[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

**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, Tuck Woodstock.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

**Tuck:** Hey everyone. I hope you’ve all been hanging in there. Happy Scorpio season, happy spooky season, happy Fall, happy almost done with the US election...season...

I do not have a new Gender Reveal episode for you today, but I do have some very important and timely announcements, and I also have a really fun bonus episode that I am really excited to share with you.

So. First and foremost, if you have not seen on Twitter or on Instagram or in our Patreon newsletter—which you can get by donating $1 or more at Patreon.com/gender—if you have not seen it yet, we have a new grant program and a new mutual aid program running right now. As you know, we typically do a grant program every fall and every spring. This spring we switched the grant to a mutual aid program and then in the fall I could not decide whether to run a grant program or a mutual aid program, and so I did both and now here we are.

So one of the reasons that we are actually able to do this is that I was able to raise, with the help of y’all, more than $5,000 in one day on Twitter, which is amazing. We did that on Indigenous Peoples Day. And because of that and because of many other reasons, we are making the grant solely for Black and/or Indigenous people who are trans and/or two-spirit. There are 10 grants, they are $400 each, and they’re going to people who are doing rad work and showing up for their communities. So that could be art, that could be organizing, that could be mutual aid, that could be something I haven’t imagined yet. But if you are a Black and/or Indigenous, trans and/or two-spirit person and you’re doing anything cool, you can apply for one of these grants at bit.ly/GR20grant. That is bit.ly/GR20grant.

If you are not doing some sort of art or organizing project but you do need money to live, we are also running a BIPOC mutual aid fund. So if you are not strictly white and are trans or two-spirit, you can apply for $100, no strings attached, no questions asked—I mean technically, there are questions that are asked in the application, but you know what I mean. No receipts needed; we’re just going to hand you $100. So that is at bit.ly/GR20aid. Again, it’s bit.ly/GR20aid. And we’re giving out at least 40 $100 payments. Actually, it’s up to 50 or 60 now. Basically I’m just taking donations on an ongoing basis, so we’re giving out I think at least 50 at this point $100 payments to folx who are applying who are both Black, Indigenous, and/or a person of color and trans.

Both of these applications close on October 31 at 11:59 PM Pacific. So I realize that only gives you a week. I’m sorry for not telling you sooner on the podcast; I’ve been promoting it on the internet instead. But if you hadn’t heard about this, you have one week to apply or you have one week to tell your friends. I’m tempted to summarize again, but you got it—if you didn’t get it you can rewind, you can ask me questions. I’m available via the internet or genderpodcast.com, but please spread the word.

Actually, speaking of genderpodcast.com, there is a new page, genderpodcast.com/grant, that has all this information and a list of all of our past winners because someone asked me about that and I was like, “Oh right, I just never told anyone who won.”

So, whew! Hope you made it through all that. The other big timely piece of news is that we have a bunch of merch that’s about to disappear out of our merch store that is spooky and wonderful and I love it so much. We have a No Says Vampires long-sleeved shirt that’s only up for a couple more days, we have Emma Jane’s Trans Ghouls Unite in sweatshirts now and stickers and other things. We have Gender Is Dead on an even wider variety of sweatshirts and stickers as we did before. Probably other things? I don’t know. You can look at all of it at bit.ly/gendermerch, and all of that stuff is disappearing out of the store in the next week or two. And so if you want any sort of spooky Halloween merch, please check that out as soon as possible. People have been loving it—it’s been amazing how much money we’ve been able to raise for trans organizations like Trans Lifeline through this program, so thank you to everyone who’s bought merch and supported trans artists and amazing orgs in need.

Oh, shit. Hey, hey—one more thing. If you want to support the mutual aid program and help us pay for additional chunks of money to hand out to people, you can do that at Venmo—I’m @Tuck-Woodstock. On Cash App I’m $TuckWoodstock. Or on PayPal, which is linked in the show notes.

So, today, I do not have an episode for you. Season six is in the works. I’m really excited about it, we have interviews done, we have way more interviews booked, it’s going to be amazing. But for right now, nothing’s ready yet. What is ready is my audio colleague, Jeffrey Masters, has done this amazing interview with Laverne Cox. Okay, so it was a few months ago, but we just got our hands on the interview and we get to share it with you, and I am so excited for many reasons. Laverne is a dream and a gift to us all, but also I just want to make sure you know about LGBTQ&A. LGBTQ&A is a wonderful podcast created by The Advocate. If you like Gender Reveal, you will love this show because it is basically the same show, except for there are also cis queer people on it and also everyone is famous. So for example, obviously Laverne Cox has been on it; Rufus Wainwright has been on it; Lili Reinhart from Riverdale was on it on it, that was a big deal; John Cameron Mitchell of Hedwig and the Angry Inch; Roxane Gay; Pete Buttigieg and his husband, both of them, separately; I could go on and on and on as I’m scrolling through. But just check it out. Jeffrey wants to make sure that you know that this show is available on all apps and is free and available to everyone. Anyone can listen to LGBTQ&A, and I recommend that you do it, especially while you are waiting for Gender Reveal to exist.

So with that said, I am thrilled to share this interview with Laverne Cox. I have not listened to it either, so we are going to listen to it together, and I absolutely cannot wait. So sit back, relax, don’t forget to apply for grants or mutual aid, don’t forget to buy spooky gender merch, and we’ll be back real soon about more feelings about gender.

I love you.

[LGBTQ&A theme music fades in]

**Laverne Cox [voice clip]:** Luckily I lived a very full life, before…[laughs]

**Jeffrey Masters:** What does that mean?! Girl!

**LC:** [laughs] I have lived, and I have made my mistakes, and I have made mistakes in the public eye certainly as well, but I had other things I did when I was younger that young people should do. I was a mess, I was a mess, but I’m glad I got to be a mess.

**JM:** Laverne Cox is one of the most recognizable trans people in the world. Maybe ever. She’s an icon. And because of that, I think it’s really easy to forget how different things were in 2013, when Orange Is the New Black first premiered. That was the show that put Laverne on the map and also helped her land the cover of Time Magazine. So today we start off by talking about that Time cover, how prepared or not she felt to suddenly be in the center of the spotlight, and just how much things have changed since then. Because the very same year that Laverne was on the cover of Time, she was also on the cover of our magazine, The Advocate. We declared her the face of the moment. And now, in a really exciting way, Laverne Cox is not the only face of the trans movement. She is one of many.

Now, just to note, this was recorded last fall for Luminary Media, so you will hear Laverne talk about the October 8 Supreme Court case with Amy Stevens: the one debating whether it is legal to discriminate against queer and trans people in the workplace. And as we know now, the Supreme Court ruled in our favour. Holy shit, right? The magnitude and impact of this, especially for those most at the margins of our community, it really can’t be overstated.

All right, let’s get to the interview. From the Advocate Magazine in partnership with GLAAD, I’m Jeffrey Masters, and this is LGBTQ&A.

[LGBTQ&A theme music ends]

JM: Let's jump in. I want to start with your Time magazine cover, if that's okay.

LC: Okay.

JM: In 2014 you were on the cover of Time and the headline said, "The transgender tipping point."

LC: Wow.

JM: I want to know if you knew that that's what the headline was going to be and what your reaction was.

LC: I did not know that that would be the headline. What did I know ahead of time? I knew it was a cover try, so I wasn't 100% sure I would be on the cover. They told me if some news item happened that was really big that I would be bumped from the cover, so I didn't know that the cover was happening until, I think the night before that it was happening for sure. I didn't know what the headline would be. The first time I saw the cover, a friend of mine named Precious Davis, who's a brilliant activist and human being. She lives in Chicago and she texted me a photo of the cover and then it was the editor of Time premiered it on like, I think Good Morning America, one of the morning shows that morning, and then it was ... and I think that certainly changed my life.

JM: Wow. So what was your reaction to the transgender tipping point part of it?

LC: It's hard for me to separate my reaction in 2014 from the subsequent sort of reaction that my community has had to that title. There was so much criticism from my community of that title and the suggestion of that tipping point and criticism of the way the article was written and who was excluded, and there was a lot of that, and what I like about my community and what I appreciate about activists who are on the ground doing the work is that in their honesty, they keep us accountable. They keep us pushing to go further, to be more inclusive, to think differently and harder about who is being left out and what we're not talking about.

LC: So it's hard for me to separate my reaction of the tipping point moment from sort of the criticism and the critical interrogation of that moment. My friend, Jen Richards, we did a panel for Variety magazine a year ago about trans representation in the media and specifically for trans actors, and what she said is that that moment in 2014 was kind of all about Laverne, is the way she framed it, and then she said, post pose, because we're probably in a post posed moment, even though pose is still in the air, it's about all of us, Jen Richards contended, and I like that because I think ... and it was always my goal, and I was very clear in 2014 that that moment with not about me and that it was about a community that I was a part of.

LC: It was about all the activists who had worked for years to create space for me to have that moment on the cover of Time magazine, and so now that is coming to fruition that more of our voices are being elevated and more perspectives and it's taken a lot of pressure off me.

JM: Absolutely.

LC: I felt a lot of pressure in 2014, I got to tell you.

JM: And so reflecting on that moment, do you remember the criticism more than the celebration?

LC: I remember both. The cover was revealed on my birthday, so my birthday now is not only my birthday but it's the anniversary of me being on the cover of Time magazine, which is pretty dope, and I decided that year, I said to myself, "If I'm going to be on the cover of Time magazine, I need to have a party," and if I wasn't going to be on the cover, if I was bumped for any reason, I was like, "Well it could just be a birthday party," and so I had a party that year and Time magazine, they were so generous that they gave us tons of copies of the magazine, and my boyfriend at the time had big posters made of the magazine. I still have a poster of my Time magazine cover in my apartment and I sent one to my mom and then we gave one away for charity.

LC: So we had a party and it was indeed a celebration and there were tons of trans people at the party and some people from Orange Is the New Black were at the party, and so I have fond memories of the celebration of the moment as well, but I think both can exist. I'm all about both and, that I can be in the celebration, then I can also critically reflect on the moment.

JM: Of course, and so that cover, as well as Orange Is the New Black, at that time made you one of the most recognizable trans people in the world. Did you always know going into it that that would also require you to take on this educator role?

LC: No, I certainly didn't know that. I mean when I booked Orange Is the new Black, I just hoped I could get another job from it. I mean in 2012, I just thought I was doing a web series and people weren't really streaming shows. I was just happy to have a job, especially since I owed back rent. So I was just happy to be able to pay my rent, if I'm being honest, but I was clear though, because I had done media work before Orange Is the New Black, is that when I have a platform that I wanted to be able to change the conversation, elevate the conversation about and with trans people, and so I just felt it was my job as a person with a platform to challenge people to think differently about how we talk with and about trans people.

JM: And so I saw that happening, I saw you actively changing the conversation and moving it away from surgeries and the transition to about the other parts of the trans experience that we don't talk enough about. That was you working alone and knowing that that was important and not part of a larger mission?

LC: I never feel like it's alone. I feel like I had a lot of support from my community and came out of an activist community and I had done a reality show in 2008 called, I Want to Work for Diddy, so I had been working with GLAAD for many years and in various capacities. I had been writing for the Huffington Post and going to Albany to talk to legislators about gender, the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act, which took years to pass. I had been going to marches. So I was engaged as an activist in my community. I had gone to the Philadelphia Trans Health Conference and done panels and so I was in my community and so I didn't feel like I was alone doing it. I was certainly the person who was being publicized or the person who had the platform, but I didn't feel alone.

JM: Oh, and you also then felt prepared?

LC: I was prepared. I think the beauty of having my breakthrough moment as an actor, that also coincided with the advocacy work that I was doing, having that breakthrough moment over 40 and after sort of struggling in New York City to be an actor for over 20 years, I was prepared. I was prepared as an artist and I was also prepared as a human being to be able to ... and barely, and can I tell you barely? Because there's nothing that can fully prepare you to be famous and to have people recognize you on the street and all the criticism that comes with that. Nothing can really fully prepare you for that, but I was way more prepared than I would have been 10 years earlier, before the lovely therapist I have now and all the lovely sort of tools and work I've done on myself to build shame resilience, to build trauma resilience, to just be able to exist in the world, in my own skin with a sense of worthiness.

LC: I think we see a lot of young people become famous at fairly young ages and we see them go crazy, and I so get it now. It's really, really hard if you don't know who you are and all of the sudden, the world is telling you who you are. If you do not have a sense already of who you are and then all of the sudden you're famous, I think that's very, very dangerous.

JM: And then they're making mistakes in public, whereas we got to do it in private.

LC: Oh, all the things I did. Oh my goodness. If it were on Instagram, it would be terrible. But yeah, luckily I lived a very full life too before.

JM: What does that mean?

LC: Girl. I've lived and I've made my mistakes and luckily I didn't have to do that, and I've made mistakes in the public eye certainly as well, but all the things that I did when I was younger, that young people should do.

JM: Yeah.

LC: It wasn't publicly, it wasn't on Instagram or on TMZ or whatever, and that's good. I was a mess. I was a mess, but I'm glad I got to be a mess.

JM: It's important to be a mess and have the opportunity to be it.

LC: Absolutely because that's how you learn. I think I've learned more from my "mistakes" than I have from when I've done things well.

JM: I labeled you as an educator helping to educate the public on the trans experience. Do you still find that you're being asked questions in interviews, what is trans? How's it different than being gay and those like 101 level questions?

LC: No. What I'm most excited about now at this stage of my career is I do tons of interviews now and don't even talk about being trans or I'm not asked about it. I'll bring it up because I love being trans and I think it's important to still continue to talk about it, particularly considering what's going on in the world with trans folks. But no, the conversation has shifted. Certainly there are folks who are not on board with this shift in the conversation, and so there's some 101s still happening, but I'm really at a place now in my life ...

LC: I was thinking about this now as I prepare to talk more about the Title VII case that's going to the Supreme Court October 8th and they're amicus briefs that are being sort of submitted to the Supreme Court by folks who think it should be legal to discriminate against the LGBTQ+ community in employment, and they're basically sort of debating the legitimacy of trans people, right? That there's no such thing as being non-binary or trans and I'm just like, "I'm not interested in debating my identity or existence anymore."

LC: At stake with Title VII is really, is it legal to discriminate against LGBTQ people? We actually do exist and the desires to define sex, right? Because the Title VII bans discrimination on the basis of sex and employment, and so the opponents of us having equal rights are basically saying that Title VII does not cover gender identity or sexual orientation and that sex should be defined in this very specific way, and so they're trying to have a conversation about how we define sex, and I don't think that's the issue.

LC: I think the issue is, should it be legal to discriminate against anyone in this country? And I say no. So I'm just done debating my existence. I'm done debating whether trans is real. I'm real. I'm sitting here and I have lived experiences as a woman, as a woman of trans experience, as a black woman and my community does, and so I'm done with that and I know a lot of trans folks are done with that. Now let's get to the place of, we are being discriminated against in ...

LC: Aimee Stephens informed her employer that she was going to be transitioning and returning to work. She wrote a brilliantly beautiful letter. I think the letter ... I read the letter for a friend of mine. There's going to be video of different folks reading the letter coming out soon and she was fired. She was fired simply and her employer does not dispute that he fired her because she said, "I'm coming to work as my authentic self." That should not be legal in the United States of America. We don't need to debate trans existence. We need to say that we shouldn't be discriminating against people because of who they are.

JM: And that's the case going for the Supreme Court in October.

LC: October 8th, yes. Aimee Stephens case and two other cases of two gay men who were also fired from their jobs simply for being gay.

JM: For all the work we still have to do, I think that one of the victories of the movement is that trans people used to be told, you transition and then you go like live stealth. You never reveal you transitioned and that no longer is the only prescription.

LC: No, no, no, not at all. I mean in 1998, when I started my medical transition, that was what I wanted to do. That's what the women I admired and were inspired to transition, the women who inspired me to transition, that's what they did. That's what you were supposed to do, but that wasn't an option for me. I never blended in. I was never ... I would always enter spaces and someone would know I was trans and so I had to get to a point where I was comfortable with people knowing that was trans. I had to get to a point where I was comfortable owning my transness. Trans is beautiful came out of that in part me. This effort for me to be able to say to myself and say to the world, "I'm trans and that's beautiful and there's nothing wrong with that and I should not be denied a job for that. I should not be denied love and access because I'm trans."

JM: And with these safety issues that come with being trans, you have a different sort of trans visibility now as a celebrity who's known for being trans. Does that make you a bigger target or does that give you protection?

LC: Both and. I think I have to be really, really careful what I do and say, and even I have these ... I'm feeling very free in this interview and I have my like, "Oh, did I say something I shouldn't have said that could negatively impact my community?" Those are the things I'm constantly thinking about, and so because if Laverne does it, then it's like, it can reflect badly on my entire community, and that is a pressure that is real. So yes, I am a target in that way. I've been very blessed, knock on wood, that there's just been so much love in my life as I travel and as I work on different sets and in different countries, that so far there has been ... It's just been a lot of love, and so I feel very, very blessed and I'm someone who has felt physically unsafe most of my life. Lots of childhood trauma around physical assault, sexual assault, walking the streets of New York as a recognizably trans person. A lot of danger that I've been in most of my life, and so safety is something that I think is contextual.

LC: I think sometimes it's in our heads, sometimes it's circumstantial. The trauma of what I've experienced throughout my life doesn't magically go away because I'm a recognizable actress now. So there's trauma there that I still have to sort of work to build resilience around and I'm still super careful. I'm always looking around me when I'm walking on the street, you know? I'm just programmed as a New Yorker, I think, to sort of just always be hyperaware and hypervigilant of my surroundings.

JM: So if someone's coming at you, you have to figure out, is this person coming to attack me or are they my biggest fan?

LC: I've had moments very early on when I was beginning to be recognized more, Orange Is the New Black. There was that definitely. This was like 2013 and I was not used to being recognized on the street, but I was used to being called out on the street, misgendered, assaulted on the street, verbally and physically, and so when strangers would run up to me on the street in the beginning ... Actually, it's still ... It's scary. It scares the bejesus out of me. I was walking on 14th Street once, I was leaving one of the wig stores on 14th Street, because you know a girl's got to get her bundles and all of the sudden I felt this person running up behind me, screaming, and then she grabbed me and I started screaming and I started running, and it was just so instinctive.

LC: It's the fight, flight or freeze thing, and so then I would ... and then she was like, "I love you," as I'm running away from her, and I was just so scared and even now, I'm just thinking like this was this fan who loved the work and I'm like running from her on the street because someone just ran up on me on 14th Street in New York, and like when that has happened to me before, oh my goodness. It just even brings up a lot of emotion for me now. So that is the thing that I don't know if my fans always understand that I don't always feel safe.

LC: I remember I went to ... I could have a bazillion of these stories. I don't need to tell you another one, but there have been many situations that I've been in where I've just kind of felt a little traumatized because crowds scare me and just, there's a whole history of me not really being safe in my life. So these are things I have to work on and I have a great therapist, but then I have to ... I don't know. It's a process with all that stuff.

JM: And so you've said that you were harassed on the street in New York City every day living there?

LC: Yeah. Oh yeah.

JM: Did that only change when you started becoming famous?

LC: Well, it didn't change when I became famous. I remember I was going to a hotel bar to be interviewed for ... I was on the cover of this magazine called Bustle in 2015 and as I entered the hotel, someone called me a man as I was entering the hotel. So I was like sort of called out. I was being called a man and like, screw this guy screaming. When people do this to trans people, it's not like, "That's a man." It's like not a whisper. It's like they scream it and they want everybody to sort of know within like a five mile radius and then people start looking and then there's not just, "That's a man," it's like, "Get the F out of here." It's like I'm walking into a hotel. There's this whole sort of becomes like ... Because I'm walking on the street, it often becomes this thing of like, "Get the F out of here."

LC: I'm like, "I'm walking on the street." It's like they want me not to be walking down the street as myself, like trying to get from point A to point B. It's like, "Get the F out of here," and I mean, so it's like not just the misgendering, it's the demeaning, you should not exist on this street corner, kind of thing, and so I'm going to be interviewed for a cover story for a magazine and being harassed and misgendered as I go in. So yeah, I mean I have my incognegro look when I travel now, which helps. But yeah, it still happens.

JM: That's wild.

LC: Yeah. Can I tell you though, what is so wonderful when I don't feel like my safety is threatened, that I'm just like, "Bless your heart." You know? If I don't feel that I'm in danger, I'm just able to say, "Bless their hearts," and I pray for them because that's clearly not about me. It's about them. I think when I don't feel safe, then it's a different issue and there's trans people out there right now who experience that and are not safe when it happens, and so we ... I don't know what we begin to do to make it safer for trans.

LC: I mean I've been talking about this for years, we've been sort of experiencing the murders or trans people, particularly trans women of color, for years in record numbers and trans folks are saying, "Stop killing us." And I don't really know what we can begin to do as a culture to stop the violence against trans people and that is very disturbing and honestly, that's what makes me so excited about ... I'm going to do my pivot. That's why I'm so excited to be working with RED and BAND-AID because so often, I feel so powerless.

LC: There's so many things going on in the world that are just so frustrating and it's just ... I feel at a loss and I think a lot of people feel at a loss but with RED and with BAND-AID, you can buy the RED BAND-AIDs at your CVS store and 20 cents of every purchase will go to a day's worth of life saving medications for people who are living with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa. That is something concrete we can do to change the lives of people who are living with HIV, to stop the transmission of HIV from a mother to her unborn child. They do such incredible work with education and prevention, and so it's like, this is something we can do right now. We can go to CVS and buy some BAND-AIDs and make a difference. Buy the RED BAND-AIDs, and so that's really dope. I think that's really incredible, and I'm just so excited to be a part of this.

JM: And I think it's amazing that it's you who ... Your identity is you're a black trans woman and the black community is still incredibly hard hit by HIV and the trans community.

LC: Absolutely. I just recently discovered that it's the number one killer of people between 18 and ... between 15 and 28 years old. Globally, HIV is still the number one killer, right? When it's preventable, and so what ... There's so much work that we can still be ... I think part of that is access, right? So that we need to make sure that people are getting access, and that's what RED does with the global fund, right? Making sure people have access to prevention and treatment if you become HIV positive, and then I think it's the stigma too that we still have to address.

LC: A dear friend of mine who passed away from ... I don't want to cry. Oh gosh. Anyway, a dear friend of mine who passed away from HIV, AIDS, they didn't get treatment because no one knew that they were HIV positive. They didn't want to tell anybody because of the stigma and the shame and they could still be alive if it weren't for that stigma, and so we've got to let go of the stigma. We really do. I have such incredible friends who are living with HIV, who are undetectable and living these incredible lives because they have access to medication and I want to celebrate those friends. That's another reason I wanted to partner with BAND-AId and RED, to celebrate all my friends who are HIV positive, the members of my community who are so resilient and amazing and strong in the face of this stigma and just continue to let people know that you don't have to die from HIV and AIDS anymore.

LC: It need not be a death sentence but folks just need access to medication, and that's what RED is doing, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, but that is a conversation that we need to be having more of here. We need to lift the stigma of HIV, AIDS. It's not a death sentence. We can actually work to end AIDS. We can work to end it, which is incredible.

JM: And we have proof of that with cities like San Francisco, which is on track to have zero new transmissions, and I think it's so glaring that this is a predominantly white gay city compared to Sub-Saharan Africa, which is a more marginalized people.

LC: Yeah and so the work around communities of color, the work for my trans community, and I think it's really tricky for trans folks because a lot of our partners don't necessarily identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community, right? So there's a whole different kind of conversation that we need to be having around safety as trans folks and trans people of color, particularly because our partners ... It's a whole other kind of conversation. I've had friends who were ... I have friends who are trans and then they are dating people who may or may not know that they're trans and then are not concerned about condom use when they don't know the person is trans, but then they find out the person is trans and then all of a sudden the condom use comes up, and so there becomes a stigma around being trans and the assumptions that we make around HIV status.

LC: So there's still a lot of education that we need to have around these issues, and I'm here for that and I'm here to just let everybody know that you can make a difference, and by purchasing RED BAND-AIDs today and it's in Sub-Saharan Africa and then we can begin to destigmatize this health crisis.

JM: I think it's really good for people to hear that Laverne Cox, who has this label, transgender icon attached to her also is ... It's true. It's true. You know it's true. That she's also dealing with the trauma of her community and the trauma of her past in New York City and everything. That doesn't go away.

LC: No and I think too, I've been doing a lot of work to heal from when I sort of went through puberty and was coming to age around my own sexuality, AIDS was a reality, and so AIDS has been a reality my entire sexual life, and so for many years, because I grew up religious and I internalized so much transphobia and homophobia, I associated it with sex, with getting AIDS and dying, and so there was so much shame and stigma attached, and so to do the work to sort of separate those things has been work. It's been lot of therapy.

LC: Luckily, being with partners who have been healing around all that and so not having a stigma attached to ... I think a lot of LGBT people, maybe not now as much, maybe [inaudible 00:24:12] my age group. Hopefully fewer LGBTQ people are growing up with this sort of stigma around their sexuality, but I grew up with a lot of that that I've had to do a lot of work to unlearn and so it just ... It's just very special for me to get to be here today and encourage people to band together. Hashtag band together. If you want to go on your social media once you get your RED BAND-AIDs from CVS and like you know, post a picture of you with the BAND-AID, I'm going to be doing it and with hashtag band together and show your support and encourage other people to do it as well.

LC: I think it's a very exciting thing to lift stigma, to let everyone know that you can make a difference. You can make a difference and I think ... I know I need to feel that right now and I think a lot of us do because we feel powerless, but we're not powerless. We can actually make a difference in this AIDS epidemic. We can do something right now.

JM: I agree. One more question-

LC: Yes.

JM: -before I let it go. You've done so much. You're still young. What do you have left to do?

LC: Oh my God, there's so much. So much activist work that has to be done and I'm really in partnership with folks on the ground doing that work. I have yet to have something scripted that I produce on the air. We're in the process of ... We have some stuff in development and we'll see. So I want to be a producer in the scripted capacity. I've produced documentaries and have a Daytime Emmy for a documentary I produced, and so yeah, producing scripted projects as a vehicle for myself as an actor and for other actors. I want to do Broadway eventually when the right role comes along.

JM: You surprised me because I saw you sing about a year ago at something that Our Lady J produced and you sing opera?

LC: Yes.

JM: I don't know if people know that you're an opera singer.

LC: I feel like an opera singer in training. I was just at a voice lesson yesterday with ... I just have got a new teacher here in LA because it's just one of the things I do, I'd say for fun, but yesterday's lesson was not fun because my teacher is trying to get me out of a lot of old bad habits, that it's just time to let go of. So singing opera is really, really hard.

JM: It looks like it.

LC: It's insanely hard, but it's fun to have a challenge, and so I look forward to continuing to be challenged by the work that I do with my opera singing hobby, but also my work as an actor. I want to get better, and so I have a wonderful coach here, and there's some wonderful roles coming up that are going to require a lot of me and I'm looking forward to rising to the occasion and getting better at what I do, and so I think ultimately that is what ... I mean, I want to get some shows on the air and produce things, but I just want to get better at everything, and so that is a tremendous amount of work and discipline, so I need to become more disciplined as well.

JM: That's an amazing place to leave it on. Thank you.

LC: Thank you.

[LGBTQ&A theme music starts]

**JM:** And that was Laverne Cox. You can see her narrating the documentary Disclosure on Netflix, which she also executive produced. Last week we talked to Sam Fader, the film’s director, so make sure you check that out. And if you’ve not yet, please subscribe to this podcast and help us spread the word. Doing things like that by posting things on Twitter, or Instagram, even Facebook—remember Facebook? Doing things like that really are some of the biggest ways you can help our show grow, so thank you so much to everyone who does that.

We are produced by Advocate Magazine in partnership with GLAAD. I’m Jeffrey Masters and I’ll see you next week. Bye!

[LGBTQ&A theme music ends]

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

**Tuck:** That’s going to do it for this week’s bonus episode. I just wanted to remind you that our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder, our logo is by the talented Ira M. Leigh, and that’s it! The rest of the show is normally made by me. This week it was made by Jeffrey Masters and The Advocate. So...have a good week. See you soon. Bye!

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]