**Tuck:** The Heart is a show about intimacy, power, gender, bodies, love, sensations that linger in your body, interactions that you keep turning over in your mind. Host Kaitlyn Prest, and a new team of producers bring you honest, raw and experimental narrative about all the invisible things in the air between humans, from Mermaid Palace and Radiotopia, listen and subscribe at [mermaidpalace.org](https://mermaidpalace.org/) or wherever you get your podcasts.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music plays]

**Tuck:** 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 fades out]

**Tuck:** Hey everyone. I hope you’re all hanging in there. Please, do keep hanging in there. This week on the show I’m excited to share my interview with queer, trans, and intersex advocate Mari Wrobi. Mari shares tips for making your trans-inclusive language, intersex-inclusive as well. They fill us in on all of the advocacy and art that they do, and they tell us about coming out as trans in middle school, and how that informed the way they came into their intersex identity.

**Mari:** My body is literally telling me, binaries are fake. Gender and sex are both social constructs They’re not real.

**Tuck:** Please note that this interview was recorded in January so you will hear references to things like volunteering, doing photoshoots, going to work. That’s all from the time before, and hopefully will resume in the future, but is not happening right now.

But before we get to all of that, y’all are still joining the Patreon for some reason. You’re absolutely amazing. I truly cannot wrap my head around the incredible support that y’all show this podcast every single day, every single week. It is really astonishing to me, so thank you so so so much. I risked a trip to the grocery store today to stock up on thank you notes for all of our ten dollar and up patrons so if you want to join us at patreon.com/gender, just one dollar or more gets you access to our weekly newsletter, five dollars or more gets you Gender Reveal stickers in the mail, sent by yours truly, and then ten dollars or more gets you more stickers, pins, and a thank you note. That’s all at patreon.com/gender. Thank you this week to our new and upgrading patrons, including but not limited to M.K., Riese, Zach, Galaxy, and James. And with that, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender intro, a newsy fanfare, plays]

[calm background guitar music plays]

**Tuck:** This Week in Gender, I wanted to share the deeply saddening news of the passing of Lorena Borjas who died on March 30th, at age sixty due to complications from the coronavirus. Lorena was known as the mother of the trans Latinx community in Queens, New York. She immigrated to the United States from Mexico when she was twenty years old in order to begin her transition. She survived human trafficking, and she became a community organizer whose work centered immigrants, sex workers, and trans folks. Over the last three decades, she has organized HIV testing for trans sex workers, she has created needle exchange programs for trans women on HRT, she has created a bailout fund for sex workers. She has done so so much incredible, incredible work.

I strongly recommend going to the show notes for this episode right now. You will see a link to a tribute to Lorena that was published on the outlet *Them*, and if you scroll down through that article, you will find a ten minute documentary on Lorena’s life and her work. I highly, highly recommend watching it so that you can hear from Lorena in person. Before she passed away, Lorena created a transgender emergency fund on GoFundMe, which is still taking donations now. As of this recording, it hasn’t quite reached its ten thousand dollar goal, so I highly recommend donating. That link is in the article I just mentioned. I don’t have much else to say about Lorena just because other people who knew her well can say it so much better, and she can say it so much better in that documentary. So please look into her story and just try to take heart that people like her have existed in this world, and that so many of them do still exist and will continue to exist after this is all over.

[calm background guitar music fades]

**Tuck:** This has been This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender outro plays]

[*Gender Reveal* theme music plays]

**Tuck:** Mari Wrobi is a queer, trans, and intersex advocate and community member, born and raised in Sacramento, California. They work full time at the first and only shelter for LGBT+ youth experiencing homelessness in Sacramento, which is known as STEP or the Short-term Transitional Emergency Program. They intern at the Gender Health Center, a non-profit in Sacramento that offers free services to trans and gender non-conforming people in the area. And they are a youth member and advocate with Interact, Advocates for Intersex Youth.

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

**Mari:** Yes! I love this question. I personally identify as non-binary. It’s really taken a long time to come into that identity. I’ve been identifying as trans in some way shape or form since I was in middle school. But it’s been a very long journey of basically testing out every known label possible and then getting to a point, you know, where I’m at now where I was just sort of like, you know what, non-binary feels kind of right. It’s kind of a catch-all. I can identify with this term and then not really have to think about gender as much. So that’s what I did, and that’s what I’ve been doing for at least several years now.

**Tuck:** I love that that’s your approach to it because that’s something that resonates with me as being, I am non-binary, and thus I don’t ever have to think about this again if I don’t want to. [both laugh] But I find that sometimes when people start identifying as non-binary, it leads them to spiral into only thinking about gender in this really, really intense way. And I’m like, no, the secret is to never think about it. [both laugh]

**Mari:** Exactly, exactly. The secret is, I picked a label, and I’m done now. I don’t have to be questioning. I don’t have to do anything else. We’re good.

**Tuck:** Yeah, so I’m one of those people who didn’t know that non-binary people existed until I was in my twenties. I didn’t meet a trans person that I was aware was trans until I was in college. I would love to hear if you’re willing to share a little bit about what it was like exploring your gender identity in middle school.

**Mari:** I was in middle school ten years ago so it was a very different culture than what we have now, and what we’ve reached now in terms of talking about trans people, actually acknowledging that trans people exist, non-binary people exist. But when I was in middle school, the first time I heard the word transgender was when I was watching a Law & Order episode. It was not a good representation of trans people. In fact, it was very detrimental to the trans community. But the first time I heard it, I was like, oh, that sounds right; that sounds pretty accurate. And I had never known I was trans before that, but afterwards I started identifying as a trans man, which I identified as for five or so years. And that was sort of my way of exploring the community at that point.

But then when I was in my last couple years of high school, I was like, I don’t like the name I chose for myself anymore. I don’t really want to dress this way. And I think that non-binary has always been who I am, but I sort of fell into this really typical path of, you’re trans so you can only be one of the two binary trans categories. You can’t really exist outside of that. But eventually, I was like, I don’t really feel this is true. So I sort of explored every label you can think of. I was trying everything out. I was trying out new pronouns. And it was definitely very weird because I was the only trans person in my middle school and my high school so no one really knew what to do with me.

Like, swing dancing in P.E. or whatever, so they were sort of like, “I don’t know, go to the library instead of coming to P.E. We don’t really know what to do.” So that was another interesting thing because there was no education about trans people when I was going through all of that. That’s what led me to, in the beginning, wanting to be sort of stealth. I didn’t want people to know that I was trans so I sort of pretended that I was this kid that was coming from out of town to go to school- nobody knows me. But I think that if I could do it all again, with today’s education and understanding, I think it would be a lot different of an exploration.

**Tuck:** Yeah, what do you think it would look like now?

**Mari:** I work a lot with queer and trans youth, and I get to see these kids, thirteen years old, fourteen, really be proud of their identity, and really be willing to talk about it, playing with their presentation and not feeling that deep shame that I feel like I felt when I was growing up. So I imagine that if I were to do it all again that it would be so much better. With more community, I feel like I would have better understanding of all the terms just because the internet itself has improved so much. When I see these trans youth who are so confident and so sure of themselves, on one hand I’m kind of jealous, and on the other hand I’m so happy that this generation can do this thing that I couldn’t do, or that people who grew up when I did couldn’t do.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I just got on the app TikTok, and I feel that so strongly because it is just trans teens thriving.

**Mari:** [laughs] Right? It’s amazing. I’m like, you’re doing so great!

**Tuck:** It’s really incredible. So, I have a bunch of follow up questions. But I wanted to go back and ask, what pronouns do you use?

**Mari:** [chuckles] That’s a good question. I use they/them pronouns.

**Tuck:** Perfect, I was wondering what your journey looked like from identifying as a trans man to identifying as a femme non-binary person, and also more importantly I would love to hear your take on what it means to be femme because you know I always make people answer that on this show.

**Mari:** [laughs] It’s a really good question. I feel like I think about it all the time, and every time I think about it, my answer is different. Like being femme is such a… I almost want to say for me it’s been such a fluid idea of what it means. I also just think that the longer I present as and identify as femme, the more understanding I have of what femme-ness means to me. To start with the journey that I sort of took from one binary to what people might see as the other, I’m not sure. Interestingly enough, coming into my identity as a trans man, while I did lose some friends, some support, I also had a lot of people who were so accepting of this fact, this transition. And interestingly enough once I realized, hey I actually kind of want to wear dresses, I want to wear skirts, whatever. And I actually have the pictures of me wearing my quote on quote first dress after deciding I wanted to be more femme. And I love looking at those pictures. They’re so cute. But starting to be more feminine, I sort of just did it. I sort of was like, oh, this isn’t sparking joy for me anymore; I’m going to change this up a little bit.

I actually found that as I started to present more femme, as I started to identify less as a trans man or transmasculine that I actually lost a lot of support from the people who did support me as a trans man or transmasculine person. People were very upset that I was sort of switching things up again. They were like, what are you doing? This isn’t how it should be. So even people who had been very supportive were starting to pull back because I think that all the, you know, the gender…I’m not sure if I’m allowed to gender fuckery, but...

**Tuck:** You are. But I also like the pause because you’re like, you know, all the gender. And I’m like, do I know, all the gender. [both laugh]

**Mari:** Like do you though? Are you sure? I’m not sure if you know. But yes, all the gender fuckery, people aren’t very happy with. But sort of internally what that kind of looked like for me, was realizing that I did want to present in a different way, that I did want to continue to be gender non-conforming, but in a less traditional way than what’s quote on quote expected. And so, for me, being femme, which has happened in the past year or two, where I really started to fall into the label and accept it as who I am; I sort of define femme-ness as like, being femme is about being subversive. And I know that being femme is something that everyone who’s femme has a sort of a different understanding of.

So this is definitely about how I feel, being femme. But it’s about taking the gendered expectations of what traditional femininity looks like, thinking like oh lipstick and high heels and dresses and whatever, taking that expectation, and we’re not going to do it that way though. We’re not going to do it in the way that you have grown to expect of traditionally, women, but femme people. So for me, being femme is very queer. Being femme is very rooted in my queer identity, and that’s not something that I can parse out. I have to be femme and queer, and femme and non-binary. And it has come with a lot of trying to talk about the experience of life experiencing misogyny, but also not being a woman. And I feel like that’s another huge thing, is just this idea of trying to talk about the oppression you face while also not misgendering yourself or being misgendered, and that’s huge.

**Tuck:** Wow, I could actually talk about *just* this the entire time, but you have so many interesting things you do with gender so I am going to try to move on now. I asked you what you wanted to talk about on the show, and you told us that you started identifying as trans after going through a typical intersex puberty, but I am not convinced that most of our listeners know what a typical intersex puberty would look like, [Mari chuckles] so I was hoping you could talk to us about that.

**Mari:** Absolutely, yes. I literally love talking about intersex things. That’s the thing I can’t shut up about the most. [Tuck laughs] So yeah, so there is no such thing as a typical intersex puberty. Everyone who’s intersex...intersex is this big umbrella term that just describes a bunch of experiences, in a lot of the same ways that trans is a very big umbrella term. My intersex puberty looked a lot different than other intersex people. For me what that looked like was, even though I was assigned female at birth, I had a puberty that was very much, if we want to use a binary explanation, it was a puberty that was very masculinizing, which of course I don’t look at it like that at all. But in the intersex community, you have these terms.

I started growing facial hair and had thicker body hair and oilier skin, more acne, higher libido, which is common for, you know, whatever gender. It was all these sort of changes that related to the fact that my body produces more testosterone than estrogen, and that my body produces testosterone that’s on the level of cis non-intersex men. So while my body was doing its thing, that’s why I think that I fell so into the idea of, I’m a trans man. Because this puberty that was, very what you might expect a cis non-intersex man to go through was happening to me. And so, I think what happened was I was sort of like, oh I’m a boy, I’m a guy, I’m going through this puberty that is very similar to my brothers, very similar to what my dad went through. And so that is what I think propelled me into, instead of realizing that that meant I was intersex, instead of understanding that this is an intersex thing, I knew the word trans, I had a better understanding of what trans was, and that’s sort of what I fell into. I was like, oh I’m trans. And it was actually learning that I was intersex, realizing that, that sort of helped me transition into being more femme because I was like, this is a different thing than I thought it was. I still have always identified as trans, but it definitely allowed me to shift the way that I viewed myself.

**Tuck:** Yeah, so how old were you when you learned that you were intersex?

**Mari:** I always had a idea that something was different, but when I was growing up because I was identifying as trans, the differences didn’t bother me like they might bother someone else. So for instance I didn’t have a period for literally years after I was quote on quote, expected to. But because I was identifying as trans, that didn’t bother me. I wasn’t going to tell anyone and say, hey I’m really upset I haven’t had a period yet, you know. I was totally fine with it. So I had an idea that someting might be different, but I didn’t actually start to go through the process of learning what intersex meant, and trying to get a diagnosis, until I was probaby about eighteen. Even then, it took me a few more years to sort of officially be, I’m intersex and find the intersex community and validate my diagnosis and that sort of thing.

**Tuck:** Did that diagnosis change the way that you think about your gender because they are two distinct things, but I understand how they could also feel related as you described.

**Mari:** Yeah, so definitely, especially when I’m talking to trans audiences. I try to be very clear that yeah, sex and gender for a lot of people they don’t overlap. For some people, they do overlap. And I know for myself personally that they have almost become indistinguishable from each other because of the experiences that I’ve had. But no one ever told me, you’re intersex, but when you find the community, when you find that people are like you that are intersex you kind of come into, oh yeah, I am intersex. And for me in terms of gender, because I was already understanding that my body doesn’t exist within the binaries, I was also more willing to accept that my gender didn’t have to exist between the binaries. My body is literally telling me, binaries are fake. That gender, sex are both social constructs. They’re not real. So I was more willing to identify as non-binary, and that’s why I sort of landed into that. I feel like my identity as non-binary has, in a lot of ways, felt more like I was crashing and burning into the identity.

[both laugh]

But, I’m happy there. I’ve built a little fortress. I built my home on this deserted island. I’m good. It definitely has led me to be like, it’s cool to be non-binary. That’s fine. And I feel like that’s really important as an intersex person to talk about my experiences a lot because there are a lot of intersex people who do identify as trans, and I feel like it’s a different experience of transness than what people who aren’t intersex go through. So I feel like we need to be having the conversation more.

**Tuck:** Yeah, can you talk about that a little bit more, what it means for intersex folks to identify as cis or trans or neither, and sort of what goes into that. Is it based on gender assigned at birth?

**Mari:** Yeah, so that’s actually really interesting. It seems like as a community we’re sort of coming into this understanding that intersex people are not… yes, we are assigned male or female at birth, but we aren’t quote on quote biologically male, biologically female; we’re biologically intersex. Even if we weren’t assigned intersex at birth because that’s not a thing, people are sort of rejecting the assignment, which I feel like is something that happens in the trans community. But I feel like with the intersex community, it’s really important because a lot of people who are intersex are forcibly assigned through surgery, through hormone replacement therapy, they’re assigned to a gender that’s just not what their body represents.

And I also think that when we talk about intersex people who are also trans who want to transition, often that transition looks so so different from what it might look for other people. For instance, if I wanted to start testosterone, my body has already done a lot of the testosterone things so that HRT experience would look a lot different than somebody who’s not intersex that wanted to start T. And same with… I have a friend who wants to get bottom surgery, but the way that bottom surgery is going to go is going to be so much different. That’s a trans experience, “I want to get bottom surgery.” That’s a trans experience, but the way that we’re gonna go through it is going to be so much different just because of what surgeries might have taken place because of what the body has naturally done because there’s so many different factors that complicate things because of being intersex. That’s a big thing too.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I’m realizing just now in this moment that I’m not sure whether we have actually talked about on the show the fact that at the same time that conservative politicians and organizers are trying to prevent trans youth from accessing care, they are also allowing and encouraging the same invasive surgeries on intersex youth and babies, and I was wondering if you would be willing to talk to everyone about that for a minute?

**Mari:** So a lot of the time when we talk about the differences and the overlap of the trans and intersex experience, we talk about the fact that trans people are often fighting for bodily autonomy and medical interventions that they do want, whereas intersex people are fighting for bodily autonomy in the way of medical interventions that they don’t want. We both really want this bodily autonomy. We both need, obviously, bodily autonomy, but it’s in the way we’re being forced to access it, is very different. There’s this idea of cosmetic surgeries, and when you have trans people and trans kids, especially, you’re saying, oh cosmetic surgeries are pointless, so we’re not going to do them. And you’re essentially saying that this very medically necessary surgery that trans people need and want, you’re calling it cosmetic, and for that reason it’s unimportant. But on the other hand the surgeries that intersex children and infants are going through are entirely cosmetic, and yet that’s still not a point of contention. We’re not saying just because it’s cosmetic we shouldn’t do it.

So there is such a big cognitive dissonance, where people are not understanding that they’re creating such a double standard when it comes to the medical care that the trans and intersex communities should have or that they don’t. It’s just wild how willing people are to completely, essentially align themselves with transphobic, misogynistic, and homophobic rhetoric so that they can make people fit into binaries.

**Tuck:** Speaking of intersex issues, I know that you are a youth member and advocate with Interact, and I was hoping you could talk about what Interact is?

**Mari:** Yeah, okay so Interact, advocates for intersex youth is this international organization that connects intersex people, intersex youth all around the world to the same priority of protecting intersex people from all of the harms that affect us, which is a lot. Interact is great because it provides resources, not just to intersex people but to people who are allies to people who want to know more about the intersex experience. It also does a great job of connecting people to the action that they can take in their state. So when bills come up, when demonstrations or rallies come up, Interact lets you know that hey, this thing is happening. Call your representatives or you can donate, or whatever capacity that people have to be an ally, to show up. Interact provides all of those helpful tidbits, all of the definitions, everything you need to know to be the most effective person you can as an intersex ally. And it also provides a lot of opportunities for intersex people, especially intersex youth ourselves to advocate on our behalf, and I’m so lucky and so thankful to be part of it.

**Tuck:** Yeah, for folks who are listening who aren’t intersex, but want to be better allies and accomplices to intersex folks and do a better job including them in their activism when they’re working on issues of gender and sex, do you have any advice for folks like that?

**Mari:** Yeah absolutely. I would definitely recommend checking out the resources that places like Interact can offer, which is stuff like brochures and pamphlets and booklets and whatever else you need to have an understanding of what intersex means, what you can do.

But I also just recommend being aware, following intersex people. There are so many awesome intersex people that are on social media, that are on YouTube talking about exactly what intersex means and exactly what their experiences have been. Doing things like reading books from intersex people because there are a lot of intersex authors who have written memoirs, who have written books about the intersex experience, and what that looks like, what that means. There are so many ways to get informed and be a better ally, and I feel like it all really starts with listening to intersex people, as simple as that is. Being aware is the first step. Being open to challenging the things that you think are true or challenging those thoughts and ideas, I think is the best way to start getting involved. And of course when things come up, like potential laws in your state, showing up in the best way you can politically, in that way, is just another huge thing that is especially more relevant now than it has been in the past.

**Tuck:** Absolutely, when we as a community of queer and trans folks are speaking about say, trans issues, is there any language that could be improved to make sure that we are including intersex folks or should we be including intersex folks, or is it a separate issue that we shouldn’t be trying to all lump together?

**Mari:** Yeah, so I actually do have a lot of recommendations just in terms of how people should be referring to intersex people or thinking about intersex topics. First that starts with just being the most effective in your language as possible. I think that as the trans community, we’re very aware of how important language is when it comes to talking about these things. So that means using terms like intersex people, intersex individuals, intersex bodies, and staying away from of course things like, atypical, referring to intersex people as atypical or abnormal because that’s just not true. Staying away from typical, grammatical, mistakes in terms of referring to, intersex, just like transgendered. Not saying things like condition or disease because that pathologizes intersex people.

But also, something that I always bring up especially within the trans community, is that we tend to say things like “people with penises” and “people with vaginas” because that’s more inclusive of trans people who don’t identify as men or women, male or female, but they do have a penis or vagina, that’s a very common way to be inclusive. But actually it’s very exclusive to intersex people to use that sort of language because there are intersex people who have vaginas, but don’t have a uterus; they don’t have ovaries. They don’t have any of the quote on quote typical or expected parts. So you aren’t being inclusive of people if you say people with vaginas when you actually mean people who menstruate. And there are intersex people who are born with penises but don’t have any testes, and to say things like, oh people with penises should make sure to get checked for testicular cancer. That’s also not inclusive. So what I always recommend is say exactly what you mean. If you mean people who menstruate, say that. If you mean people who can get pregnant or people who can get other people pregnant, say that. Let’s not dance around the language that we use. Let’s be inclusive by being very blunt about what we’re talking about.

It’s very interesting watching people stutter over their language. I’ve definitely been in trainings where you are watching the old cis white guy in the room try to say the word clitoris. [Tuck laughs] And you’re just like, oh this is fun, but also sad. Let’s be, let’s be real here.

**Tuck:** Totally! Great, well I want to talk about some of the other rad stuff that you do before we run out of time, and so you work full time at the you said, the first and only shelter for LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness in Sacramento, which is known as STEP or the Short-term Transitional Emergency Program. So I would love to hear about the work that you do there. I would also love to hear what we as listeners can do to show up for this type of LGBTQ youth who are either experiencing homelesnes or at risk of homelessnes.

**Mari:** Yeah, so I work with transition aged youth who are eighteen to twenty-four in Sacramento who are LGBT and experiencing homelessness. My shelter specifically is a ninety day shelter so they're really with us for a very limited period of time. But in that time, we’re able to offer them stability. We’re able to offer them affirming care in the sense that we have binders on site. We will provide you with the deodorant, the shampoo, the soap, whatever that is most affirming for you, and it’s good work, but it’s hard work because you’re coming in with these people who have been routinely discriminated against who have been pushed out either by their family, by institutions that don’t accept trans people, by being unemployed because of that or having to drop out of school because of that. And it’s really hard because what we’re doing is we’re essentially saying, you have worth as a queer trans youth. You deserve to exist in this system no matter how messed up it is. So that’s its own thing.

What I do specifically there is that I help folks find the next step for them so ninety days goes by so fast, and my job is to help them get their next spot, whether that's permanent housing such as an apartment or that’s another transitional program that’s hopefully longer. LIke I said, it’s good work, but it’s hard work.

So people can actually be effective allies to the community of queer and trans people who are experiencing homelessness by… they can physically donate their clothes, their affirming resources, things like binders or packers or whatever it is that they have that they might not have a need for anymore. People can be effective by offering their time. I know that we would love to have more people who could volunteer, who could come in and teach our youth something that they maybe don’t know. You also have ways you can be effective in terms of, we put out little wishlists, sponsor a youth for folks who have the financial capacity. But I also think it just comes with understanding that our systems are really horrible. And that means that hiring trans people is important, that having these people talk about their experiences is important because listening to queer and trans youth experiencing homelessness is the best if not only way that we’re going to get better as a society.

**Tuck:** Yes so as everyone maybe knows, there is a grant program through Gender Reveal where we are giving out grants to trans artists, activists, and advocates, mostly trans folks of color, and you applied for the fall 2019 grant, and you were the very first runner-up, which means you did not receive any funding, but I’m still hoping to scrape some together for you because I really wanted to fund your project, but while we’re talking to you already, can you tell us about the project that you applied to the grant for?

**Mari:** Absolutely, so I applied to the grant with the project that I call, “Where We Feel Safe” and it’s essentially a photography project that I’m working on with trans models in my community that I pose the question, where do you feel the most safe? So it’s a question that I feel like is kind of a hard question in some ways, kind of an easy question in others because for a lot of people, they kind of know that they have a place that they feel very comfortable. But on the other side of that is the sort of implication of okay, you feel safe in this place specifically that you’ve chosen, but what places do you feel unsafe in, and what places do you feel are not represented when you ask this question. So essentially my photography project is taking photos of trans people in the space that they do feel the most safe. I want to make the people who are in the project feel the most comfortable. I want them to feel incredibly safe. I want them to be with people who make them feel safe. I want them to be doing something that’s comforting to them. So it’s not supposed to be any sort of trauma porn or anything like that, but at the end of the day, I want the project to tell a story of what places are we not representing?

And, as I’ve been doing this project, which I started a couple of months ago, I can definitely see that for the most part, there are not public spaces... You don’t get a whole lot of, I feel comfortable at work, you don’t get that a whole lot. Surprisingly enough [sarcastically]. You don’t get a lot of people who feel comfortable at school, who feel comfortable just in public in general. And I think that that is very telling of what the trans community faces. And at the end of the day, what I really want to ask is, what spaces are trans people routinely locked out of by this? What spaces do we not have access to because we don’t feel safe? And at the end of the day, I would say it’s primarily public spaces, and that is not a good thing. So I sort of want to be able to, not fix the problem, but how can our community do better? How can society do better? How can cis allies do better to make trans people actually feel welcome and safe in these spaces?

**Tuck:** Does any of this art exist in a way that folks can view it now, or will be able to view it in the future? And also is there a way that folks can support you?

**Mari:** Yeah, so I know that I applied to the grant program because I wanted to be able to pay the people that I am essentially asking to be very vulnerable. This does take a level of vulnerability, and it also takes people going out of their way to make time for this. Up to now, it’s been very volunteer-based. People can support by being aware of the project, by… I have a little Linktree in my bio that links to the photos I’ve taken up to now, on Instagram. And yeah, I have been playing around with the idea of making it a hashtag or a movement. So that people can actually… you know, I’m limited right now to the spaces that are around me, that are close to me. But I would love it if we could get more people who are talking about this, who are showing everyone the place that they feel safe so that we can have a broader sample size, and by that, have a broader understanding of these things and these spaces.

**Tuck:** Absolutely. Before we wrap up, do you want to talk about Gender Health Center at all?

**Mari:** Yeah! No, I would love to give a plug. I intern at the Gender Health Center, specifically with the outreach and education department. The Gender Health Center in Sacramento is this incredible nonprofit that offers free services to trans and gender non-conforming people in the area so that includes things like name and gender change help, a free hormone clinic, counseling with gender affirming therapists. It’s an incredible nonprofit here that we have. And my role has really been creating these really, really important events that our community benefits so much from. We had a Trans Day of Remembrance Healing Fair because we figured we’re so used to vigils and rallies and these hard, heavy political conversations. But our community also needs to heal, especially the people who are still alive, who are constantly being bombarded with trauma porn and the death and discrimination that our community faces so much so we held a healing fair instead where we brought people in and allowed them to heal as a community. So yeah, I’ve loved the work that I have been able to do with the Gender Health Center. I love that I’ve been able to be a trans, non-binary, intersex voice within this organization because I feel like that understanding intersections and marginilizations is really important when it comes to having these conversations, having these events. So, that’s been great.

**Tuck:** Awesome, yeah that Center sounds so incredible. I honestly cannot even imagine [**Mari:** yes!] that a resource like that exists. That’s amazing.

**Mari:** Yeah, I used to be very jealous of the Bay Area. They have so much cool stuff that we in Sacramento, who are only an hour away, don’t have. And then I forget that we have a lot of really cool resources here too.

**Tuck:** Yeahhh! The way we always end this show is by asking, in your ideal world what would the future of gender look like?

**Mari:** I love this question. So many different, good answers to it all the time. So in my future ideal world, gender would not be a thing. Just a simple, simple answer, I love that the gender X is becoming much more prominent, much more widespread. I recently got the gender X after months of agonizing over whether or not I should, and I did, and like I said, that’s great. It’s an awesome opportunity that not everyone has, but in my ideal world, I would love for the gender X to not even be relevant. I would love if we could just not assign gender at birth. If we could just not denote gender on any form whether it’s medical documents, birth certificates, whatever. I would love if we could just not because that could give intersex children the right to grow up exactly as they are without needing to be forced into a box. It would give non-binary people the capacity to just grow up as non-binary, to be non-binary. It wouldn’t make people fall into a category, and then realizing that, oh I don’t fit this category. It would be like, there are twenty million categories, and they’re all open for you if you need or want them. So, that is hopefully a direction we’re going. I would super love that, but until then, you know, gender X will take it.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I love as a tagline “gender, I would love if we could just not.”

[both laugh]

**Mari:** That would be my presidential slogan if I ran for office, so stay tuned.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music plays]

**Tuck:** That’s going to do it for this week’s show. Please share the episode with your friends, your family, and your community so that they can also learn how to be better intersex allies. Maybe it’s an extra great time for them to listen to podcasts. You can find Mari at [genderfenderbender on Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/genderfenderbender/), an incredible handle, and Mari Wrobi on Facebook. And you can check out [interactadvocates.org](https://interactadvocates.org/) for more information on how to help and support the intersex community. If you need someone to talk to about gender, or anything else, check out our Slack community at [bit.ly/genderslack2](http://bit.ly/genderslack2). New people are joining every day; it’s wonderful. You can also find us on Instagram and Twitter at gendereveal. I’m at Molly Woodstock, and you can find episode transcripts and a contact form, and more at [genderpodcast.com](https://www.genderpodcast.com/). This week’s show was produced and edited by me, Molly Woodstock. Our logo is by the talented Ira M. Leigh, and our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Additional music this week by Blue Dot Sessions. Hang in there friends, and we will be back so soon with more feelings about gender.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music ends]