*[music plays]*

**Molly:** Welcome to Gender Reveal, a podcast where we ask intrusive personal questions, and hopefully get a little closer to understanding what the hell gender is. I am your host and resident gender detective, Molly Woodstock.

*[music plays and then stops]*

**Molly:** Hey, everyone. Hope you’re hanging in there. This week on the show we chat with Grover from the Masculine Birth Ritual Podcast about coming to peace with she/her pronouns, experiencing homelessness and studying homelessness, and being pregnant, giving birth, and raising children as a transmasculine butch. But first, just a quick reminder that this show literally would not be possible without y’all telling your friends about the show, tweeting and posting on Instagram about the show, supporting us on Patreon, donating via PayPal or CashApp, submitting Theymail messages, sending us your gender questions, writing reviews for the show on iTunes - shout out to Jess for writing one of my favorite reviews of all time recently - and of course subscribing to the darn show and listening to it every week! I just want you to know that it really does make all the difference in the world and I love and appreciate you so, so much. Special shout out to everyone who has written to tell me that this podcast made you trans - I love you the most. And with that, it is time for “This Week in Gender”.

*[news music plays]*

**Molly:** Last week in gender, we talked about which US states allow nonbinary gender markers on driver’s licenses and birth certificates. This week, I wanted to talk about the *other* hundred and ninety something countries in the world. I am just going to talk about the specific countries that have third gender options because otherwise we would be here all day and night. Just disclaimer that researching a hundred and ninety something countries is really difficult to do, not least because a lot of resources are only written in languages that I can’t read, so if I leave out any country that has some sort of third gender or sex marker, or if I get something wrong, please, please, please, please let me know. In the meantime, this is what I’ve got!

*[soft music in background]*

**Molly:**

Bangledesh recognized *hijra* specifically as a third gender in 2013, and folx can identify as such on passports, ID cards, and voter rolls.

In Canada, you can get an X on your passport, although someone in our Gender Reveal Slack group said that actually you still get a binary marker, but then on the next page you get a special observation that reads “the sex of the bearer should be read as ‘X’ indicating that it is unspecified” so, I don’t know about that. The Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador, all those places allow X’s on birth certificates; Prince Edward Island offers X options on drivers licenses; and Alberta and Ontario allows X’s on all documents.

Denmark - trans folx can apply for an X on international passports.

In India, the Supreme Court of India asked in 2014 that government documents like passports and voter ID cards have options either ‘TG’ for ‘Third Gender’ or ‘T’ for ‘Transgender’. What I have written is just that it was asked, but, uh, I’m pretty sure they followed through and made that happen.

Anyway, Malta, which is a country that I have never really thought much about, apparently has some of the best protections for intersex folx in the entire world. They also have an X option on their ID cards and passports to anyone who wants one and has since late 2017.

In Nepal, a 2007 Supreme Court case ruled that gender designation should be based on “self-feeling”. In 2011, there was a national census that included a third gender option, and in 2015, Nepal started offering an ‘O’ for ‘Other’ on passports. Way to go, Nepal!

The Netherlands issued its first X marker passport late last year.

In New Zealand, gender markers on birth certificates, passports, and driver’s licenses are all self-determined, with X as an option.

Pakistan has been offering a third gender option on national ID cards since 2009. Good job, Pakistan.

Uruguay passed a new law in October that allowed folx to self determine their genders, including nonbinary genders. Honestly, we should spend a whole episode on Uruguay’s new trans law because it’s wild and kind of amazing. So, remind me to do that next week, I guess?

Okay, now to the two places that are more troubling than it first appeared:

In Australia, you can apply for passports but the internet says that you need a doctor’s note that you’re “of indeterminate sex or intersex” which seems somewhat limiting. There has been some talk of removing gender from Australian passports entirely, but apparently the Prime Minister is a huge transphobe who hates this idea.

And finally, I have heard so much about Germany offering a gender neutral ‘X’ marker on passports and what-not, but I learned on the internet that Germans are only allowed to access those options if they’re declared medically intersex.

Honestly, I spent so much time researching about all these countries because I really wanted to clarify that everywhere else, you can access this not just if you’re intersex but if you’re nonbinary, because there seems to be a huge difference in the way that certain countries are treating nonbinary and intersex folx. There was one country in Latin America, I forget, that had like really, really progressive binary transgender laws, but really, really awful intersex laws, so there seems to be a really wide spectrum on where every country is about protections and rights for binary trans people, protections and rights for nonbinary people, protections and rights for intersex people, and also protections and rights for cis queers.

So, again, I’m sure I left out a bunch of stuff, uh, please let me know anything you know about all of these topics. I’m sorry I didn’t have time to talk about more binary transgender rights, but boy howdy, are there a lot of countries out there.

This has been “This Week in Gender”.

*[news music plays, followed by interlude theme music, over which Molly speaks]*

**Molly:** Grover Wehman-Brown is a butch parent to two small kids. She’s a writer, liberation seeker, and host of a new podcast called Masculine Birth Ritual.

*[music stops]*

**Molly:** In terms of gender, how do you identify?

**Grover:** I identify as a transmasculine butch.

**Molly**: And what pronouns do you use?

**Grover:** I use she/her or they/them pronouns.

**Molly:** I would love to hear what ‘butch’ means to you.

**Grover:**  So, I think of butch as a queer masculinity that is attached to a particular cultural tradition in the US, and I think I’d say, associated with like AFAB queers, back in a time before either of those words were used.

**Molly:**  Totally. Uhm, you say Leslie Feinberg is a source of inspiration or insight into your own identity, and I know that some folx may not know who that is, and I was wondering if you could talk about that person and the influence on you.

**Grover:** Yea, I’ve been sitting a lot lately with Leslie Feinberg as an ancestor and as, like, a person that I actually had, like, met, and been in space with, and Leslie Feinberg is a white, working-class-raised adult from Buffalo, New York, who wrote the book Stone Butch Blues and she was a communist, and an organizer, and an activist, and she was like a model of queer and trans masculinity - she also wrote the book, what is that book called? I’m trying to -

**Molly:** *[overlapping]* “Transgender Warriors?” Uh...

**Grover:**  Yea, the book “Transgender Warriors” right, that’s trying to do, like non-academic work, like, she was never inside of an academic institution. She was, like, a public intellectual working-class person who put out a book about transgender legacies. So the way in which she articulated her gender within a wide cultural and political context and legacy that changed throughout her life, right, like what it meant when she came out as a person who desires women as partners, and as a person who has a nonnormative gender, the language that was at her hands was so different than what we have now, and then her clarity in writing about how she was positioned in queer and transness as queer and transness moved around her.

**Molly:** I realized I should back up because you mentioned that you are transmasculine and that you use she/her pronouns, and I realize there might be some folx who were confused by that or curious about that, so I was wondering if you had anything to say about that decision and those seemingly...I don’t know, two identities that are somewhat in tension.

**Grover:** Yea, I personally don’t find those two identities in tension, and also I understand why people would feel like they were in tension, or feel tense when they hear those words together. So, I think of butch as a masculinity which for me is attached to female-ness or womanhood, but not essentially. Does that make sense? Like there’s butch trans women. Like so I’m not saying that it’s only an AFAB identity but it’s like butchness that touches - that has touched - womanhood at some point, uhm, is a political category, and that feels connected to this tradition that I spoke of, right? So like, butch might be how my gender is expressed, and how I feel in terms of my identity and cultural tradition, but like my political experience and embodied experience of being in the world right now is transmasculine in that I had an experience of being gendered in a certain way when I was younger that chafed with my own sense of self so much so that I never could adhere to that gender expectation of girlhood or young womanhood in any kind of way that allowed me to pass sort of within bounds, and then in understanding my own self within that system, and my own body within that system, it’s true that I have bodily gender dysphoria, and I have taken steps in my life to try to like find the best way to live between how I feel in myself, how others perceive me, and the political conditions of how the world interacts with me. So I had a period where I considered various surgeries and hormones and I took steps that I consider transitioning, which were name changes and changes in the words that I, like, asked people to use for me, and at times that did include pronoun changes, like I went by ‘he’ for a while and by like ‘he/she’ alternating for a while, and at one point, I had, like, this poster hanging from my wall of our house that I was living with with my two trans friends. We were this little house of cuties, and I hung this poster on the wall that was like, “These are the pronouns I want to be called. I want 30% she, 30% he, and like, 40% they” and they were like, “Oh, that’s cute, that’s cute, we’re gonna try, but, also that’s a lot.” *[laughs]* Like, it’s a lot to have to try to adhere to a pronoun sequence. Uhm, so it’s, it’s like, I’ve always had the same embodiment, I’ve always had the same gender, my experience is being like, how do I figure out how to navigate socially and politically with what I have and what I’m working with? There’s no ease in dwelling in womanhood. Like womanhood is a category that I feel like I don’t escape unless I change my ex-... my external expression, or that I’m constantly, like, how do I say - at some point in this like hanging this poster on the wall with different percentages, I, like, had this experience - a couple of experiences - that led me to using she pronouns, which were that I was, like, asking my friends to call me “he” or “he and she” alternating, and what was actually happening was that people who were really invested in me being a trans man, would call me he all the time, and people who were really invested in me being a non-trans-spectrumed lesbian would call me she all the time. And out in the world, like, just, like, regular straight people strangers would call me she most of the time. And I just felt like I had no agency, really, even though I was telling people my pronoun preferences, and also that, like - basically, like, every time that someone called me “she” when I wanted to be called “he”, it chafed me, or it hurt me, right, inside, and then I would travel home to where I grew up in the rural Midwest in a working class town and I would see, like, rural lesbians who raised me and, you know, rural straight people who loved me but did not understand what to do with me, and like I felt like, like if I wanted to connect with people, and not change my body, so that I had a beard or uhm could pass, that like I could either stand there having this linguistic fight with them, or I could find a way that the pronoun “she”, I could hear it and it could just rest on me, like “Yea, -

**Molly:** Mhmm

**Grover:** “- “she” is a pronoun, it’s just a word in a sentence and your body can be part of that.” And like I can still be as masculine embodied, not necessarily comfortably a “woman”, right, in some essential way, and move through the world. And so deciding to just say, “Hi, my name’s Grover, my pronouns are she/her, the way I’d like you to talk about me is like mister, sir, guy, gent.” Right? Like, for me, I just like realized that the obsession with pronouns hurt me more than helped and that what actually felt the most, uhm, clear about my gender identity were these other words, and that, like, I didn’t ever feel like “Yes, I’m deeply he” or “Yes, I’m deeply they” or “Yes, I’m deeply she”. But I do feel like, if someone calls me “buddy” and we’re friends, like, that feels good. And, if somebody says, “Excuse me, sir” that makes sense to me. So really, like, like, just like, letting go of attachment of how the pronouns felt, really, was really helpful in my own gender transition because then I could ask for different terms of engagement.

**Molly:** You make a podcast called “Masculine Birth Ritual” and I’m wondering if you could tell me about your own experiences that inspired you to make this podcast specifically.

**Grover:** Sure. Well I have 2 kids. One of them I did not birth, my wife gave birth to her 5 and a half years ago, and the other one I did birth 3 and a half years ago. I was, like, never called to be pregnant, like, “Yes, my body deeply desires that experience,” but I was just more game to do it. Like, I was like, I was given these body parts, they have in some ways plagued me, up until recently, uhm, in terms of how I felt about having them. But they are in fact useful and I think it’s interesting to think about growing a human that will share my genetics and I am really interested in “Even Steven,” as I call it, like division of labor, and my wife is the primary incomer for our family, so it was rough on us when she had the baby and had to go right back to work the first time. So I was like, let’s do it, I’ll do it, I’m up for this. And so I got pregnant quickly, and then I had a really hard pregnancy, beyond what I imagined was possible and a very traumatic birth, and as part of my birth that included like a really serious health complication, which is called peripartum cardiomyopathy, which is pregnancy induced heart failure -

**Molly:** Oh no!

**Grover:** - yea, I was sent to the ICU alone without my baby, and there, while in the ICU alone, I had a transphobic nurse that, *[Molly gasps]* like, literally, like, tortured me through, like, negligence and active harm - like, actively, like, asking me, like, “Which is more comfortable for you, this or this?” and then doing the less comfortable thing -

**Molly:** *[faded]* Oh my God…

**Grover:** or, “Excuse me, I’m experiencing, like, so much pain, I’m crying because I’m in so much pain because you put this needle in wrong, will you please call somebody else to reset it?” “No.” Like, you know, it just like went on and on and on and on and then I thought it was just, uhm, normal cruelty that happens in medical industry until something happened with an interaction with another professional and s- and she like with glee interrupted her and was like “She’s a transgender! She’s a transgender! She’s had the surgery! She’s a transgender!” And like, it all fell into place for me, that like that what I walked around with fearing all the time was like happening.

Once I healed from that birth, which is actually still in process, but like once a couple years went on, I just still felt, like, really the nagging feeling that my experience in preparing for the birth was so one of not having access to representations or resources of non-feminine people giving birth and having pregnancies. And there was like, you know, there’s these subcultures of, like, if you know somebody who knows the right person you can get into, like, a pregnant masculine-of-center Facebook group where you could be like, “What do you do about clothes?” and, “What was your plan to get your, like, people in the hospital to not call you mom?” and stuff like that, but they’re just these very underground whisper networks and I just felt to myself like, I had this really intense, very gendered story and experience about my birth, and a lot of it was about not having access to resources and representations, and so I don’t actually want that to happen to other people, like, I want that to end now, and like, I wish that existed for me, and it’s my job as a queer that’s grown old to make space for the people that come after me.

**Molly:** I have many follow up questions, but did you ever find anyone else in the hospital at that time that was able to advocate for you or was it just this transphobic nurse ruining your whole life?

**Grover:** So what happened is that I had been planning for a home birth and then wasn’t able to have one because of all these medical complications, but when you pay, cuz you have to pay in advance for, like, a homebirth midwife - which is why you all should fund your friends’ homebirth midwife funds *[Molly laughs]* when they happen on GoFundMe - so if you pay for a homebirth midwife and you are not al- able to have a homebirth, the midwife will often switch into the doula role at the hospital. And so she had been on my support team until the baby was born and then she had gone home, and so when this started happening, once I got back to my room and had access to my phone again, I texted my wife who was downstairs in the delivery, like, recovery area with the baby still but she wasn’t allowed to be up in ICU because babies aren’t allowed in ICU, and told her what was happening, and she called our midwife who drove an hour from where she was to the hospital and she was like a magical witch like with fury at her back coming into this ICU unit and having like very terse conversations with the nurse manager, and, like, very quickly I was moved off that floor because I was, like, terrified this nurse was about to go off shift, I was terrified she was going to come back the next night and it was just going to be 12 solid hours of horridness as I was trying to stay alive. Like, really, I was having heart failure, I just had a C-section, I had hemorrhaged, I was very sick.

**Molly:** Yea. What would you suggest for other masculine-of-center folx who are going through the experience of pregnancy and giving birth? Would you recommend that they have an advocate paired with them, or do you have any other advice to sort of avoid that horrible discrimination that you faced?

**Grover:** I would say have an advocate or two with you, cuz in this case my wife was with me, but once the baby was there, she was with the baby, and so, like, this wouldn’t have happened if I wasn’t alone, but it was literally, like, the only time I was alone in the hospital up until that point. It was the first time. There’s a lot of things you could do before birth to try to, like, be in as affirming of a space as possible and there’s, you know, resources out there about how to do that but that’s about, like, paying for a doula, if you can, or- and interviewing the staff in the OB clinic where you’re about to give birth and asking proactive questions and having someone be there to re-educate every nurse that comes on shift and every doctor that’s going to come in the door about what your parenting name is, what your pronouns are, and what is and is not going to happen in your room. So, people should always have that person, whether it’s a friend or doula. Other than that, like, we just really need a massive shift in like public health and standards for medical professionals.

**Molly:** You mentioned that there wasn’t a lot of representation of masculine-of-center folx giving birth. Other than your podcast which is obviously a very valuable resource, do you know of any other folx that are publicly accessible that aren’t these, like, whisper networks of Facebook groups that people might be able to access?

**Grover:** Yea, when I was pregnant, the, uhm, episode of “The Longest Shortest Time” came out with Tristan and Biff where Tristan got pregnant. Cuz they had had a lot of episodes that were about adoption and then Tristan got pregnant.

**Molly:** Yup!

**Grover:** So that was great. It was great to listen to and it was, like, great, like, he’s so positive and, like, fairly joyful, you know? Like it was a lovely model to have and then also right before - right when I was pregnant the graphic memoir “Pregnant Butch” came out, and so that was also nice to have something at hand and able to read. So those are two things. But, those are two very small things *[chuckles]* and I feel like we need a lot more. And one thing that people often do when they prepare for pregnancy is they read birth stories, they watch birth videos, and those we are really lacking in.

**Molly:** So you gave birth, you have two kids. Uhm, now that you have the kids, uh, I’m wondering what the biggest challenges are that you’ve faced as a masculine-of-center parent who is not a cis dude.

**Grover:** Hehe. Hoo. The number one challenge that I face? Employment. *[laughs]*

**Molly:** Mhmm. Fair.

**Grover:** *[still laughing]* You know? Like, I mean the, the like, simplest answer is like I-I really hate trying to get other parents and teachers trying to use my parental name which is Bubba and that’s, like, an endless fight. And like, every new school we go to we have to educate and like, sometimes we do constant education and correction all year long and like, a teacher still cannot interact with me in any kind of chill way that appropriately uses my name which is Bubba. Like, I had one of my kids teachers started just calling me Bubba instead of my name, like “Hey, Bubba!” And like, you don’t say that to like, moms walking by, like “Hey Mama!” That would be inappropriate! *[chuckles]* Right? So -

**Molly:** Yea. So just to clarify for our listeners - like, instead of Mom or Dad or any of those terms you use Bubba.

**Grover:** Right.

**Molly:** Great.

**Grover:** Right. But really like one thing that is true about parenting world is that it is so gendered in a way that it is one of the areas of life that exceeds anything that we wish out of identity. It’s like deeply political and economic and spatial.

**Molly:** Mhmm.

**Grover:** So, like, there’s dad spaces and there’s mom spaces, and even though people are slowly trying to break that down, and trying to whittle it away, like there’s very few stay at home dads, and when there are stay at home dads, there’s not robust public cultures of them at playgrounds, you know supporting each other and hanging out, but even when there’s those, there’s not that many for gender queer. Like, I experience some pretty significant depression entering this parental phase of my life, because I was just like in - in order to interact with other parents, I just had to weather a constant onslaught of microaggressions and just, like, talking to people about, like, shit I just did not want to be talking about in order to find my people, like, and the people I wanted to parent alongside or that were just, like, home with their babies at the same time I was. And then in a lot of communities it’s set up for moms to basically be -and women-to be stay at home or part-time earners so I’m having this weird experience of now, like, after being home with my kids and after I got my PhD while I was home with my kids, uhm, having a hard time reentering the job market and feeling really, like, you know, like, I can’t go out and network every night because I’m home with my kids and I don’t have a, like, mom’s network that I can work real hard with, so basically that gender pay gap that happens when children are born, is, like, there’s no data for it - although I would love somebody to do that study - but it feels, like, extra impactful. Like, there’s very few on-ramps off of the stay at home parent slump back into the job market when you’re not a dad, and you’re not a mom.

**Molly:** Yea! So you mentioned what your kids call you which is something I was going to ask cuz it’s something that people have asked about on our show before, Uh, but I’m wondering about how more broadly you talk to your kids about gender.

**Grover:** Well, it depends on what ages they are. When our daughter - our first daughter was born, we never used words and we still don’t in our house, unless they use them, use words like girl and boy. Like we don’t say “Go to that little girl over there!” or “Go to that little boy!” or “You’re a good girl!” or whatever. We don’t use that language. And the language we use about ourselves - my wife is a cisgender femme - and the language we use about ourselves are just our parental names. Like, “Go to Mama” or “Bubba’s going to do this for you.” Yea, and when our daughter came home starting to have the very developmentally normal gender binary language that she was learning on the playground or whatever, we tried to take the approach of, like, curiosity, of like, “You said she looks like a girl. What does a girl look like?”

**Molly:** Mhmm.

**Grover:** “Huh. Okay. But wait, you’re a girl and you don’t only wear pink.” Or, whatever, you know, like, just asking critical questions -

**Molly:** Yup.

**Grover:** - and also I’ll say that there’s, like, ways in which my kids, especially my older one, is resistant to that. And that I’ve seen her what looks to me, like, go hard for the gender binary *[laughs]* and it’s clarity. Like, I’m having to more proactively get a little bit fierce and clear with her about, like, “That friend uses they/them pronouns,” and then, you know, she’ll be like, “Yea but they’re really a girl.”

**Molly:** Oof!

**Grover:** And I’ll be like, “No that’s not actually how that works. Like, not everybody’s a girl or boy, and that person identifies as genderqueer, and they use they/them pronouns and it actually doesn’t matter what you think. Your job as a person is to respect them by using those words. So in our house you’re going to use those words.” You know, like, like, having to get a little more fierce. Cuz like, that, that hasn’t been a priority for her. And I - you know, it could be that she’s rebelling, uhm, or just that developmentally that’s where she’s at, but at the same time, you need to respect the people who you are in community with, right? So.

**Molly:** Yea. Definitely. I was thinking about the fact that you grew up in a very working class area. Is that correct?

**Grover:** Mhmm.

**Molly:** So, uh, I’m wondering if you have advice for ways that queer and genderqueer people can go into spaces where people maybe aren’t familiar with these concepts in a way that doesn’t feel like we’re judging those people for not knowing these concepts? Does that make sense as a question?

**Grover:** Yea, it makes sense as a question. I don’t know that I have answers -

**Molly:** That’s fine.

**Grover:** -in terms of language. I guess, I’ll say this: I’ve been out for twenty years. I came out in rural Ohio. I like, I do like social justice organizing work, and have for a while, and so, like, I think often in terms of, like, strategy and what kind of impact you want to have, I think is important to the question that you’re asking. So it’s, like, if your goal is to, like, go home and live there, right, like, there’s one standard of how you need to the world to reflect yourself back to you, and, like, if your goal is to, like, go teach a three day workshop of people who want to hear you, that’s another thing, or if your goal is that you’re, like, canvassing for a candidate, that’s a whole other thing. Right? Cuz it’s just like, one day, you may never see these people again. Right? So I find people from the community I come from are most receptive to me asserting what I need from them in terms of my gender when I, like, hear what they’re saying, I try not to let it hit me to hard, right. Like, I try to let it glance off of me instead of, like, having it bounce off of me and back at them with as much impact as I felt it with, and then come back to them with, like, constant carrots, like in the carrot and stick metaphor, of like, “Yea cool, I would love to go out to dinner with you, but, in order for me to be comfortable with doing that I would really like it if you told your friends what my name is that I use cuz I just actually don’t want them calling me my birth name the whole time. So if you’re willing to do that, I’ll go with you, and if not, you should go without me.” Like, does that make sense?

**Molly:** Oh it makes a ton of sense, yea.

**Grover:** So, like, I mean, the result is sadly that, like, I don’t often go home, I don’t live where I grew up, I’m not organizing my communities in rural Ohio. I live in a bubble town.

**Molly:** Mhmm.

**Grover:** *[sighs]* I find myself, like, if I’m going into places where I know that I often won’t be seen, I, like, have to tell myself this is for x amount of time, I can try to, like, get people on board as much as possible and I also just need to understand this is going to be exhausting, it’s going to feel a bit like crap, and soon I will get to go back to the place where I can feel seen and whole again. So it’s like a harm reduction model and, like, I struggle with, like, how much I push myself to be in spaces where - which for me are right now is a lot of parenting spaces where it’s like, “Do I join my kids’ PTA?” “Do I coach my kids’ soccer team?” where it’s just gonna be like constant “Miss, Miss, Miss, Miss, Go to your mom, ma’am” right? Uhm, and, like, what capacity will I have to intervene and, like, ask people to interact with me differently, so they can actually hear me.

It’s hard. Like, the thing about the education is that my experience, and again I came out twenty years ago and I’ve kinda stopped trying to get my community on board like ten or fifteen years ago, was that me going back and saying blah blah blah blah gender identity, right, like, these words of this language-heavy way that we understand our world in, like, the queer world we’re talking about I think is that it really shut people down and just reinforced to them that I went away to become an elitist. *[chuckles]* You know?

**Molly:** Mhmm.

**Grover:** And that’s crappy and that’s not true, but that’s how they experience it, no matter what I was experiencing. Like, I was homeless in New York City, but in my hometown I was still considered an elite.

**Molly:** Wow!

**Grover:** It-it just doesn’t matter, cuz you don’t live at home anymore, and you’re not working at Denny’s or Applebee’s or at the nursing home, right, like, I just like, was no longer a part of the community and I went to a place where elitists live so that’s that. And also, like, I was always fairly intellectual and then I got even more intellectual skills and they just keep pouring out of me unless I put myself in check and intentionally talk differently. Yea, and I mean this was true even with like, lesbians, right?

**Molly:** Uh-huh.

**Grover:** Like, one of, the woman that I was like, I came out because I was attracted to her, one time said to me, like, “Well, we all know you went to the city so you could come back here and teach us how to be good lesbians.” And I was like, “Woah! There’s so much going on there!” *[laughs]* There’s just, like, so much!

**Molly:** Yea!

**Grover:** Uhm, but that’s really how people perceived me.

**Molly:** Wow.

**Grover:** Like, when I went into my communities and was, like, “Hey, I’ve got a cool short haircut, I’ve got different pronouns, I’ve got different, you know, like, name,” they were just like, “Yea, that, that happened too fast. I’m not here for that.”

**Molly:** Wow.

**Grover:** But, I mean, I would love, if-if, like, I would love if I was on - if we were on right now with like, a person fifteen years younger than me from rural northwest Ohio, like I would be, I-I hope it’s different. I w-I, yea, I hope it’s different. I think in the city of Toledo it would be different.

**Molly:** Yea, of course. Uh, you mentioned that you were homeless and, I mean, we both know that a disproportionately high number of queer and trans folx are homeless. I’m wondering if you have advice for other folx who are struggling with housing security because you obviously made it into a home.

**Grover:** Yea, I mean, I also then went on to get my PhD researching how to end homelessness.

**Molly:** Oh wow!

**Grover:** Unfortunately I don’t have all the answers. But I’ll just say this to normalize people’s experiences, which is that usually when people experience homelessness, they don’t exit it immediately. They bounce between different forms of housing insecurity and homelessness for a long time. So if - if a young queer person finds themself sleeping uh, at their partner’s house all the time, and then they break up, and then they’re at their friend’s house, and then that goes sour, and then they’re kind of like without a place to stay for a couple days, so they go visit someone, and the- you know, like, it’s a lotta, a lot of times in the queer community it looks like moving around a lot.

**Molly:** Right.

**Grover:** And just like, moving, moving, moving, moving, moving, moving. *[sighs]* And I mean, for some people in some cities and some communities, if you live in a city, there’s some services, you know, like, I live in the Bay Area now so there’s some here, but even when I was in New York City the services were over full and people were like, “You’re not using drugs, you’re not doing sex work, you have a job, so, I’m sorry, but, like, we just can’t use our services money on you.” Like, “I see you, I believe you that this is your experience that you’re sleeping in your storage locker, but like, good luck kid.” Uhm, so I guess my advice is, like, do the best you can at, like, not losing your dignity and at keeping a job if you can, and at, like, maintaining your relationships with other people, if you can, because that really is, like, what’s gonna happen, like, to keep you afloat. And also, one of the ways that I sort of levelled up from, like, really, really, shitty experiences of, like, sleeping in dank basements and sleeping on the couch of my workplace before the shop opened and stuff like that to more stable ways of - like, I was stably housed for a year and then I went to go back to school and I, like, couldn’t always afford an apartment so sometimes I slept in my car but frankly sleeping in my car was freaking amazing compared to everything else. I had a minivan so it was freaking amazing comparatively and it was nothing like the stability that my housed peers had. But, like, the thing that allowed me to move from chaos to semi-stability of housing insecurity was that, like, a friend of mine who was raised middle class and had a union job long before any of us did, he was like, “Grover, what needs to happen for this to stop?” and I was like, “Frankly, a thousand dollars. A thousand dollars would be one month’s rent and security deposit in this cheaper town where rent is cheaper, and if you give that to me, I will go and I can get a job anywhere, and I will like, be able to have an apartment again.” and he took out his checkbook, and he wrote me a thousand dollars, and he called up a friend who lived in that city who had a guest bedroom, and said “Can you please take my friend?” and his name is Asa Kieswesser and he’s amazing so if you’re friends with him you should love on him.

*[Molly chuckles]*

Yea! So like that is one big thing that changed. So also I guess I would say, like, I was so ashamed of being homeless that I didn’t tell that many people that weren’t my closest friends and at the time uh, queer community talked about it a lot less, I feel like there’s much more visibility about it now, and so I did not feel entitled to say to my community, “Hey, I’m homeless, this really sucks, can someone throw me a house party and can we raise one month’s rent and security deposit for me so that this can end?” Uhm and I wish that I had or I wish that our community had been in that place cuz it really would have made a huge difference. So I say, like, look at the entitlement of your friends who have never experienced economic hardship and literally borrow some of it or ask them to use theirs and get what you deserve which is safe, stable housing.

**Molly:** Thank you for sharing all of that I really appreciate it. We are running low on time. Before I ask you our last question I wanna ask if there is anything else we haven’t talked about that you want to make sure we talk about. I know we haven’t talked much about the podcast but I’m up for anything that you feel is important.

**Grover:** Yea, I guess I wanna say I hope people listen to Masculine Birth Ritual whether they plan on getting pregnant or not, and passing it around to their friends. It’s an aspect of queer and trans community that I think straight people love to talk about cuz it’s considered weird and cool, right? *[Molly laughs]* but that I hope that our community talks about more as a life phase. Like, we have these gender transition moments, I think, in our young adulthood, that we spend a lot of time on but, yea. Like, this is a life phase of being gender nonconforming, or nonbinary, or queer and trans that often can be really challenging and oft-also has a lot of opportunity for transforming our communities by envisioning what gender is differently as we age and differently in terms of like - I’ve never gotten, like, a masculine birth origin story that didn’t include violence in sort of the cultural consumption that I have. So there’s an origin story of Zeus birthing the Amazons out of his head, but only after he was cracked in the skull. Right? So like, so like, thinking about what, what masculine birth stories could provide, in terms of what we’re building in terms of queer cultures and queer visions for queer and trans futures.

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

**Grover:** I mean I think of gender really as, like, a suit of interaction that currently is situated in, like, a pretty restrictive way. So, like, gender would look like, or really feel like, like, a warm snuggly suit you put on, like, like, this idea of coming in or being in your gender, would just be like, “Ah,” instead- as opposed to some, like, calculated, strategic, uh, constantly shifting, uhm, dance that I feel like we’re doing right now. At least I am.

*[theme music plays, Molly’s voice overlaps]*

**Molly:** That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. If you had a good time, don’t forget to subscribe to Masculine Birth Ritual, and also of course subscribe to this show if you haven’t. You can find Masculine Birth Ritual on iTunes, Spotify, and Google Play. You can also stream in from masculinebirthritual.com. You can find Masculine Birth Ritual on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and you also can support them on patreon.com/masculinebirthritual, which our Patreon also supports. Speaking of which, you can also follow us on Instagram and Twitter. You can find us on iTunes and Spotify, maybe Google Play? I never looked. Who knows. We really appreciate your support in whatever that means to you, whether it’s telling a friend about the show, donating to the show, buying a tiny message or ad, etc. etc. etc. You can still join our Slack community. There’s over a hundred folx in there now, it’s very cute and good. Link to do that in the show notes. Also a link to send us your gender questions is in the show notes. This is maybe your last chance before we do our next episode of advice with me and Zee. So if you have a question about gender send it on over. This show is edited and produced by me, Molly Woodstock. Our logo is by Michelle Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Additional music this week by Blue Dot Sessions. We’ll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

*[theme music ends]*