at all completely, but it’s a lesser concern for me than more general social justice-y, queer, trans stuff. And so the name of the show and the content didn’t quite match up, so the name Queersplaining just literally popped into my head when I was driving home from work one night. At the very beginning of the year, I took a couple weeks off and relaunched as Queersplaining, doing more narrative storytelling type of stuff. And even the interview stuff is definitely more narrative-focused, so it’s not as much of a conversation as like, my voice isn’t to move the conversation forward, unless it’s an episode where I’m kind of monologuing about a story of my own, which I do sometimes.

**Molly:** Yeah, it’s incredible because there really are so few highly produced non-interview-based trans podcasts. I can think of Queersplaining and I can think of NB with Caitlin Benedict, and that’s it. Do you know of others that exist?

**Callie:** I don’t. And that might be a commentary on my lack of knowledge about the space as opposed to the dearth of those podcasts being out there, but that was kind of part of the reason that I was into it, because I love listening to those kind of shows, and queer and trans folks exist in those shows, but what I noticed was that when I would hear stories focused on queer or trans folks, it usually read like a tour of a zoo.

**Molly:** Yes!

**Callie:** Right? Like people inside of a bubble, and like, “Oh, here’s how *they* live.” And I’m both queer and trans, and that doesn’t mean that I get every person’s experience, but it puts me a little bit closer to the inside and I’m genuinely interested in folks’ stories, not as clickbait fodder or like, “You’re never gonna believe what happens next… they come out as trans!” I’m never gonna objectify someone’s story in that way and I think when I ask someone for a story and they’re hesitant, I can show them my back catalog and be like, “No, this is a serious responsibility.” I mean, I wanna tell good stories and I wanna tell stories that are interesting to listen to, that people want to share and that kind of thing, but for me it’s about doing that with substance as opposed to using storytelling tricks to ratchet up suspense and the whole clickbait thing. I would rather do things that way and stay smaller than like, you know, “I gotta find the twist and use this person’s transition as a shock point,” which is something that happens all the time and I can’t stand it.

**Molly:** Yeah, our friend Cas said something incredibly smart to me the other day, and he said that journalists like to use revealing someone’s gender as a twist, but actually genders aren’t plots.

**Callie:** Yes!

**Molly:** And I’ve been thinking about that and applying it to every story that I do and then every story that a cis person does about trans people, and I was looking at this *really* long profile of a trans boy that a local newspaper did here, and I realized it’s actually not about the trans boy. It’s actually about his mom. If you look at who grows, they actually focused on the cis person and her feelings.

**Callie:** Yep, and that’s how it goes most of the time. I used to have a blog on a blogging network and there was someone else who was the parent of a trans kid who had a blog. And I wanna be honest and say that, you know, it could just be the fact that blogging is not my thing and that’s fine, but I was just thinking, “If I wrote this same story about myself, I don’t think it would get shared as much as this person with this person’s story as a parent of a trans kid.” I feel like I always wanna be the person who gives the benefit of the doubt because I think people get into and share stories that they can relate to, right? And generally speaking, cis people aren’t necessarily gonna relate to my story about my bottom surgery in most cases, right? And so some of it, that’s just the mechanics of how human psychology works, but that doesn’t make it any less frustrating. [laughs]

**Molly:** For sure. I could talk to you about this all day, but you mentioned that Atheism became less and less important to you in relative terms to other things, and I was wondering if you wanted to talk a little bit more about that?

**Callie:** Yeah, it’s a couple of things. Part of it is my own experience with the Atheist community versus people in progressive social justice-focused religious spaces. I’ve gotten so much hostility from the Atheist community, mostly online, but you know, when I look at the discourse in Facebook groups and online and comment sections and stuff like that, so much of organized Atheism is *so* toxic in ways that are subtle and overt. And for me it just started to feel like the delineation between religion and non-religion was not an important factor in determining whether or not somebody was fighting the same fight as me. And so I can look at things like religious privilege. Church state separation is a huge thing for me because regardless of any social context, I don’t think religions should get to make the rules. So that’s something that I still care very much about, but a lot of the discourse in Atheist activism is literally focused on convincing people that God doesn’t exist. And that’s just not a conversation that I care to have and not a conversation that I’m convinced accomplishes a lot of good.

I’ve met plenty of hardcore right-wing Atheists, Richard Spencer, I mean I haven’t met Richard Spencer, but he’s an example of an atheist who’s just hardcore right-wing and a lot of the alt-right are those folks. They’re atheists, they’re not interested in evangelical Christianity. They are atheists, but they are right-wing, very racist, homophobic, sexist, et cetera Atheists. And so it’s still part of who I am, I’m still an Atheist, and I think that’s worth talking about, queer and trans folks experiences with religion, positive and negative, because some of them have been positive. But that’s not the main conversation I wanted to have really. And it just sort of started to happen naturally. I figure I’m always gonna make the best stuff about the stuff I’m most interested in, so I just follow, like “What am I super super stoked about?” And that for me just became religiously focused less and less.

**Molly:** Yeah. You talk about sex and masturbation on your podcast in ways that are really refreshing because I’ve never heard a show in which trans people get to talk about their relationships with sex and masturbation the way that it happens on your show, but it sounds also *really* vulnerable because you’re sharing your stories a lot of the time, and I’m wondering what that decision was like for you and how that experience has been to have those details out in the world.

**Callie:** So I think a lot of it comes from the privilege of knowing that I can do that safely, because I’ve never been in a position where I felt like my livelihood was at risk or that I was gonna lose relationships with my friends and family for doing that. So a lot of it is just the fact that I feel like I can and do it safely. But I also think, like, all of the worst things in my life have come from keeping secrets. Like hiding being queer and being trans. And especially, part of my story is that I came out to my friends and was Callie socially for a year before I was ever able to be Callie at my job because I worked at a job where I couldn’t come out. And so I had that very visceral knowledge of, “This is where I get to be actually who I am and this is where I do not.” And I had to switch back and forth between those two things and looking back on that time in my life, that is absolutely the worst period of my life when it comes to mental health. And I just kind of made a decision that I’m never gonna hide again, I mean, unless my life was on the line or something like that.

And the other thing too is that one of the, I think it was episode four of my podcast that I did like four years ago now, it was the first bathroom bill law I had ever heard about. I don’t think it was actually the first one ever, but I was just scanning through the news and I happened to come across, like “Oh, this is a thing.” And this was before the marriage decision at the Supreme Court, but basically it was like, “Oh, they know they're gonna lose the marriage fight, so they’re moving onto other targets and I’m that target.” And so I was talking with my cohosts about it and I just sort of broke down while we were recording because it was really scary as a newly out trans person who was still so unsure of myself and my presentation and whether or not I was safe in public, and that was just sort of a very visceral reminder, because it was a Kentucky bill where they were talking about basically putting a bounty on a trans person, like if you find a trans person in a bathroom, you can sue the school for $25,000.

**Molly:** Oh my God.

**Callie:** And I just had this moment where I just completely lost it while we were recording the podcast. I moved my mouse up to the stop button ‘cause I was like, “Oh my god, I need to get myself together,” and I was like, “No, people need to hear this shit. They need to know how real this is. This is not abstract.” And so I left it in and I left in the uncomfortable pause after I was done sobbing and all of that sort of stuff and I got feedback on that episode for 2 years.

**Molly:** Wow.

**Callie:** From people saying, like “Gosh, I knew this was important intellectually, but I really felt it after this.” And every time I tell a story like that, someone says, like, “Holy shit, I’m not the only one,” or, “I had no idea this was a thing, but now there’s this whole other thing for me to explore.” And so it’s sort of other people encouraging me to do that and other people getting something out of it because I don’t think these conversations happen enough. Nobody should feel like they have to talk about these things, but everyone should feel like they can if they want to, and that’s not where we’re at.

And the other thing too is like, I had a lot of friends who were talking about getting surgery who were really scared, not sure, and I really benefited from people being really, really true with me about the struggles that they had and like, “Yeah, I don't regret it for a second and probably never will, but holy shit, was it harder than I ever imagined it would be!” And I really benefited from having those expectations set for me, and so if I have people listening to the show who are thinking about this too, they deserve to know what they’re getting themselves into and I’m in a position to help folks out with that knowledge, with the caveat that my experience is my own and everyone’s different, but here’s another data point for you to have. I feel like if I can do those things, I should.

**Molly:** Yeah, so actually on a related note, I would love to hear, if you’re willing to share since you did bring up that you had bottom surgery, if there was something that you wish that you had known going in that you didn't know?

**Callie:** I feel like maybe it wasn’t emphasized enough to me that like… so it’s *safe* to attempt sexual things after 8 weeks, that doesn’t mean it’s going to *work*. The second part of that caveat was buried in the paperwork somewhere. [laughs] And it took me, I was three days shy of a year the first time I had an orgasm after bottom surgery and it had never entered my head that it was a possibility that it was gonna be that long. And so that would have been cool to have somebody tell me.

**Molly:** Yeah, of course. And there’s a really good episode about that on your podcast [both laugh] Speaking of which, if people want to start listening to your podcast for the first time, there’s this huge back catalog. Are there any episodes that you feel especially proud of or that you feel like are a good place for people to start?

**Callie:** I would say it depends on what you’re looking for, because given the topic, some of the episodes of my show get pretty dark and I don’t shy away from that because it’s real. But I also know that not everyone is always in the headspace to hear dark stories. So if you’re looking for a happy story, or at least a story with a happy ending, the episode ‘Let Me Have a Turn’ is one that I would go for. I did a story about the trans military ban that gets into some of the really complicated history involved with all of that. Lots of feelings there. Yeah, those are the two that I can think of off the top of my head [laughs]

**Molly:** So this is the part of the show where I ask what you want to talk about that we haven’t talked about yet.

**Callie:** What I’ve been thinking about a lot lately is folks like you and I who do work like this. Inevitably, it’s really, really easy for us to engage with all of the worst things that happen to our communities, right?

**Molly:** Mmhm.

**Callie:** Because those stories are bountiful. And I make an effort, not always successfully, to seek out joyful stories, because obviously those exist, right? What I’m thinking about so much lately is how to balance those things responsibly. Because I feel like I have an audience of folks who are queer and who are trans, and I have an audience of folks who are allies and who really want to learn and want to do better and want to genuinely know, like “I want to know you better so I can help this community.” And so if all I do is put out stories about all of the awful things that happen in the community, that can be a really powerful call to action for allies, but for queer and trans folks, obviously they don’t need to be beat over the head with how terrible things are right now.

**Molly:** Right.

**Callie:** But if I don’t address those things, then I feel like I’m doing a disservice as well, and so what I’ve been struggling a lot with lately is the back and forth between those two things and kinda feeling like no matter what I do, I’m shirking my responsibility, if that makes sense?

**Molly:** [laughs] Yeah, wow. The way we always end the show is by asking, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**Callie:** Honestly what I would love is there to just be no stigma. Because for me, the most helpful thing, even before I had anything really figured out about who I was, I think the point where I really got over the hump was becoming okay with asking those questions. And when I talk with folks who are questioning and they think like, “I’ve had these feelings, I think I might be trans, I don’t know, here’s what I’m feeling,” my advice is always like, this stuff is, 1) it’s not binary and 2) It can be fluid. So even if you come up with an answer, that doesn’t have to be the forever answer. The most important thing is knowing that you can ask those questions and that whatever the answer is, is cool. And I think if we as trans folks were able to internalize that and as society as a whole was able to take that on, honestly I think eventually the social construct of gender would kind of fall away entirely, because if we were okay with people asking whatever questions, we would have no emotional investment in the concept, but I think that’s what I would like to see is for it to just not be a big deal for people to ask these questions about themselves.

[Gender Reveal outro music]

That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. If you learned a thing or had a good time, please share this show with a friend, and please consider joining us at [patreon.com/gender](http://patreon.com/gender) and if you do, you can receive buttons, pins, a handwritten thank you note from me, access to our weekly newsletter which includes photos of my cat (very important) and more.

Please support Callie’s work if you can. She’s doing so much important work. She recently got laid off from her job, which she talked about in the interview and then I cut it for time, but please support her at [patreon.com/queersplaining](http://patreon.com/queersplaining). You can also listen to Callie’s show Queersplaining at [queersplaining.com](http://queersplaining.com) and subscribe wherever you get your podcasts. You can also find us on Twitter, Instagram, [genderpodcast.com](http://genderpodcast.com), and of course, on Slack, again that’s [bit.ly/genderslack](http://bit.ly/genderslack). This week’s episode was produced and edited by me, Molly Woodstock. Our logo is by the talented Michelle Leigh, our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Additional music this week by Blue Dot Sessions. We’ll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

[Gender Reveal outro music ends]

Okay, and since you stayed until the end, I have one more secret bit of information to share. We are working on merch. I set up a test merch site with products that I could make easily off of our existing logo. You do not need to buy them because they are just test items. I don’t really know how it’s working yet, but if you want to check it out, it’s at [bit.ly/gendermerch](http://bit.ly/gendermerch), that’s [bit.ly/gendermerch](http://bit.ly/gendermerch). No guarantees, but half of the proceeds go to Michelle Leigh who designed our logo, and half go to The Okra Project which supports black trans folks in New York City. Goodbye, I love you.