[theme music]

**Molly:** Welcome to Gender Reveal, a podcast where we ask intrusive personal questions and hopefully get a little bit closer to figuring out what the hell gender is. I'm your host and resident Gender Detective, Molly Woodstock.

[music ends]

**Molly:** Holy moly, thank you so much for listening to the show! So many of you have been sharing links to the show online, you've told your friends, you've left a bunch of five-star reviews on iTunes, you said nice things in Tweets. I appreciate it all so, so much, it's so heartwarming to see, and all of that stuff really helps us get off the ground and out into the world, which is great because we literally can't do any of this without you.

And speaking of which, before I introduce this week's guest, I need to tell y'all about the folks who pay our bills so that we can make this show. First up, thanks so much to all of our Patreon supporters! It means so much to me that so many of you are willing to donate a few dollars a month to the podcast. If you'd like to join our legion of Patreon supporters, head to patreon.com/gender, and if you donate $5 or more per month, I'll send you some cool stickers. Honestly, if you donate less than $5 a month, and then you, like, send me a message about why you want stickers, that's fine, I'll send them to you probably.

Alright, next, many thanks to GladRags! Look, we all know that pads and tampons are expensive and uncomfortable and terrible for the environment, but here's the great news: GladRags XO Flo menstrual cups are only $35, they don't have that thick rim that makes other menstrual cups uncomfortable, and one cup lasts for years and years and years. And if you head to gladrags.com and use the coupon code 'GENDER', you'll get $5 off your order, which means you just spent $30 to avoid buying tampons for a decade! It literally does not get better than that. Thanks, GladRags!

Finally, thank you to TomboyX. TomboyX is dedicated to social justice, they're dedicated to LGBTQ issues, they're dedicated to women's rights, and they're dedicated to making super comfy, ethically produced underwear. You want briefs, you want trunks, you want boyshorts, you want bikini, you want boxer brief, you want a pin that says "In cats we trust", they've got all of it! Get 15% off your order with the code TOMBOYS' at tomboyx.com. I promise you if you try it, you will find something you love.

[theme music]

**Molly:** Okay, friends, last week we did a segment called "This Week in Gender," and I wanted to bring you a little update on that story. So, "This Week in Gender":

[trumpeting news music]

First of all, I think we've confirmed that, yes, you can change your birth certificate-listed gender to 'X' for non-binary in Oregon. Now, Newsweek is reporting that starting January 27, folks born in Washington state will also be able to change their birth certificate gender to 'X', and Washington's also waiving their requirement that folks need to see a doctor and get a doctor's letter before they can change their legal gender. Meanwhile, in Vermont, the Vermont DMV is thinking about adding an 'X' designation on their driver licenses. If it does that, it'll be the fourth spot in the US to do so, after Washington, D.C., Oregon, and California, I think in that order. And while we're here, I wanted to share this cool part of the Newsweek article that I mentioned. It might not be breaking news, but I certainly didn't know it, and so maybe you didn't know it either. It says "Even as gender non-binary acceptance is gaining popularity in US states, the country trails behind many international communities. Nepal was the first country to recognize a third gender option in 2007. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, and Canada also legally recognize non-binary, or third gender people."

This has been "This Week in Gender".

[trumpeting news music ends]

**Molly:** Okay, folks, it's time to introduce this week's guest! Carlos the Rollerblader is a hummingbird on wheels. When not talking to strangers across the country on their free advice hotline, they flip between doing stand-up comedy, DJing, oil painting, community organizing, and event hosting. Originally hailing from Maryland but making a second home in Portland, Carlos rolls around the city, literally rolls, on rollerblades, to keep a smile on your face, with a margarita in hand, probably thinking about music. Catch them on Instagram @carloscollective for their latest news.

[music interlude]

And without further ado, here's Carlos!

Wow, first of all, thanks so much for being here, I'm so excited to have you on the show! Could you start by telling us, with regard to gender, how do you identify?

**Carlos:** So, I identify as non-binary with they/them pronouns.

**Molly:** Cool.

**Carlos:** Okay.

**Molly:** When did you first hear the concept of being non-binary.

**Carlos:** Uh, I don't know. Probably like 2010, 2011 Tumblr, which is standard.

**Molly:** Wow! You were ahead. You're ahead of the game!

**Carlos:** Was I?

**Molly:** Yeah, non-binary didn't trend until, like, 2013, '14, '15.

**Carlos:** Huh.

**Molly:** So, great. Did it resonate with you right away?

**Carlos:** No. No, no, no, no. I, you know, had to play around and, and some-- I don't know, feel some type of way. But I did ID with they/them pronouns, like, almost immediately. I was just like, "Oh, something in the middle? Fine, I'll take it." And then, I didn't really find queerness as a term until maybe 2012, but I think I was doing like demiboy for a little bit, and like, feeling like demisexual and with pansexual, and then I was just like "I don't really care about any of these words for real," and then I found-- like there was genderqueer, but I was just like, that's kinda corny, I've, I don't know. I just don't like the word, like as it looks, aesthetically. [laughs] It's just too many, uh, what do you call those?

**Molly:** 'E's? [laughs]

**Carlos:** Those. Um, but just like "juh-qwah-uh"

**Molly:** [Laughs].

**Carlos:** It's just. It's just too many things, but queer is just queer, queer, queer, queer, queer.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** I love that. And, yeah, non-binary is, you know, that's what I got for now. I feel like it could change more, to be something a little bit more streamlined.

**Molly:** So I first heard about you from the posters for your free advice hotline, and I was wondering if we could start by you explaining what that is and how it got started.

**Carlos:** So, the free advice hotline is an idea that came about almost a year ago, last February, February of 2017, and it was originally going to be drunk advice. That was my original idea. I think I was between jobs, and just freshly out of a relationship, and also Trump was just freshly inaugurated, and it was a strange sort of lonely, tense, very downtrodden mood; not just for me but for the whole city. And then that's when I decided okay, we're gonna change this from a joke, from drunk advice, it was gonna be bad advice. And then I was just like okay, why don't I just do free advice, and people get what they get. It wasn't supposed to be so altruistic, I guess, but people seemed like they needed things to say, and they didn't really know who to say them to because so many people felt betrayed by their friends and family voting for Trump, and so, you know, you lose a certain channel of communication in all of that. And I just put that out, free advice hotline, call and we can talk about whatever.

**Molly:** Yeah. When I first saw the posters, one of the things that I was personally excited by, as you may guess from the show, is that it listed that you use they/them pronouns on the poster. I was wondering if that ever came up during a call, or if gender and queerness ever came up during a call?

**Carlos:** [Chuckles] Actually, no, people tend to ignore it.

**Molly:** Ohh!

**Carlos:** Like most details of the poster. Some people do, like especially online, online, people are very much better about it, but when they call, you know, they throw around a lot of he/him pronouns, and I will correct them, and they'll be like "Oh my god, I'm so sorry I missed it!" or blah, blah, blah. But generally, I mean, people are open to talking about it, so that's all I need.

**Molly:** So, what do people talk about?

**Carlos:** People talk about anything from what they want to make for dinner all the way to, you know, my family and I have political beliefs, or you know, I've even gotten calls about custody battles, about weird and secret pregnancies, and just all sorts of things.

**Molly:** It sounds like there's some really heavy stuff that people are calling you about

**Carlos:** Oh yeah.

**Molly:** What work have you done to, like, protect yourself from being, like, emotionally weighed down from all of that?

**Carlos:** Yeah, that's something that I'm really happy I get asked a lot because people do realize that this is, like, a lot of emotional labor for hardly anything in return, and honestly, when I'm taking a lot of the calls, I'm probably already stoned. So, that's step one. I also like to keep like, an emotional barrier; I keep my calls short and direct. I don't like to go on and on. I don't tend to do follow-up calls either, I tell people if they wanna call back, they can, and some have, but I'm not a therapist. This isn't a once-a-month sort of thing. I only need to invest in those 10 minutes, 15 minutes, and then I can cut off and go back to watching Dragon Ball Z, you know, or taking a nap, or whatever I was doing.

**Molly:** Yeah. You said that it's for almost nothing in return. Is there anything that you feel like you have gotten out of it?

**Carlos:** That I have gotten?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** Oh! Oh my god. The hotline has provided so many cool-ass gifts. Like, just, well my rollerblades came via the hotline. I have a pair of Seba FR2s with 84-millimeter wheels; they're my babies.

**Molly:** [Laughs].

**Carlos:** I call them Puffy and Mase. They're my heart and joy. They came to me via the hotline, via a filmmaker in L.A., Drew Bachrach, who raised the money for me to have those. So, there's that. I mean, just the general notoriety has gotten me a few things, just the visibility of somebody brown and queer has gotten me some cool things. I don't know. Honestly, it's just been able to shed light more on the other projects I've been doing, like stand-up comedy or event organizing or event hosting.

**Molly:** That leads into something that I really wanted to ask you. So, Portland is seen as, like, a really great place to be queer and non-binary, and it's seen as a really bad place to be a person of color. So, how does that shake out for you? What's your experience like here?

**Carlos:** Portland is a complex city to live in because yeah, it's great to be queer in it, and it's great to have a large part, a very important part of my identity acknowledged and realized, and not even that it's accepted necessarily, but it's not sneered at, at my face, you know. But if I were to dress like a "typical Black person" and wear like sweats and like joggers and the Yeezy sneakers or whatever, like a young, millennial Black person, I don't get treated with the same respect. One of the things about rollerblading in particular, you know, to sort of parse through these two identities, is that it gives me a novelty that almost, it doesn't like supersede my Blackness, but it, again, softens that blow. Where that novelty is just like top priority, where me being Black is just like oh that's just, we don't even care about that anymore, you know, like-- I see people change, you know, like their faces will literally change from sort of shock and fear a little bit, to like, okay, like they look at the rollerblades, like "okay, no nevermind, I'm not, like, scared anymore" 'cause nobody's gonna be afraid of a Black dude on rollerblades. Or if they are, they shouldn't be. And there are people who are [sighs]. Yeah, it's an interesting intersection for sure. It's something that I grapple with all the time because you don't really know, with any person, and any presentation that I'm giving off, what you're going to get from other people. So, it's sort of one of those things where being queer, in the white Portlanders' eyes, being queer softens the blow of being a Black man, or being read as a Black man because white people, and people in general, are just scared of Black men, and that's, you know, how it is. But being queer, and like wearing my earrings and makeup and something, it like lets their guard down a little bit more, so that's always a push and pull. It's just like, either I'm getting, you know, a hard blow from one presentation and a softened blow from the other, or vice versa.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm. Do you think about leaving?

**Carlos:** Portland?

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Carlos:** I did leave.

**Molly:** Right.

**Carlos:** And I came back. I left because I didn't understand Portland. I didn't understand anything about the people, their communication style, about the, you know, the class makeup, about hardly anything. I just sort of jumped into the city without any, any ground to fall on really, and that caught up to me. And I went back home, to Maryland, and that was great and therapeutic. But it did allow me to see that there's a lot of opportunities afforded here in Portland, especially for a queer creative.

**Molly:** Yeah. Do you feel like queer and trans people of color in Portland are welcomed into, like, the mainstream white queer and trans spaces?

**Carlos:** That's an ongoing battle, for sure. I won't speak for, you know, the scenes as monoliths, but it's definitely an ongoing battle between, you know, different activities and having equal representation all the time. It's ongoing.

**Molly:** So the other day on Facebook, you posted a list of questions that mentioned "Ask Themselves More Often," and some of the items were like "Am I talking over others?" And "Am I devaluing women as a joke?" And you mentioned something like "I know I don't ID as a man, but I was raised to be one, and I grapple with that," so can you talk a little bit more about what you're grappling with and how you're approaching it?

**Carlos:** Well, it's just one of those, you know, everybody has privileges to unlearn, and that's one of those things, you know, the expectations and the privileges and the, just all the bullshit guidelines, or whatever, about how to perform as a man, how to be a man, and I don't really agree with most of that, if not all of it. And that's what I-- It's just, like, a process of unlearning it, like actively unlearning it and trying to be more of an example to other men and also, still-- It's a hard thing to have to balance wanting to rebuke it but also having to participate in it to help push other men to the side that they need to be on. It's just, like I have to keep some of it, and I have to give a lot of it away, in order to walk that line.

**Molly:** So do you have conversations with men in your life about dismantling toxic masculinity? It sounds like, from what you just said, that you’re doing that work.

**Carlos:** Yeah, I mean, I’ve always been trying to, in some degree, pushing. And that’s where, like queerness really, really helps me, and I love it, and I love the politics of, you know, I love the academia of queer culture right now, but I also love that, you know, I love my upbringing, and it gives me an opportunity to sort of parse both of those worlds. Because, yeah, I’m trying to combat toxic masculinity, but I’m never saying it like that. I’m never saying “Hey, let’s battle toxic masculinity together,” I’m just like “Yo, why did you just say ‘that’s gay’?” You know? And then hitting ‘em like that because that’s just what works sometimes.

**Molly:** So, speaking of toxic masculinity, a big part of it is learning that you need to reject anything that’s remotely feminine, and like, right now, looking at you, you have the goatee and you also have earrings and nail polish. When did you first start experimenting with femininity and how did that go?

**Carlos:** Hmm, maybe, high school, I think is when I formally started. It started by accident. My sisters and I, at a certain point—we all have, like, long legs and are close in age—and so we mixed up our jeans, and I ended up wearing some of her jeans, and this is, I don’t know, we just like mixed ‘em up, or, and I don’t know, I just

started wearing like my girlfriend’s clothing and just didn’t really see what the big deal was. Where, you know, there’s the boyfriend hoodie, you know, why isn’t there a girlfriend hoodie? I just started to think about shit like that, and I was just like, I’m small enough, like, my frame is very tiny, so “women’s jeans”, air quotes, air quotes, don’t really mean anything to me because they fit like jeans. I don’t know, they fit like I want ‘em to fit—

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** —so, yeah. That’s when I really started to play around with clothes, and then it graduated to nail polish and then more makeup, more facial makeup, and now I’m kind of at the point where I’ll just do whatever the fuck I want.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** So, experimenting with femininity, I don’t ever really think, actually, of it as experimenting, you know? It sort of was just something that I adopted because I was always around it, and by that, I mean I’m the oldest of eight kids, nine kids, I don’t know, there’s so many.

**Molly:** [laughs].

**Carlos:** And most of were girls, so I have a lot of sisters. I was— the strongest presence in my life was, like maternal ones, so like my mom, my grandma, my aunt, and I had some like step-dad and dad things happening, but those were the ones that really took precedence for me. And they’re who I learned gender from, you know? People who sort of took on both roles, so to speak, and got to be a little fluid, but they didn’t, they don’t think of it in the way that I do. They just think of it as handling their business. My grandma and my aunt are both professional bowlers, so that’s a male-dominated world, like a white male-dominated world. My aunt’s one of the best in the world, like certifiably, and she, the way she presents— she’s a supermodel in, like, one of her lives, and she’s also a professional bowler, and she also works in academia, so she gets to put on all these different, like, appearances, and watching her do that was one of the most revolutionary things I could have seen as a kid. So, you know, she can be like hyper-professional, and she can be like, really like badass, and like, I don’t know, wear all of these high-fashion outfits, and then on the other side, you know, she’s just like this technical machine, stonewalling, bowling ball-throwing Valkyrie, and it’s just so tight. So, that's what I am, like, emulating in a way, is just like these women who, who literally did what they want with their appearance and their careers, and I wanna do the same thing.

**Molly:** I love that so much. Thank you for sharing that.

**Carlos:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Can you tell me more about your experience doing stand-up in this city?

**Carlos:** Doing stand-up in this city has been quite the adventure, quite the adventure. We have a really robust scene, and I say that for the whole country, perhaps, even, like North America, I don't know, our scene is really healthy. A lot of people come here to do stand-up, there's a lot of great little subsets in our scene, too, and I really love mine, which is the sort of Black and queer comedy communities, and they overlap a lot, and that's, like, the people of color doing comedy here, I have the distinct privilege of performing with all the time, and we also have-- there's also a really big scene in Seattle, and they overlap a lot. So, overall, it's pretty healthy, even though that when there's spats in, you know, within the scene, everybody's talking, which is a step, so.

**Molly:** Yeah. Who are some other folks in your little scene that we should keep an eye out for?

**Carlos:** Oh, Jen Tam, for sure. Jen Tam is my co-collaborator on a lot of projects. Let's see, everybody from Lez Stand Up, Laura Anne Whitley, Kirsten Kuppenbender, and Caitlin Weierhauser. In my scene, there's D. Martin Austin, there's Chris Johnson, Marcus Coleman, Brandon Lyons, Thomas Lundy, really, really good people, Mel Haywood. I don't know

**Molly:** Awesome!

**Carlos:** I could name drop forever.

**Molly:** This is great, I love this!

**Carlos:** [Chuckles] Yeah.

**Molly:** Cool! So, to what extent does your identity as, like a queer, Black, non-binary person come up in your comedy, if at all.

**Carlos:** I mean, actually, [clears throat] I feel like queerness inherently comes out because of just how I express myself, and I'm very like snarky, and like sassy onstage, and sort of playful and mischevious, but I don't like to get too political during jokes because so much of it, well, is easy. It's easy to just talk about, you know, your identity, but I like to just tell really absurd stories, like being mad at J.K. Rowling or finding a baby in a grocery store.

**Molly:** Wait, I have to know why you're mad at J.K. Rowling now.

**Carlos:** Because I'm a Hufflepuff.

**Molly:** [Laughs].

**Carlos:** [Chuckles] And I didn't want to be. I wasn't. I wasn't for a very long time. For like a better part of a decade, I was a Slytherin, and then I got re-housed, and I like took the test over and over, and I was just like, dude, [sighs] I'm a Hufflepuff now. And it's her fault, so, that's why.

**Molly:** [Laughs] I mean, fair enough.

**Carlos:** Yeah.

**Molly:** So in general, you are a performer, and you're becoming a local personality, sort of a Portland ambassador. So when you're doing that work, how important is it to you to be out?

**Carlos:** Out in queerness? Or?

**Molly:** Queerness, non-binary-ness, anything. To be yourself. How important is it for you to be seen as exactly who you are is what I want to know.

**Carlos:** Super important.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** Super, super important. I am the kind of person that doesn't like to pull punches, and I would rather you know who I am and what you're getting into than not. Which is generally, like something pretty good, like, you know, I'm okay as a person, I think. And to sell myself short by way of clothing or, or presentation, or makeup, or whatever, I don't know. I just, I don't wanna give people the wrong impression. Like, I don't know. I'm a Carlos, like singular being, and so, that's something that I just try to communicate without actually saying anything.

**Molly:** Yeah. Lots of queer and trans and non-binary folks struggle with feeling like they're asking too much from people to be accepted for who they are, and for people to use the correct pronouns for them and all of that stuff. Do you have advice for folks who are feeling like they're a burden on someone else just, you know, for existing?

**Carlos:** Yeah. I mean, I wanna say something a little magnanimous, like "know your worth" or "treat yourself like a million dollars," but really, it's more about making it normal, I feel. That's where the power is, is in normalcy, is in being ubiquitous. Once you feel like you should be at that standard, like and then go for more. Go for whatever you want. Like, you just have to be standard.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** Nothing less. Like substandard? Nobody wants to be substandard.

**Molly:** This is not a gender question, but I feel like all of the listeners will be angry if I don't ask: How and when you became Carlos "the Rollerblader" specifically?

**Carlos:** Oh, that's, that's a good one. I was given this name, I mean it is an obvious moniker, I think, but I was given it by Brandon Lyons the first night that I went to his open mic at Brody Theater. And I just signed up as "Carlos" because I didn't really know-- I don't, I'm not the kind of person that uses their last name on a lot, so I just put Carlos on the list for the open mic, and I went up, and he sort of stumbled when he introduced me, not stumbled, but he was just like "This is Carlos the... Rollerblader" because I had on my rollerblades at the time 'cause that's how I got there to the thing, and I just didn't take 'em off, I didn't feel like it. And that persisted.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** And that's that.

**Molly:** Now it's your brand! I love it.

**Carlos:** Yep, yep.

**Molly:** Cool. What else about gender and queerness and identity is coming up in your brand right now while we're talking that we should talk about?

**Carlos:** Well, I think, I talk about, you know, to people who aren't genderescent in any way, I talk about--

**Molly:** Wait, what was that word?

**Carlos:** Genderescent.

**Molly:** What does that mean?

**Carlos:** Like, like, what is it a portmanteau of? Like 'gender' and then like, I don't know, 'escent', so like, transient and like light-based.

**Molly:** Gotcha.

**Carlos:** Yeah. Genderescent.

**Molly:** I love this.

**Carlos:** Somewhere in between. So for people who aren't genderescent, I end up talking about what being non-binary means, and I know it means a lot of things for a lot of people--

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Carlos:** --and I can say, for me, it means, it really means, literally being able to pick and choose what I want to. Like I can pick anything from anywhere and sort of just pastiche it together. And that's, that's my gender. That's what I wanna be. I just wanna feel like a walking decoupage, you know? I don't know. That's what feels the best to me. Same with queerness, you know? I wanna just be able to like walk into a room a be like "Oh, I could fuck you, and you, and you, and you" for completely different reasons and in completely different ways, and like, I don't know. With both of these intersecting identities, it kind of just feels like the world is mine. In a good way.

**Molly:** I love that. Alright, well, the way we like to end the show is by asking: What do you think is the future of gender? Or, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender be?

**Carlos:** Complete fluidity. Is that a thing? Is that an answer that you get a lot?

**Molly:** No, but I like it.

**Carlos:** Okay. Yeah, I think that's the future is just like picking up, putting on, doing whatever, or just having nothing.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** Like in that episode of Star Trek.

**Molly:** Right.

**Carlos:** Where it was like, a bunch of no, no-genders. That is a good question. I don't know, I mean, in my perfect world, my gender would be completely fluid, and I would have like both reproductive organs. Like that would be the best possible option. And if everybody had that, then, you know, nobody would-- well, people would fight.

**Molly:** [Laughs].

**Carlos:** I'm sure they'd fight over something. But like, you know, if everybody had the same shit, then...

**Molly:** I love this.

**Carlos:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Great! Alright, well thanks so much for coming on the show!

**Carlos:** No problem. Thank you so much for having me! This was so fun.

[theme music]

**Molly:** That's gonna do it for this week's show! If you're listening in the Apple Podcast app, and you're having a good time, could you please click that five-star rating? It's super easy, and it really does help other people find us.

If you have questions about anything we have or haven't talked about so far, send us those questions at gendereveal@gmail.com or @gendereveal on Twitter! That's Gender Reveal with one 'r'. And we'll get it in a future episode!

And as always, if you want some cool stickers or just wanna support the show, we're patreon.com/gender.

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

Our logo is by the talented Michelle Leigh, and our music is by the legendary Breakmaster Cylinder.

We'll be back next week with another interview, and so until then, have a good time gendering!

[theme music ends]