[*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]

Hey, everyone. I hope you’re all hanging in there. It is such a weird time. I know some of y’all are bummed that you won’t see your family for the holidays. Some of you are relieved to not see your families for the holidays. Some never see your families for the holidays and are like, “Hello, welcome to my entire life.” And some of y’all have been quarantining with your families for months and either love it or hate it or both.

Someone wrote in at one point several months ago to be like, “I’m trans and I’m quarantining with ten straight, Conservative family members and your show has been helping me,” and ever since then, I’ve been like, “I have to put out new content for this person.” So, whoever you are, I hope you’re really hanging in there.

But anyway, we are not taking breaks for the holidays because we just started the season and I don’t have anything else to do and time is fake. So, this week on the show, I am delighted to share my chat with Mauree Turner.

Mauree talks about being the highest ranking openly nonbinary person in the US political system. What! They’re also the first Muslim legislator in Oklahoma. We talk about all of the pressures that come with that. We also talk about starting a job in a system that wasn’t built for you and about reimagining the, quote unquote, criminal justice system in a state with one of the highest incarceration rates in the entire world.

**Mauree:** We’ve been literally defunding public education in order to fund the police. We’ve been literally defunding access to healthcare in order to fund the police.

**Tuck:** But first, just one quick announcement. Our merch stores are still packed with a wide variety of shirts, stickers, masks, pillows, all sorts of fun, sometimes weird stuff. Quick note that, thanks to our friend Xander, I learned that some of our beautiful, new “Gender is a boundless expanse” shirts printed weird. Xander’s says, ‘Ender is a oundless expanse.” Oops. That’s what happens when things are on a boundless expanse. Turns out there are bounds sometimes. I just adjusted the designs so that hopefully, that won’t happen on future orders but, if you already ordered and yours prints weird, Teespring has a 100% satisfaction guarantee so you should be able to contact them and request a new one. Please, do not tell them that I sent you because this is probably my fault and, if a bunch of you do this and blame me, I’ll probably get in trouble but keep it on the DL and they should be able to resolve it for you. Anyway, thank you to everyone who has bought merch to support trans artists and trans organizations. We have raised thousands of dollars in the shop so far this year, which is wild. All of the designs are available through December 31 and they are at bit.ly/gendermerch.

Oh, and I say this at the end but, in case you don’t listen that far, if you want to support our show and get exclusive stickers, pins, a weekly newsletter, you can join us at patreon.com/gender.

We have a piece of theymail this week. Theymail is a little ad from a listener that I read on the show. This week’s ad is from our pal, Cal, who says, “Ever been curious about exactly what body changes come with HRT? Go check out Calcifer’s OnlyFans. $7 to see their clit grow from six months on T.” If you’re in Portland, OR, they’re also available for meetups. Only seeing two clients per month to keep COVID risk low. Rates start at $500 per session. Their website is calcifersomerset.xyz and their OnlyFans and Twitter is @Calcifer\_S. I will also add that I just saw their OnlyFans is running a 10% off sale right now so a great time to check that out if you’re into it.

And in the meantime, it’s time for “This Week in Gender."

[*This Week in Gender* opening theme plays; it’s a new theme different from previous seasons]

**Tuck:** Well, friends, it is Christmas Eve eve eve eve and we are a trans show so you know we gotta talk about TranSanta, baby! You may have seen mentions of TranSanta swirling around the world wide web but did you know that it was created by a super group of trans icons? We’ve got Pose actor Indiya Moore, ACLU attorney Chase Strangio, intersex activist Pidgeon Pagonis, and Kyle Lasky who maybe isn’t quite icon status yet but they’re a web developer. I’m sure they’re cool.

Anyway, Indiya has been serving as spokesperson for this project. They entered foster care when they were 14 due to their parents’ transphobia and I need to read you this quote for two reasons. “It felt like I was on the naughty list my whole life,” the star, who identifies as nonbinary and uses they/them pronouns tells Yahoo Life. “That’s what being trans feels like. It feels like missing Santa every year. It feels like Santa didn’t see my chimney.”

That is such a heartbreaking quote and I hate that I got distracted in the middle by Indiya being called the star who identifies as nonbinary and uses they/them pronouns and the fact that Yahoo Life exists.

Anyway, the project organizers said in a statement, “For the holidays, we want to show trans young people that they are loved, supported, and have a family around the country and world of people who will care for them. We are transing Santa. Join us. Transness is so beautiful and we are celebrating our magic.”

So, if you would like to join them in transing Santa -- and who doesn’t? -- simply head to the TranSanta Instagram account and click the link in their bio. From there, you will see a grid of letters written to TranSanta. Content warning: because these are trans youth who are in need, some of the letters do mention child abuse and transphobia more broadly. If you click on one of the letters, it will take you to a wishlist on target.com so you can purchase something and have it sent straight to the recipient without either of you getting doxxed in the process. Again, some of these lists are also heartbreaking because they’re socks and pens and snacks and then, some of them are an iPad. If you have sock money or iPad money, you can donate at linkin.bio/transanta -- we’ll put a link in the show notes -- and, if you are a trans youth in need and you would like to submit your own wishlist to TranSanta, you can start by emailing [transanta2020@gmail.com](mailto:transanta2020@gmail.com). Thank you for showing up for trans kids. This has been “This Week in Gender.”

[*This Week in Gender* closing theme plays]

[Background music plays]

**Tuck:** Mauree Turner is a born and raised American Muslim and Oklahoma community organizer. Mauree’s life work is geared towards fighting for and maintaining the civil rights and liberties for all who enter America. They’re also the current representative for the state of Oklahoma’s House District 88. Before becoming the first Muslim legislator for the state of Oklahoma and the first openly nonbinary person to be elected to a statewide office in the United States, Mauree had been doing community organizing around justice reimagined and rebuilding, religious freedom, LGBTQS+ rights, and race relations with the ACLU of Oklahoma, CAIR OK, the NAACP, and a number of grassroots organizations.

Just a heads up from me -- the audio quality is a bit wild at the beginning. I would apologize but there is a pandemic and we’re gonna take what we’re gonna get.

[Background music ends]

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

**Mauree:** I identify as a nonbinary femme.

**Tuck:** Aww! What does femme mean to you?

**Mauree:** For me personally, it is a way to kind of describe that femininity that I also hold that I think is really powerful within the nonbinary realm that I dwell and, I don't know, I’m still trying to figure that part out, to be honest, but for right now, it feels good.

**Tuck:** [laughs] I feel that so much of gender is just like, “i don't know. Right now, it feels good,” you know?

**Mauree:** [laughs]

**Tuck:** Like that’s most of it.

**Mauree:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Tuck:** Oh, and then, what pronouns do you use?

**Mauree:** I use they variations and she variations.

**Tuck:** You can tell me to fuck off with this question. Is the she pronoun because it feels good and comfy or because you’re giving cis people an out who don’t know about nonbinary gender?

**Mauree:** Not necessarily people, so to speak, I think because it does feel good sometimes? I don't know? I think it’s also a way to ease my family into… I think it’s more so for my family than for other people, right. And that’s also something that I’m continuously trying to do that shadow work to fully understand. Because it doesn’t always feel really great when people are like, “Uh, madam or, uh, she or ma’am,” or something. It’s something I’m still trying to figure out but, in that respect, it feels decent.

**Tuck:** Good. I’m glad. You’re the highest ranking openly nonbinary public official in the United States. What thoughts and feeling come up when you hear that? I can see your face a little bit.

**Mauree:** I don't know. It’s one of those things… I was just talking to my roommate about it last night but it’s one of those things where I haven’t really gotten a chance to sit down and process it all. But also, I don’t really ever get worked about anything to be honest, either. I know, right before the polls closed here in Oklahoma, I remember pacing back and forth through my little ass apartment and -- sorry, pardon my French [laughter] -

**Tuck:** You’re good.

**Mauree:** - and being like, “Oh my god. And like, almost hyperventilation but also trying to avoid eye contact with everybody. It was my mom and my roommate and my little nibling. It was equal parts, “Wow. We really did something really amazing. We created this really great movement,” but also, “Aw, man. I’m really nervous. Things come next.” So I think that was the majority of emotion that I felt directly attached to my identity and the magnitude of this election. But every day, I get a jolt because I get another message of someone who’s like, “I didn’t think I could be in politics or I never saw myself in politics in any kind of way, shape, or form so thank you for being this representation for us.”  
  
That comes from folks inside of House District 88 as well as outside of House District 88, so across the US and, sometimes, across the world, which is really interesting. That, I think I’m trying to wrap my head around in some aspects because, growing up, I grew up in a space where I knew I wasn’t always going to have representation. I think, to be able to now be the representation that I looked for as a child is really empowering, right, that I realize I am my own role model and also, being able to couple that with the fact that so many other people who are the same as me that were like, “I didn’t have representation and this feels really great.” So, being able to provide people with that feels really cool.

**Tuck:** Yeah, absolutely. I wanted to ask about that. Not only are you the first nonbinary state representative in US history, you’re also, obviously, the first Muslim legislator in Oklahoma history, you’re queer, you’re Black, you’re young. You’re what? Turning 28? Are you a Capricorn or Aquarius?

**Mauree:** I am a Capricorn.

**Tuck:** Yeah, that would’ve been my guess. It does track.

**Mauree:** [laughs]

**Tuck:** Capricorn notwithstanding, how much pressure do you feel to represent all of these different communities and, more than that, how are you coping with the fact that you are representing all of these different communities?

**Mauree:** The biggest part for me is that these are intersections that I’ve always held and I’ve always worked in in some aspect from the NAACP to the Council on American-Islamic Relations, ACLU, Freedom Oklahoma so I’ve been able to do that nonprofit shadow work so to speak, being on boards and being able to do that work and not have to be out front. To go from that to being jolted out front -- because I am small-town Oklahoma through and through -- to go from that to being like, “Oh ok,” and now, everybody sees you and every part of your identity and, on top of that, they want to push you down into a smaller box.

Sometimes -- not all the time -- I wish I could just be another one of my counterparts in the Oklahoma legislature that gets elected and then, they’re like, “Okay, now I get to do the work for two years and hopefully another two years after that and hopefully another two years after that,” but for me, it’s like I’m doing it on a state level but it feels like, in some aspect, in front of the whole world. So that is very nerve-wracking. The number one thing that comes back to my head is “the bigger they are, the harder they fall.” I’ve been a grassroots organizer for as long as I can remember and I know my heart and my community that I fight for and work with every day knows my heart, too, but sometimes, things just happen, right? You don’t always have the answers to everything. Hoping that folks outside of my community also have the same grace with me.

**Tuck:** You talked about being Oklahoman through and through. I was looking through articles written about you and a lot of them were framed in this way that kind of surprised me, which was like, “Yeah, they’re the first nonbinary state legislator and they’re from Oklahoma,” like it was extra shocking but I also know a lot of queer and trans Southerners that are like, “Yeah, people in other places really have no idea what it’s like to be LGBTQ in the South. There’s all these misconceptions.” I’d love to hear more about what your thoughts are on that and what your experiences have been.

**Mauree:** Yeah, it’s interesting. I mean, because it’s 2020, getting ready to be 2021, people still will ask, “Oh ok. Did you ride a horse to high school or whatever?”

**Tuck:** [laughs]

**Mauree:** People did!

**Tuck:** Oh my god! I live in Oregon and, when I went out of state at first as a kid, people would be like, “Oh, do you have cars?” Because of the Oregon Trail so I actually feel that because, yeah, we’re still in covered wagons.

[laughter]

**Mauree:** Yes! To hear people still have that kind of mentality now where we are in the 21st century is very interesting. So, that is also a thing is I continuously am extending people with the grace that I would want people to extend to me. When I hear those things, it’s like, “Hmm, that’s kind of ridiculous,” but you know, let’s go from there.

So, I think that it is very remarkable what House District 88 did, right -- I mean, our physical House District 88 and our honorary House District 88 members across the world -- to make this happen. But also, I want to name that I live in one of the most progressive, if not the most progressive place to live in Oklahoma and also happens to hold, I think, one of the major parts of our LGBTQ+ community. So, I can’t reiterate enough what House District 88 did was remarkable on so many fronts but we hold a seat that should be pushing what equitable and what true progressive policy looks like. And that’s something the district has been asking for for a little while now. We simultaneously wrote what’s next and also showed up and did that with this 2020 election. On the outside looking in, if we’re looking at Oklahoma from a full perspective, I think that that’s really remarkable that we were able to elect a Muslim and a nonbinary person and that the first one came from Oklahoma. That is really remarkable.

For some reason, before this election, I didn’t think that that would be one of the things. I thought I was like, “Oh, this is gonna be the first Muslim that Oklahoma elects,” and that was it until I woke up the next day. I didn’t think that would be a factor in what people were talking about. It’s remarkable but it wasn’t something for me that I thought that House District 88 specifically wasn’t capable of.

Did I think that I would be the first Muslim or the first nonbinary person elected in Oklahoma? Absolutely not. Did I think I would see it in 2020? Absolutely not. But I think the campaign trail and the movement that we built was really indicative of what Oklahoma as a whole is capable of. And I think we also see it when we look at what is happening in Georgia. Is that a good… It feels like a good portion of our traditionally red states are not necessarily red as much as heavily voter suppressed, right? And the hope is that we can get more people engaged in that aspect.

**Tuck:** You mentioned House District 88 is perhaps the most progressive, the most liberal in the state of Oklahoma but the state government is Republican controlled. When we’re pushing for these progressive ideas, it’s one thing to be two cis white people who are theoretically debating and it’s another thing to have your identities and your rights as a person being debated by your coworkers. What’s your plan for coping with that emotionally?

**Mauree:** Oh, man. It might be part of my Capricorn shining through but I’m really good at compartmentalization.

[laughter]

**Mauree:** But, no. That’s a real thing and I think that’s something that I’m continuously trying to navigate how I’m going to handle. Because it was one thing to be able to be on a board and to be an intern for CAIR and also be a community organizer for the ACLU and have to hear about conversion therapy bills or Islamophobic rhetoric and be like, “We gotta call our legislators,” but it is going to be a completely different ballgame to sit there and to hear people debate my everyday life, right, and whether or not I can show up as a full person. But that’s a part of community organizing and I think, more specifically, relational organizing. The legislature has been able to get away with some really strange things because they don’t have people who have those shared lived experiences or maybe even because they don’t have people who are openly living those shared lived experiences and advocating on behalf of. It’ll be interesting and I don’t have an answer right now for how I plan on coping with it but I do know that it’s not gonna feel great all the time but I wouldn’t have ran for this seat if it was something that I didn’t think I could handle.

**Tuck:** Totally. Yeah. That’s an interesting point, though, and you’re totally right that many people are more polite or thoughtful face-to-face than they are when they’re just theoretically talking about people so it is actually true that just you being there and them knowing you and them being like, “Oh, Mauree’s a human being that I like and think deserves rights,” could actually be so helpful compared to if they were just trying to imagine a nonbinary person, a Muslim person, a trans person, something like that. That’s a good point.

**Mauree:** Yeah. Like, today one of my coworkers... The last conversation I had before I left the building... It was the first time that I had been around while we all introduced ourselves, I think. It was at the end of the day and someone was like, “Hey, I think we should all introduce ourselves,” which I think is… anyway. Moving on.

**Tuck:** [laugh]

**Mauree:** So, we were going around, introducing ourselves and it got to me and I was like, “My name is Mauree Turner. My pronouns are they and she and I represent House District 88.” And everybody goes around. Nobody uses pronouns. Then, at the end, we were waiting at the elevator to open up and one of my coworkers turns to me and he says, “You said something about pronouns. Can you talk to me more about that?” And I was like, “Yeah, sure.” But it was honestly, just so refreshing that somebody reached out. So we had the conversation. He was like, “Okay, that makes sense. If I ever screw up, please just call me out about it,” and I was like, “Thank you so much!” That was great.

And just to understand that I’m going to a place that I highly doubt that we will see eye-to-eye on everything but to be able to meet at that place was humanizing for me and was a really great benchmark to start that relationship because, going into a legislature where everybody is Republican or Democrat and everybody has their preconceived notions of what a Republican or a Democrat is, especially me because I have a reputation of now running to the left of a Democrat. So, to even be able to start there was really great but you are right. I think, especially in Southern Oklahoma where we have this thing about this nasty nice thing. Everybody will be nice to your face and then it’s like, “Oh, bless her heart,” behind your back. [laughs] So, it’ll be interesting but I feel like we’re -- at least my freshman class, or my incoming member class -- is, it feels, really good right now.

**Tuck:** Yeah, speaking of getting started in this new job, when nonbinary people enter workplaces, I feel like we often have to figure out answers to really basic questions like, “Can I use the restroom? Will there be a box to mark my gender on the HR forms?” I am guessing, I don't know, that there’s also basic concerns like that that come up for Muslim folks in new places. So, as the first nonbinary and first Muslim lawmaker in this state, I’m wondering to what extent the system has been able to accommodate who you are as a human being and to what extent you’ve had to find workarounds or change the way that things are set up just to be able to participate in your job.

**Mauree:** Oh, for sure. When we all sat down to do all the paperwork and check the boxes, it would be male/female and I just created another box and wrote nonbinary next to it and checked that. And it started to make me think about what that looks like because some of the things are, it feels like, maybe federal level type changes. My hope is that maybe one day, somebody will fix that and I don't know if it’ll be me-

**Tuck:** [laughs]

**Mauree:** But that was my first order of business, creating those little boxes. But realistically, that was also a piece of legislation that I’m hoping to work on and explore more what that looks like is that I submitted an idea to create a space for nonbinary or gender nonconforming folks on all state-issued paperwork. Also, in Oklahoma, you have to have surgery to change your gender marker so I also submitted a piece of legislation to do away with that because not everybody wants surgery, not everybody needs surgery, and not everybody can afford surgery. So, those are two of the things on that front. The bathroom thing is a whole nother situation at our capital, one, because everything is continuously under construction. It’s just a lot. As of right now, I have to go up to the makeshift sixth floor to use the restroom.

**Tuck:** Oh, god.

**Mauree:** [laughs] And then, on the Muslim front, I think that’ll be very interesting. Even though people love to say… And I say, “People love to say.” When I say people, I think namely me. I don’t think other people really think about the separation of church and state in Oklahoma of all places. We’ve got a chaplain and we open up session with a prayer.

**Tuck:** Oh, wow.

**Mauree:** Yeah. And maybe I… This is something I need to take up and I’m glad that you asked because now, I’m thinking through all these things and maybe it’s something I need to take up with our House Rules Committee or something. So, hoping we can… If that’s what we’re going to do, we can incorporate a place to do it for different types of prayer because I often think about what my coworkers would feel if I did the same thing. If I came up and led the House in an Islamic prayer for Al-Ilāh from the Quran for one of my debates or something like that, that would make national media.

**Tuck:** Yeah, it would.

**Mauree:** But everybody else is like, “But Christianity is alright,” you know? I think that that’s something that’s going to be interesting to navigate and I hope that we create space, right? I think if we’re going to do those types of things at the beginning of session, then we should also be doing land acknowledgments for our Indigenous communities, our Native American communities, and the stolen land that we’re occupying right now, right? So if we’re going to create space for you and your ideologies, then we should be doing that for everybody because this is the people’s House. So, still trying to navigate what everything looks like but I feel like we’re on a good track.

**Tuck:** Yeah. I have such a silly question, I think. Again, I live in Oregon. It is easy to change your gender here, which is a miracle. When you say you need surgery, a question that I hadn’t asked myself is what… Is it bottom surgery specifically or is it any surgery? Is top surgery enough to get your gender marker changed or would you need to get bottom surgery?

**Mauree:** Oh, wow! I don’t know. I just know that you have to have surgery. I’m not even sure. That’s interesting. I think that that is not a conversation that the Oklahoma legislature has had just yet.

**Tuck:** Right. They don’t know. They don’t know there’s different surgeries.

**Mauree:** Yeah! Right! They’re just like, “Uh, if you want to be considered X, Y, or Z, then you have to have the surgery that aligns with that.” That’s probably as blanketed as it is. It’s not a “You have to have top surgery and bottom surgery,” or anything like that so that’s actually really interesting. I’ll have to take a deeper look at that.

**Tuck:** Yeah. I mean, ideally, obviously ideally, all of it goes away and it doesn’t matter but I was just curious. I’m like, “Oh, I wonder what they think the surgery is.”

**Mauree:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Tuck:** Okay. I feel like I should ask you about policy.

**Mauree:** [laughs]

**Tuck:** Obviously, right now, there’s a lot of discussion about the role that police play in our society. Most lawmakers seem nervous to take any kind of stance towards abolition. Obama says we can’t even say, “Defund the police.” As a lawmaker but also a Black person, a nonbinary person, obviously a person who we haven’t talked about on this show yet but a person whose life has really been impacted by the carceral system, what is your vision for the future of the, I guess, “justice system” would be my question?

**Mauree:** [laughs] I think what we have seen in these last years, it’s not like police brutality has been on an uptick but I think it is being more talked about and put in media because it’s hard for police to police themselves apparently. I think that it’s one of those things where you don’t know what you don’t know when it comes to language specifically and how you talk about things. So when I started this journey, I was like, “Who is doing meaningful justice reform in Oklahoma and holistic justice reform at that?” Looking for somebody that was talking about more than just the amount of money that it would save taxpayers but was really talking and taking a look at the school-to-prison pipeline; what it means when we have school resource officers and not school guidance counselors; what it looks like when we have such high barriers to get into reentry programs that some people who are leaving the prison system can’t actually get into them -- things like that.

And that’s when I found the ACLU and being able to sit down and be a part of conversations that weren’t just community organizing but were also direct policy advocacy and also, being able to peel back some of those layers. It really helped me realize that we are… which also kind of helped me start looking for somebody to run for office because I never planned on running for office. But it really helped me realize that this is not a system that can be reformed. It has to be reimagined and rebuilt altogether.

I think it’s the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and over again and expecting a different outcome. Sometimes, that’s what it feels like that reform conversation is. And sometimes, that’s where it stops. It’s just the conversation of saying, “We need reform.” I think, in order to make the change that we need, that we have to reimagine what a justice system looks like with people in mind, right? And that means people who have been involved in the justice system, people who haven’t been involved in the justice system. What it means to create an equitable system that isn’t built on revenge rather than rehabilitation. Oklahoma has one of the highest rates of incarceration in the world.

**Tuck:** Right.

**Mauree:** And it’s not because we have worse people here in any way, shape, or form. But it’s because we’ve got this archaic, bigoted criminal legal system that does a really bang-up job of attacking our most vulnerable populations and then, making us pay for it.

**Tuck:** Uh-huh.

**Mauree:** I think, when we talk about an equitable justice system, we talk about the people who live in it, living conditions. It’s also one of the most unsanitary places to live. Think about that on any regular day outside of a pandemic and what that looks like when a pandemic is god awful.

That’s my take on it. This is not a system that can be reformed but needs to be reimagined and rebuilt and we’ve got some really great folks who have been reimagining and writing that playbook and also working to build it and that’s the team that I want to be on.

I think, to the people who say, “Defund the police is not how we make this conversation sexy-

**Tuck:** [laughs]

**Mauree: “**It’s not going to bring people to the table,” I would ask them to think about the fact that we’ve been literally defunding public education in order to fund the police. We’ve been literally defunding access to healthcare in order to fund the police. I think people often get caught up in the phrasing of things rather than understanding what it truly means and how to really do that work. Like, your focus should be doing the work at the beginning and at the end of the day, especially as a community organizer. And I think that every person in the legislature, every person in an elected position, should be an organizer. Those are my thoughts on what it means to build an equitable criminal legal system that has community at the heart of it.

**Tuck:** You know, you were talking a lot about community organizing. You obviously came to this through community organizing. You come from a family of community organizers. I’m sure you read Adrienne Maree Brown as we all do but in, *Emergent Strategy*, she talks about exploring different structures of organizing that don’t replicate the hierarchical systems that harm us so I’m wondering if you have any particular organizing structure or organizing philosophy that works well for you or any suggestions to other organizers who are listening about ways to organize.

**Mauree:** For me, and I think that this actually stems from the… So, I was born and raised by some really amazing community organizers, my mom and my grandma, so there’s that grassroots organizing training that I received throughout my childhood. Then, when I came on at the… Actually, I guess my nonprofit organization training started when I got started with the NAACP. So that formal training there -- what they talk about more often than not -- is this snowflake model, which I love. And I think that’s honestly at the roots of everybody who organizes is the fact that you should be continuously trying to work yourself out of a job. And I mean, not even from the formal sense like if you’re hired on as an organizer for the ACLU or one of these other large nonprofits.

But I think even in community organizing without a paycheck, without the legislature and things like that is that you shouldn’t be the pinnacle of all of the information that should be shared and should be learned about how to take care of community. You should continuously be spreading that, helping people get the same understanding of what it means to take care of community but not only the understanding but how we actively work on that and how we think about solutions and how we create a table where everybody feels welcome to share their ideas on how we progress.

That was the organizing that I always thought about but, once I got on at the ACLU, they were like, “Oh, we call that the snowflake model.” And it’s essentially… What it looks like is you’ve got this middle and that’s you. And you’ve got these five sprinkles out from it. Those are the people that you train and, hopefully, they will train more and they will train more, right? That’s what I love about it. I love the knowledge sharing because, while I do hold a lot of really unique intersections, I don't know it all. So I appreciate being able to learn and grow from other community organizers and being able to pass that knowledge on so, so much because I look forward to a day where I can also be like some of the organizers that I learned from growing up. My hope is that I always have enough fire to be able to come out when people ask me to but I also look forward to the day where I can be like, “I did so much and now, they can do the work,” you know? Right?

**Tuck:** [laughs]

**Mauree:** I can pass that knowledge on and they are doing some really amazing work. That’s what I love and that’s how I try to continuously do my work. And to also make it in layman’s terms. I think something that organizations like ACLU and Industrial Areas Foundation that formally train organizers… I think that one thing that kind of fall victim to is this formalized organizing language, which is, I guess legalese for organizers and I think more predominantly white organizers. It’s really just about knowledge sharing and making sure that you are continuously training people.

Also, that folks realize the power that they have. Somebody can train you but you also have your own nuances for how that works and how that translates in your community, too. So understanding the power that you have and the importance of people power. I think that’s language and effort I can get behind. It’s that we are continuously and we should always be making sure that we are creating a space for people to own their power and to use that.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I like that. I feel like I don’t use the phrase “pet peeve” but one of my pet peeves is dress codes and the concept of what professionalism looks like because it’s always so straight and so cis and so white and Christian and binary and wealthy. I have had a lot of trouble being seen as professional while also presenting myself in a way that is me in my body. Something that I really appreciate about you is not only are you queer, nonbinary, these identities that I see myself in that.

We’re roughly the same age but also you are literally wearing overalls and you have a septum piercing, which I also have -- you can’t see me -- and you also have this really cool piercing in front of your teeth that I’ve never seen before. I’m just like, “Wow, I’m obsessed with not only are you, on paper, these identities that resonate with me but also, in my mind, I’m like, “Oh, they look like me and they don’t.” I’m not Black, I don’t wear hijab but, in my head, I’m like, “Oh, you look like me more than anyone else I’ve seen,” so I guess I’m just wondering, has it ever been difficult for you to be seen as a professional while also being in your truth. Have you had people try to tell you that you can’t present in the way that you’re presenting or I don't know. I’m just curious about your experience with that.

**Mauree:** Well. Honestly, it was always a bigger thing for me, I think, than it was for anybody else. And if it was for somebody else, then they certainly didn’t tell it to my face, which I appreciate. But I remember I had a partner back in 2018. I remember thinking to myself, because at that point in time, I used this bull ring and I remember having, what I thought, was this deep conversation. I’m sure my partner at the time was like, “Why are you talking about this?”

**Tuck:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Mauree:** Anyway. I remember being like, “Oh my gosh. It doesn’t seem professional. Should I take it out? Should I get something else? I really like it but it just doesn’t feel like people will take me seriously.” And then, they were like, “Uh, no. It’s fine. Just show up how you want to show up. Your knowledge should be the number one thing that people care about.” And I was like, “That makes so much sense.”

That, I think, kind of prompted me to maybe go back to the bull ring. But that’s also really funny because that’s some of the voicemails that I got on the campaign trail. People were like, “Uh,” and it didn’t matter what I wore, right? If it was a bull ring or if it was just a little hoop or something. I would get voicemails like, “Uh, people carry cattle around with a bull ring. You should take that out and take different campaign pictures,” and blah, blah, blah. I was just like, “Thanks!”

Anyway, I think all of that to say, me as a community organizer, my thing at the beginning and at the end of the day is I want to make sure that my community is taken care of, that they feel welcome to show up fully as themselves. But what I had a hard time doing was making sure I was doing the same for myself -- making sure I was continuously creating a space where I felt comfortable to show up fully as myself. So, thinking about all that, I realized that my knowledge is the most important thing, right? What I wear at the beginning, at the end of the day doesn’t stop me from doing this job.any better or any worse than anybody else here, right?

Actually, just this week, I was trying to do some work on our House rules around dress code because, literally, in Oklahoma’s dress code, it said, “Men wear slacks, suit coats, and ties. Women wear business professional attire,” and then, goes on. I just thought it was really strange and, honestly, ostracizing to gender… I just hate it when people gender clothes anyway. It also opens you up to lawsuits when you gender clothes in general, but I think specifically business professional attire. So, I went through and did some work on that and I feel good about that. But now, it’s on them to accept the changes that I made that de-genders Oklahoma’s, specifically the Oklahoma House of Representatives’ gender rules.

I think that’ll be interesting because, if they’re not accepted, then the conversation becomes them having to tell me why I can’t show up fully as myself and I think that’ll be interesting. We’ll see about it. [laughs] That is something that I tried to tackle as well, right, is making sure that folks are able to show up fully as themselves because that’s what I want for myself and my community is to be able to show up fully as ourselves, to be able to get the work done in a manner that does justice to the people of Oklahoma. It’s not just like a “We passed this law at the beginning and at the end of the day,” but also, “We did it in a way that was equitable to ourselves and creates a space for everybody to join in on how we do that.”

The rule still stands that I will not be able to wear my overalls on House floor so that is a thing but only during session. I can wear them any other time besides February to May in the gallery and on the floor. Don’t think I didn’t try, though.

[laughter]

**Tuck:** These are my formal overalls. [laughs]

**Mauree:** I know! I was like, “But if I put a blazer on it, if I put a suit coat on it, that’s what it says.”

**Tuck:** That’s the thing, though, is anything that says “business professional” or whatever attire, that means nothing. It’s so arbitrary and it’s so, again, racialized and class and just all this, heteronormative in what counts as that. I know a lot of people who’ve gotten in trouble at work because they dressed in a way that, in my mind, is professional but is also visibly queer and, in a lot of people’s minds, being visibly queer is not professional and that’s one of the reasons also why I love your campaign photos. Because I’m like, “Oh! Look at this cool hot queer person who’s also doing politics.” That’s what my brain says and I don’t get to feel that way most of the time when I am looking at politics stuff.

**Mauree:** I never thought about that. The way you phrased it was something I never really thought of until this specific moment because, when we think about business professional and things like that, the number one thing I think about is how it’s inherently racist to say afros and bantu knots and French braids aren’t business professional. But I never thought about it until just now about how business professional, queer and/or otherwise, if you’re being overtly queer when you do it, if you’re clockable, is deemed as business unprofessional. I don't know. It’s wild to say, “Okay, you’re coming into this new place and we value your opinion but also, you gotta get a new wardrobe but I’m not giving you a stipend to do that.” Like, what?

**Tuck:** Right.

**Mauree:** Why does a tie help me do my job or not? And that tie is ugly.

**Tuck:** [laughs] So this is funny to ask you on the show that is about identity but I feel like you get a lot of identity questions obviously. You were talking about this earlier. “I wish I could just do my job.”

**Mauree:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Tuck:** What questions do you wish you were getting asked or what do you wish we were talking about instead of just identity politics over and over again?

**Mauree:** That’s a good question. I do like to talk about policy but I also realize that Oklahoma as a whole and specifically House District 88 made history in a really big way and that’s something that a lot of people want to hear about. Identity is perfectly fine to talk about but sometimes, people ask the same questions and I’m just like… Everyone’s like, “This interview is going to be different than the last one you had so let’s do it.” I’m like, “Alright.” And then, they’re like the exact same questions. And I’m like, “What was the point?”

[laughter]

**Mauree:** I want to stress that I don’t mind talking about identity. It’s just having to repeat the same things over and over is really aggravating. It feels like, eventually, everybody gets to policy ideas but more so the policies that are directly tied to my identity rather than just issues that Oklahomans face. Because that’s also another thing. I hold a plethora of intersections and House District 88 holds a plethora of intersections and I won’t always be able to write policy and the hope is that I don’t always write policy that just directly affects my personal identity.

But yet again, I can’t reiterate enough I don’t mind talking about my identity. It just gets uncomfortable because I don’t like talking about myself. That’s the only other thing. And sometimes, I don't know. It’s just like, after I had a long day or a hard day or a particularly hard day or something like that and I’m just like, “These white men that I’m in the legislature with do not have to deal with this every day.”

**Tuck:** [laughs] Right.

**Mauree:** Like today, we sat in a conversation. They were like, “You know, and sometimes people will contact you and you just have to make sure that they live in your district.” Part of me wanted to be like, “Okay, but what do you do when you’re mostly getting contacted from people outside of your district and things like that?” And I’m just like, “They don’t know.” They get contacted from people maybe a town or two over or something like that and they’re like, “Oh, well let me forward this to your proper representative.” And here, I’m getting messages from folks that don’t live in the district, don’t live in Oklahoma.

That’s also the thing that’s been the reoccurring theme of my life now that I think about it. It’s always having to be, not necessarily the first, but not necessarily having somebody to look to for the answers. Because these folks will never have to know what it’s like to live like me. And sometimes, people are like, “Oh, if I could be a racehorse.” And I’m just like, sometimes, “I really wish you could.” But the fact of the matter is, on some of the most important things, you won’t be able to. It’s just like making sure I got a good therapist.

**Tuck:** Yeah. You know, what’s so interesting about that, though, is you’re totally right in that they don’t know what it’s like and I’m thinking about, sort of, the dynamic of that is like we don’t need to know about Bill, the white guy in the legislature who I just made up, because there’s a million Bills in the… I shouldn’t have picked Bill because that’s also a noun. Okay, so we don’t need to know about Bob in the legislature because there’s a million Bobs, right? And there’s another white guy one town over and you can deal with him but there are people all over the world who are rooting for you, who are so excited, and who are gonna be watching what you’re doing and, at the end of the day, there are like 40 people who cares what Bob does.

I just want you to remember that there’s a lot of… This isn’t a question. I just want you to remember that there’s a lot of pressure in representing all these groups but also, no matter what you do or don’t do, we’re just going to be so fucking stoked that you are there and, any time some white guy is giving you shit, there’s thousands of people across the world who are like, “Fuck you, Bob.”

[laughter]

**Mauree:** Thank you. Thank you. That’s also something I’ve also been thinking about a lot because people aren’t... I’m not even specifically talking about the folks in the Oklahoma legislature. I’m talking about folks that are in politics across the nation, across the world about how some of them aren’t good but do the job anyway. But also, the fact that everyone’s like, “Well, you should be friends with them. You won’t agree with them on everything but you should still be friends and you should come to them cordially,” and things like that. I’m just like, “Some of the things you’re doing are actively harming community and I don’t… I used to try to wrap my head around what it means because I was like, “That just seems fake. It doesn’t seem like you’re friends. It just feels like you’re fake.” I don't know.

And hearing everybody these past couple days talk about things. They’re just like… A lot of the times when I try to go and talk to somebody, they’re like they just really didn’t know and they wrote a fucked up bill because they hadn’t had somebody that was doing that relational organizing with them. I’m like, “You guys talk about organizing like it’s really dirty but sometimes, that’s what you’re doing here is that relational organizing.” It helped wrap my mind around it in a different kind of way but you still got people who will write abortion ban bills and I’m just like, “That’s…” I don’t know. Have you heard that sound bite that’s Cardi B like, “Das weird”?

**Tuck:** [laughs]

**Mauree:** That’s suspicious, right! And I’m just like, “So are we supposed to be cordial or are we supposed to be friends because I don't know.” But, yeah. I’ve been trying to think about that a little bit more like what that really looks like but part of me is like, “This is politics.” And I’m like, “No.” But the definition of insanity is like… So we should be turning this on its head completely.

**Tuck:** What’s something you’re looking forward to addressing through policy or not in this new position that has nothing to do with your identities?

**Mauree:** [laughs] In Oklahoma, it’s been snowing here for the past couple of days. Before that, right before the election, we had this sheet of ice come through. Trees got bogged down with ice. Literally, there were trees that were uprooted. It was very odd. What happened was trees just started snapping over power lines. There were folks who went without power for weeks. Then, it was just a rolling… You heard about these rolling brownouts that happen on the West Coast. It would be like you got power back and it would be gone again.

Then, seemingly, after most people had been restored power from the ice storm, Oklahoma winds came sweeping down the plains and the people lost power again but our energy runs off of a monopoly. There is one energy company that really just does it all. But they charge you a fee to cut your trees back from your power line. So, when things like that ice storm that came through happen, what we’ll see more often than not in affluent neighborhoods -- and this is across America -- is that affluent neighborhoods will pay to have their power lines moved underground, which leaves our less affluent areas out in the cold literally and figuratively because it less incentivizes our energy company to restore power. So, the hope is that what I’ll be able to do along with the help of some amazing representatives and senators is have our energy take all of our power lines and move them underground. At the very least, I would like them to take away that fee that they charge people to cut those trees back.

Another thing is that I hear some of my coworkers are also working on putting an end to qualified immunity here in Oklahoma. Not only do we have one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, but Oklahoma and Tulsa specifically are two of the top places in the US specifically for police-involved killings. I don't know. It feels like, for the past couple of weeks, in Oklahoma City specifically, we’ve had somebody shot by the police… somebody killed, somebody murdered by the police once a week for the past couple of weeks. So, the hope is that we’ll be able to do some amazing work around that. That’s not my bill. Somebody else, I think, is doing that. But one thing that I had proposed is that we have a standardized hiring practice for law enforcement, right, and that hopefully, we can create a database of folks who have killed somebody while they were on the job and that we can keep track of that stuff as well, too.

**Tuck:** It is truly wild that there is no database of people who are killing other people at their job.

**Mauree:** Absolutely. We have... our only HBCU in the state of Oklahoma… They’ve got their own police force on campus, which campus police happen on just about every campus from what I understand. But it’s an HBCU and the only university in Oklahoma that has a holding facility on campus.

**Tuck:** Oh my god.

**Mauree:** Right. And this is also where cadettes, I guess, get their training before they join the law enforcement someplace else.

**Tuck:** What? Oh my god.

**Mauree:** It’s mind-blowing, right? It’s absolutely mind-blowing to think about. So, working on things like that, because that is problematic on so many levels… The fact that our justice system is inherently sexist and racist and bigoted on so many fronts and our budget really shows what we care about. If we did care about becoming the top 10 state that folks keep saying we’re striving to be, then we actively have to start moving our funds around to actually make sure that we are providing resources to community.

And it’s weird that we are thinking about public education as a resource to community but that is what we mean when we say that we care about community. Providing people with an adequate public education system, with adequate access to healthcare because our hospitals and our emergency rooms in rural Oklahoma, which is just about everywhere other than Oklahoma City and Tulsa and I would even beg to say that Oklahoma City and Tulsa are just bigger versions of small town Oklahoma. But those places are actively vanishing. The hope is that, because community organizing is changing hearts and lives, is that I can not only pass some really good legislation in my time here but that I am actively working on changing hearts and minds and also, hopefully, developing some more organizers while I’m at it.

**Tuck:** I saw on Twitter that you like *Steven Universe.* What *Steven Universe* character would you be?

**Mauree:** Uh… It feels like one of those L word type things where I want… Everything in my body wants to be Garnett. I want to be Garnett so bad. And I envision myself as a Garnett but I think, if I had to tell the truth, that I would probably be Pearl.

[laughter]

**Mauree:** If I just really owned up to a lot of things about myself, maybe Pearl. But in my heart of hearts, I am Garnett. I don't know, actually… To be honest, I say I’m Garnett but I might actually be a Ruby.

[laughter]

**Tuck:** My house was talking about this yesterday. My cat’s name is Ruby so I was like, “If Ruby is Ruby, am I just a different Ruby?” And my roommate’s like, “Yeah, you’re just a different Ruby.” And I was like, “Okay, cool.” So we can all join and be one big Ruby. But when I was talking to her, I was like, “I’m gonna ask my guest that tomorrow.” And she’s like, “Oh, what do you think they are?” And she was like, “I think they’re a Garnett.”

**Mauree:** Oh! Okay! If people see me as a Garnett, then I’m gonna own that.

**Tuck:** You should own being a Garnett. Because then you’re still a Ruby. You’ve still got a Ruby in you.

**Mauree:** Yeah. I’ve got some Ruby tendencies.

**Tuck:** You’ve just got other stuff in you.

**Mauree:** Yeah.

**Tuck:** Great. Well, the way we always end the show is by asking, “In your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?”

**Mauree:** I don’t know. All I know is that I think, if people were given a range to fully live as themselves and be able to explore without the confines of what we were taught growing up, without that gender binary really latching onto us, I think more people would be nonbinary or genderfluid and I think it would create a society that… I think we would be at a point in society where we weren’t fighting for basic necessities, right? Or where we weren’t creating wars over the fact that people just aren’t happy with their individual lives. I think we would’ve gotten to the place that we’re striving to be by now if we didn’t have to worry about the gender binary as we know it today.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music starts]

**Tuck:** That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. You can follow Mauree @MaureeTurnerOK across any social media platform you can think of and, if you’d like to hear even more from Mauree, they were also recently interviewed on the TransLash podcast, which as you know, is hosted by our friend Imara Jones who was our guest on the show two episodes ago.

We are on Twitter and Instagram @Gendereveal. I’m on Twitter @TuckWoodstock. You can also contact us through our website, genderpodcast.com where you’ll also find transcripts of the show and where we just announced our 10 Fall 2020 grant recipients. Y’all, they are just all so amazing, I cannot wait for you to meet them so check that out. More on them in future episodes.

If you like this podcast, please tell your friends about it. That’s the only way we spread the word about the show.

The links to our merch shop, our Slack community, our theymail request form, and the form to submit your gender questions are all in the show notes.

This week’s episode is produced by Isaura Aceves and me, Tuck Woodstock. Special thanks this week to friend of the show, Callie Wright, for sharing their audio engineering wisdom. If you aren’t listening to Callie’s show Queersplaining, what are you even doing?

Our logo is by the wonderful Ira M. Leigh. Our theme song is by the also wonderful Breakmaster Cylinder and additional music this week by Blue Dot Sessions who, you guessed it, are also wonderful.

We’ll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music ends]

**Mauree:** … problematic on so many levels… um, uh… Sorry, my Oklahoma accent almost jumped out there but, um…

**Tuck:** I love it when your accent jumps out. It’s fun.

[laughter]

**Mauree:** It gets really annoying. I have a dog -- her name is Penelope -- and I have to call her Penelope. I used to call her Pen but, apparently, when I say, “Pen,” people hear, “Pan,” like a frying pan.

**Tuck:** Oh, really?

**Mauree:** Yes! So now, I just refer to her as Penelope. Sorry, I’m really bad about tangents.

**Tuck:** I love tangents. They’re great.

**Mauree:** The training we went through today said, “Don’t do that.”

[laughter]

**Tuck:** Well, I won’t tell them.

**Mauree:** [laughs] Okay.