**Tuck:** Hey, it’s Tuck, just popping in before the show to say that there are two instances in this week’s interview talking about the murder of autistic people. The first talks about police violence and is at the beginning of the interview, and the second reference is near the end of the interview. So, take care of yourself, and here’s the show.

[Gender Reveal theme music plays]

**Tuck**: Welcome to Gender Reveal, a podcast where we hopefully get a little bit closer to understanding what the hell gender is. I’m your host and resident gender detective, Tuck Woodstock.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

**Tuck**: Hey everyone, I really hope you’re all hanging in there. This week on the show I’m excited to share my conversation with Noah Adams, one of the coauthors of the book, *Trans and Autistic.* As you might expect, Noah and I talk a lot about the intersections between transness and autism including the compounding gate-keeping faced by autistic trans people the intertwined history of ABA and trans conversion therapies and whether being trans and autistic and having ADHD are linked in some way. Jury’s still out on that one.

But before we get to that, a couple of quick things. First, this is your last week to shop our February merch collection. So, if you’ve been eyeing our Femmes Can Be Thems shirt or the Welcome to Fabulous Gender Hell sticker, or our new Make it Gay collection, please head over there now. That’s all at bit.ly/gendermerch. Do not email me on March 1 and ask where everything is. It will be gone.

Secondly, if you missed last week’s announcement, we have a new FAQ page on our website, so if you have a question at any point about the podcast, the merch store, the Patreon, the grant, the mutual aid fund, the transcription program, any of that, you can find answers at genderpodcast.com/faq, which my autocorrect keeps knowingly changing to genderpodcast.com/fag. Incredible!

Last but not least we’ve got some Theymail for you today. Theymail is a program where a listener sends us a little bit of money and we read a little message on the show. This message is from Maluli Consulting Inc. who writes: “This queer captain is here to make your personal and business finances easier. I am offering tax preparation, business consultations, incorporations, financial planning, and book keeping services. All services are remote and personalized to your needs.

Visit www.maluliconsulting.com or email at maluliconsulting@gmail.com to schedule your appointment. You can also find me on Instagram and maluli\_consulting. Sliding scale fees available. I look forward to working with you!” I will add that I checked out their Instagram and they have a free workshop about taxes for sex workers on February 27 so definitely check that out if it’s relevant to you. That’s Maluli Consulting, M-A-L-U-L-I. And with that, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[slow, chime music plays]

**Tuck**: Do you remember a few weeks ago when Kai Cheng Thom predicted that one day soon there would be businesses that were trying to grab trans people’s last $20 by advertising as professional trans coaches? I regret to inform you that this has already happened. You may have seen on Twitter that a few such companies are popping up in recent weeks. And we’re doing things a little bit different on this segment today because I’m actually not going to be the one to talk about it. Here to tell us more about the most recent controversy is a very special guest. I am going to turn the mic over to her for the rest of the segment but stick around to the very end of the show, all the way after the credits, and I’ll read you some of my favorite tweets about all this. Anyway, here is Nina.

[music plays]

**Nina:** Hi my name is Nina Medvedeva. I'm a PhD candidate in Gender, Women, and Sexuality studies at the University of Minnesota. Welcome to This Week in Gender Grift.

Trans people love compiling resources.

From 1990s message boards to Reddit and Tumblr, if you get a group of trans people together, you’ll probably get some recommendations. But most trans people don’t get paid $250,000 by Chelsea Clinton and a bunch of gay venture capitalists to do it.

Meet Euphoria -- the latest entry into what I guess we’re calling the “trans tech sector.” When you’re not paying $100 a month for HRT through Folx or $1000 a year for group therapy at GenderFck, you can spend your time on what Euphoria CEO Robbi Katherine Anthony calls “the Adobe equivalent” for gender transition.

Euphoria offers three apps: Clarity, Solace, and Bliss. Each addressing a different “pain point” in the journey of transition.

With the look of a pregnancy app, Clarity keeps a daily log of what gender you’re feeling like, how you’re presenting, and who you’re attracted to. It’s like a diary app, which the trans community already uses Twitter dot com for.

Solace, a linktree on steroids, is your new best friend for gender transition. After figuring out what flavor of trans you are (there’s only three choices), Solace helps you set goals for your transition and gives you the information you need to get there! Or at least tells you to Google it. Helpful tips include “Under no circumstances should you ever get estrogen from other trans women, get it from this expensive service instead!" and, I’m quoting word for word on this one, “If you are misgendered by a member of law enforcement, you can clarify what the appropriate pronouns are, but it is equally important to maintain respect for the member of law enforcement.” Nothing but respect for my agents of oppression.

Finally, there’s Bliss -- which looks like what would happen if a stock-trading app for finance bros took HRT. Bliss takes your money and invests it in a mutual fund filled with companies from the Human Right Campaign’s RAINBOW index. Finally, my laser hair removal can be funded by Raytheon’s war profiteering! We’ve reached the transgender tipping point on the tip of a missile.

Now don’t get me wrong. There’s absolutely nothing wrong with apps. After all, trans people have been clamoring for the trans version of Grindr for years! There's also nothing wrong with caring for trans people, maybe even getting paid for it. But what we don’t need are venture capital funded apps built to emulate what trans people already get for free among friends, in community, or on the Internet. Trans people need material changes to their everyday life at all levels, not for software developers to get paid.

So what’s with all the trans tech nobody asked for? The next section contains a mention of trans suicide, so if you don’t want to hear that, I suggest you skip ahead about a couple minutes. The front page of Euphoria has a video of their CEO reading the end to Leelah Alcorn’s suicide note: “My death needs to be counted in the number of transgender people who commit suicide this year. I want someone to look at that number and say ‘that’s fucked up’ and fix it. Fix society. Please.” Anthony says that the reason she started her company was to create technology products that made transition survivable, to make a suite of tech products that created a world free of trans death. A world where her tech becomes obsolete. This is how it gets better.

All criticism aside, I take Anthony at her word. But I don't agree with her.

I don’t think Leelah Alcorn died because she couldn’t Google surgery costs or because she didn’t know the best way to invest her money or because she didn’t know there were other trans people out there. I think she died because she felt alone and hopeless about her future. Trapped in a home with evangelical Christian parents who didn’t love her for her.

What if Leelah Alcorn and the hundreds of thousands of homeless trans kids kicked out by their families or trapped in abusive relationships had access to free healthcare, free housing, free food, and a supportive community? What if they lived in a world without debt, poverty, or prisons? A world where the press, the courts, the politicians, the police, the bosses, and the gatekeeping doctors didn’t control their ability to live? A world free of racism, cis-sexism, and capitalist exploitation? A world where, in Leelah Alcorn’s words, trans people are “treated like humans, with valid feelings and human rights.”

Venture capital and apps will not get us there, no matter who’s running the ship. Only we can save each other.

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

[This Week in Gender outro music plays]

[Interview segment theme music plays]

**Tuck:** Noah Adams is a transgender man on the autism spectrum. He is involved in a number of research projects on trans people with autism and has presented on this topic at academic and community conferences. He lives in Toronto, Canada.

[theme music stops]

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

**Noah**: Um, he/him.

**Tuck:** Do you think of your gender as he/him? Do you have other words that you use to describe your gender?

**Noah:** Male, I guess. Sorry, I’m kinda boring.

**Tuck:** No, you’re not boring at all. I just like to make sure everyone is on the same page when we’re starting this podcast about gender. Can you tell us about this book, *Trans And Autistic,* that you coauthored and what inspired you to create this book?

**Noah:** Sure, I was approached by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, which seems to have locked down the market for books on trans, autistic, things, and all roads to and from there. And asked if I wanted to write a book, ideally, they’d workshop it at Philly HealthCon for people who are trans and autistic. And I had a couple of coauthors over the years, well two. The book is a series of interviews with people who are trans and autistic, so we sat down with ten folks and asked them about their lives and their experiences with health care and experiences of transitioning, and their family and what have you and now we kind of condensed the interviews into a chapter and then, you know, it’s like a three-year process, it went on a long time.

**Tuck:** You mention that you have taught this workshop at the Philly Trans Health Conference as well as this book, so when you’re not working on this book, does your day job or your other work also have to do with folks who are trans and autistic?

**Noah:** I work for Toronto Hostel, so it’s what they call homeless shelters here in Toronto. I think it might be an East coast term, I’m originally from Vancouver, and we just call them shelters there. Hostels were where you stayed when you were backpacking.

**Tuck:** Right (laughs)

**Noah:** Decidedly not for backpacking.

**Tuck:** Right

**Noah:** Yeah, so I work for Toronto shelter services. Right now I’m working at a hostel for single mothers, basically, and their children. And then another shelter, occasionally, is for older, homeless men, soon to become coed, older, homeless people. So, that’s my day job and I’m doing my PhD now, but when I started the book, the first couple of years I think were just being an independent researcher. I didn’t start my PhD until… actually, I really got the final draft of the book in just before, that was my goal, to get it in just before I started my PhD so that I didn’t have to do it all at once. Just down to the wire.

**Tuck:** What do are you studying in your PhD program?

**Noah:** My degree is a PhD in adult communication and community development. I’m looking at community development of autistic trans communities and the mutual aid support they give to each other.

**Tuck:** Oh, that’s amazing! Can you tell us more about what that mutual aid might look like?

**Noah:** Sure, I haven’t done my research yet, I’m just in my second year of my PhD so that’s kind of, I went into the PhD knowing that I wanted to do something very like that, so I’m still kinda of getting it together in my head. But the idea is to look at community groups, for and by trans autistic people, so things like the workshop I do once a year, which is really more of a discussion group than a workshop, like every time we get together we give some topics they could talk about but people like to talk about the things that are important to them. So, anyway, looking at groups that meet by and for trans and autistic people on an ongoing basis. And it’s really just kind of an outgrowth of my work with the workshop/discussion group but also the things I learned in the book.

**Tuck:** Yeah! I want to talk about that. So your book is about trans autistic people and in the book at least, the folks that you talk to really seem to disagree about whether there is any sort of connection, inherently, between being trans and being autistic. Is that what you found in general talking to people, that people have a wide range of views on what that connection would be or whether that connection exists at all?

**Noah:** I mean I don’t want to use the word, Universal, but yeah, it is. It’s as close to universal as I’d characterize that as. I mean everybody seems to have a different opinion and some people fall into different groups but it really feels to me that people are particularly beholden to any particular stance on gender or where they seem to have come to their gender from, which is to say maybe one person feels like their gender or their gender identity really is tied to their experience of being autistic or their development as an autistic person, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that they feel like everybody has to be.

**Tuck:** Yeah, for you, do you feel like autism effects how you think about your gender or experience your gender?

**Noah:** I know I just said people tend to not universalize their experiences, but I actually felt very strongly for a long time that they weren’t. I went into the book sort of expecting to find people kind of resisting the notion that gender identity and autism were intertwined or influenced each other in a developmental way and I was surprised that some people did, I don’t, I feel like they are very different for me. I’m very wary of attempts to conflate the two because of the way it can be used to gate-keep autistic trans people.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I did learn a lot from your book about the ways that autistic trans folks are even more gate-kept than your neurotypical trans folks from transition than like other medical care. Can you talk more about that for folks who may not be familiar with that?

**Noah:** I think it’s pretty consistent that you don’t want your healthcare provider to know you’re autistic, if that’s at all a possibility for you. I don’t think the issue is just about autism but generally speaking, in my experience and the experience of a lot of people I’ve talked to, it has also come up in some qualitative research now, if you make a healthcare provider nervous they will adopt a wait-and-see stance. So if you say anything that doesn’t fit the typical, trans narrative they’re more likely to say, “Oh wait, I’m not sure I understand this, I’m going to do my due diligence, and I’m going to approach this from a conservative, health care provider perspective, and I’m going to wait and get to know more information.”

First of all, you’re making somebody wait longer just because they don’t meet the expectations you expect them to be. They’re not telling you what you’ve come to expect and that everybody knows they should tell you, except for autistic people. Yeah, so you’re making them wait because they are autistic, but you’re also potentially making them wait forever because they’re never going to not be autistic. They’re never gonna act neurotypically.

I often think of Moose, who ended up moving to Chicago because he wasn’t able to get trans healthcare in the city he was from. He learned, oh, I don’t tell them I’m autistic to get trans healthcare. And he was able to get trans healthcare but he later told his doctor he was autistic and learning that she’d known and that she also had a lot of other patients that made the same trip, from the same city, for the same reason. Like they’d actually had to move, and move not a short distance, in order to get trans healthcare because the city they were from was just denying it to people who were autistic. They weren’t denying it on paper, they weren’t denying it in any way it might have been actionable, or that you could have said or done anything about, they were just saying “ok, we need to act conservatively so we’re gonna wait and see,” and people were waiting forever.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I think there was someone in your book who was basically told that they wouldn’t be allowed to transition medically until their autism was like cured?

**Noah:** That wasn’t someone I interviewed that was, I’m trying to remember his name. He was a trans, autistic person who was killed by a cop who was conducting a wellness check.

**Tuck:** Yes.

**Noah:** He was kind of having a meltdown because his therapist had told him he couldn’t transition or he couldn’t go on hormones until his autism was cured. And that, I think a neighbor or maybe his parents called the police, and the police showed up and shot him. Which is something that happens a lot actually, autistic people being killed by police when wellness checks are conducted.

**Tuck:** Yeah, and speaking of which, I was particularly compelled by the interviews you had with black, trans, autistic folks as well as Asian, trans, autistic folks because I felt like their experiences were notably different than the white, autistic folks that you interviewed. I realize that you are white, but would you be willing to share some of what you learned from those folks?

**Noah:** You know, I guess I should start with how we approached it. We kind of approached it wanting to be diverse, and we realized after our third or fourth interview that we had interviewed mostly white transmasculine people, and had a talk and did a course change and intentionally went out looking for folks who were people of color or had non-binary experiences.

So, it was a very intentional thing and we had to work at it. And part of that is, the biggest part of that, is getting the community’s trust. Once you interview one person, if you’ve done a good job of it, then maybe they’ll recommend other people and the other people will feel comfortable doing it. But yeah, I think the way the world reacts to people who are, let’s say, black and autistic and trans, and the way the world reacts to me, who’s white and autistic and trans, are very different things in obvious ways and cause a lot of different, cascading, social outcomes. I guess what I’m trying to say is that I don’t think the experience of being autistic and being trans is very different depending on your race or ethnicity, but I think the way society treats you and the way your culture treats you is, and that creates a lot of other differences.

**Tuck:** Obviously, the people in your books have different opinions, they have different backgrounds, they have different experiences. Are there patterns that you did see emerging in your work? Sort of like shared experiences or shared beliefs among the community that you’re working with?

**Noah:** Sure, I mean I’m seeing this, I’m doing my literature review right now and I’m reading a lot of different stuff, very terrible, about trans and autistic people from different researchers and scientists who shall not be named. But I’m also reading some really interesting stuff about autistic people’s experiences of gender and I think one of the things I’m noticing is that there are all sorts of neologisms being created about body, gender, words to describe the autistic-specific experience of gender.

You know one of the things that I’m noticing, and maybe it’s just a factor of who I hang out with and who I interview and what have you, but a lot of autistic people seem to be somewhere on the non-binary spectrum and that they, their experience of gender, whether or not that’s because of their trans identity is created or somehow intertwined with their autism or not, they seem to interact with each other. Sort of the difference to me, is your gender identity somehow determined by your autism or your experience of gender identity or is it seen through the lens of your autism.

**Tuck:** Yeah, totally! And something I’ve heard other people talk about that I also relate to is this sense that, we’re living in a society that expects us all to conform to these really unnatural and rigid concepts of what gender should look like, and that autistic folks have more of a tendency to say “actually this isn’t working for me or I just don’t understand it, or I’m not going to follow the rules.” So it’s not that there are more autistic trans people than would proportionally be true, but it’s more like autistic folks are just more willing to be fucking with gender in all sorts of weird and wonderful ways, whereas some neurotypical people might be more inclined to hide their qualms about the gender role that they are supposed to be performing according to their assigned gender at birth. I don’t know if that made sense, I’m sure you could say it much better than I could but…

**Noah:** Yeah, I mean I’ve been looking a lot at autistic, trans autobiography and it’s something I’m seeing a lot there. Sometimes it’s even hard to tell if I should include a particular piece in the autistic, trans autobiographies I’ve collected because it’s not, so they say I’m like gender vague, or I identify as masculine or male, and assigned male at birth but they have some sort of understanding of the flexibility around that. I think it very much is, for lack of a better word, I think autistic people are stubborn, in the sense that if something doesn’t make sense to them they don’t see the point in doing it.

**Tuck:** Mmhhmm.

**Noah:** You know and I think it is pretty obvious that gender roles are largely arbitrary. I’m not going to say entirely, because I’m sure there’s an example where they aren’t arbitrary in some way, but they seem pretty mostly arbitrary. Women wear skirts, men wear pants, men go to work in a business office and women stay home and take care of children. But it could be reversed, it could be both, you know? And why should we call one male and one female and it’s all kinda stupid and arbitrary and I think autistic people approach that and say, “ok, well, why should I do it?” And there’s varying attempts to try to make them fit those gender roles, and certainly, I don’t know if you’ve heard about Applied Behavioral Therapy?

**Tuck:** I have heard about it but I would love if you’d explain it for folks who are listening who have not.

**Noah:** Sure, so ABA or Applied Behavioral Analysis, is the, and I’m doing air quotes here, “gold standard” of treatment for autism, early intervention for autism. The idea is that you do rigid, repeated tasks until a child learns very discrete tasks. So like, put this one picture in a basket with other pictures like it. Then you do that 300 times and then you change the pictures and then you do it 300 more times, it’s tedious and exhausting and involves things like, I had read one account by a former therapist that said, the day always started with making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and then cutting it up into bite-size, M&M-sized pieces and then every time the child did something they were supposed to do, she’d give them a piece of this sandwich. Which is, it’s dehumanizing, but you got to feed these kids eventually whether or not (Tuck laughs) they get it right. So what’s interesting and horrifying is that the man who developed ABA, Ole Ivar Lovaas, is the same person who essentially developed conversion therapy for trans people.

**Tuck:** Oh wow!

**Noah:** He actually, he worked with Richard Green and he worked with George Rekers who went on to be really into, I think he founded NARTH or something, the National Association of Reparative Therapy for Homosexuality and was pretty instrumental for a long time in advocating for reparative therapy for queer people until they found him with the rent bullet and that was the end of his career.

**Tuck:** Wow

**Noah:** But yeah, it’s the same etiology.

**Tuck:** So obviously we’ve been talking about the connection or lack of connection or overlap between being trans and being autistic, but I was wondering if you would go on this little journey with me and talk about any kind of overlap or connection between autism and ADHD because I have had so many conversations with trans people specifically, though that could just be because I’m friends with trans people, but with people who think they might be autistic and then look at the symptoms of ADHD and it’s like, oh, maybe it’s actually this or maybe it’s both and then, the opposite is true with ADHD as well. There seems to be a huge overlap in like traits that are described as having ADHD or being autistic.

**Noah:** Yeah, you know I wouldn’t call myself an expert in anything but I’m certainly not an expert in ADHD and trans people and the overlap, but I will say that both in individual reports and the little bit of research on this overlap that I’ve read, ADHD and autism seem to have a lot of overlap, there’s a lot of overlap in traits, there’s a lot of overlap in diagnosis, a lot of people who receive adult diagnoses of autism after reinvestigating it, were originally diagnosed with ADHD as children. I mean, I have to think a lot of this is that, if you weren’t seen, and this is something that came up over and over again in the book, is if you weren’t seen as Rain Man, you couldn’t be autistic.

**Tuck:** Right, yeah.

**Noah:** So if you weren’t totally, for lack of a better term, debilitated or seen as totally debilitated, if you were talking for yourself and advocating for yourself, which is all very convenient to the people making these labels, then you couldn’t be autistic, you must be something else. Also if you were female you couldn’t be autistic.

**Tuck:** Right

**Noah:** It’s pretty hard to get diagnosed with ADHD if you’re assigned female at birth but maybe that’s easier than being diagnosed with autism as a child. I mean I certainly meet a lot of people who have both diagnoses. Certainly I think there is a distinguishing line in some people’s experience between ADHD and autism, but it’s not clear to me if for some people it’s more intertwined than that.

**Tuck:** I know a lot of trans and queer people who have wondered to themselves if they’re autistic or not, and with good reason, do you have any advice about where trans adults can go from there, once they’ve had this thought of “oh, I might be autistic?”

**Noah:** I mean it is difficult as an adult, right. I think there are maybe more services, little as they are for adults with ADHD, but there’s really not much for adults with autism. I’s really more for, getting a diagnosis is really more for yourself, and maybe if you need University accommodations or something like that. Or accommodations at work, though it’s really kind of a crapshoot if you want to try to get accommodations at work for autism, I mean do you want to tell your boss you’re autistic or not?

I mean I’ve tried both, it’s gone poorly for me sometimes, it’s gone well for me sometimes, I’m at a place where I wouldn’t tell my boss now, so that says something. There’s lots of online resources, I kinda started with wrongplanet.net it’s an old school kinda web 1.0 discussion board, people talk about everything under the sun on there and it’s a good place to kind troll for different opinions and different thoughts on stuff. Just talk to people online, I think most of the community, although the community, the trans autistic community, is starting to meet in person, I think most of it is online. I will say getting a diagnosis is an incredibly expensive endeavor, I don’t know what it would be in America, but here in Toronto it’s like $3000.

**Tuck:** Wow

**Noah:** $3000 or $3600 I imagine it’s more expensive in America, things are always more expensive in America.

**Tuck:** It’s true

**Noah:** Although at the same time, it’s unsubsidized here. Usually our healthcare is cheaper because it’s subsidized to some degree but this is entirely unsubsidized. So it might be closer to equal. So you kinda have to measure that against, well just how much can I afford that, and just how much do I want that assessment that I would pay that much for it. I know some people who have gotten their University departments to pay for it, through bursaries or grants or things like that, so that’s a possibility for some people but once you’re an older adult, it gets much more difficult.

**Tuck:** Are there specific myths or misconceptions that you feel are common among neurotypical people about autism.

**Noah:** Rain Man. I mean really, everyone talks about it almost everybody talks about it. It comes again and again and again, this perception that you can’t be autistic if you don’t look exactly like Rain Man, that is the most pervasive representation of autism in at least North American culture. I mean it’s a great movie, I think it’s based on a true story but the model for Dustin Hoffman’s character wasn’t actually autistic, he was sort of a related condition.

**Tuck:** Oh interesting. So, Rain Man came out in 1988 and I know that there are some teens who listen to this so if they’re not familiar with Rain Man could you talk a little bit more about what that Rain Man stereotype is?

**Noah:** Sure, so I guess I’ll say what the movie is first. Rain Man is a movie from 1988 with Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise before he was, before he got more interested in Scientology, let’s say. Please don’t sue me. It’s about a guy who finds out he has a long-lost brother after his father dies, who is played by Dustin Hoffman, and he didn’t know he existed because he’s been locked up in an institution for like 20 or 30 years, which is actually a pretty accurate representation of what might happen.

So, they go on a cross country, getting to know one another trek, and for nefarious reasons he takes him to Las Vegas, and his brother can count cards, and it was really the first mass media, maybe the first media portrayal in a movie like that of anybody with autism or anybody with a related condition, so it’s come to represent autism for everybody. The idea is that you would be like, you would repeat words a lot, you would have limited intelligence, you would be able to count cards, or, in one scene a box of toothpicks falls on the ground and he counts how many toothpicks there are before they hit the ground. I mean it is related to a real phenomenon of what they call splinter skills, this idea that you have a particular expertise in one area that’s unrelated to other issues you might have, but even that is more complex than they made it out to be.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I was just thinking about what it would be like if everyone I knew who was autistic or thought they might be autistic was like, ah the reason I know this is because I can count toothpicks very quickly, the one sign of autism!

**Noah:** I mean it would be a little bit like if the first representation anybody ever saw of trans people was Caitlyn Jenner and if you didn’t look exactly like Caitlyn Jenner then you couldn’t be trans.

**Tuck:** Right, and I think that is true for a lot of trans people. I was talking to someone the other day and when I was growing up the only trans people I saw was like one trans man and two trans women and I was like, well I’m not a trans man or a trans woman, so I’m not trans, and it took me like 24 years to find out there were other options, right?

**Noah:** And I think that’s something that comes up, obviously, it’s not a unique experience to people with autism, but I wonder if it’s more common among people with autism. The idea that if you don’t fit the given examples, you can’t be a thing. That you need to have a representation of what that is in order to compare yourself to it and see yourself in it, so something I see coming up a lot is people saying, you know, I wasn’t sure and then I went to University and then I met this person who was a trans man and I was like oh my god everything came together, it was like a shot out of the dark and suddenly it made sense. People approach that and say they weren’t trans before but now they’ve been converted.

**Tuck:** (laughs) right.

**Noah:** I mean, I don’t think conversion works that way but, I think it’s more just that now people have representation that they can say, this is what this is. I don’t think it’s necessarily that you need to be autistic. I mean, obviously, I’m not the best source for this, but I remember growing up and all I saw re:representation of trans people, I guess this is showing my age, but Maury Povich and can you tell what gender they are and I thought if you weren’t like a trans woman on Maury Povich, you couldn’t be trans. I mean the very idea of being transmasculine, or not transfeminine, anything but transfeminine was inconceivable to me. I mean I knew how I felt but it was, it was inconceivable that there was a thing that you would call that.

**Tuck:** Right.

**Noah:** And it wasn’t until I went to University and you know had other people to talk to, and actually read *Stone Butch Blues*

**Tuck:** Awww

**Noah:** That was before my time, but still.

**Tuck:** *Stone Butch Blues* is like everyone’s time you know, it’s eternal.

**Noah:** You know I’m not sure… You know one of the things that bugs me about TERFs and their, they’ve got a stick up their ass about, oh you got to save the autistic people from transing, and they don’t give a crap about autistic people. They don’t care about anything that they’re purporting for anyone in these communities that they’re purporting to speak for, in fact they prefer that autistic people not say anything. It makes it easier to put words in their mouth.

**Tuck:** Right.

**Noah:** I mean, I think you see that with autism parents, and it comes back to this idea of Rain Man. If you’re not totally, if we can’t characterize you as totally helpless and suffering and in need and your parents aren’t valiant heroes suffering on your behalf then you can’t be autistic. If you can talk and communicate for yourself, whether or not that’s because you had the supports you needed to do so, maybe their kids would be able to too, if they had the supports they needed to do so…

**Tuck:** Right

**Noah:** then you actually can’t talk for me. Because it becomes about centering the autism parents.

**Tuck:** Yes, which is such a thing with trans parents to, parents of trans kids too, is like, oh let me talk about how hard it is for me to have a trans kid, let me talk about how hard it is for me to have an autistic kid, and it’s like you should be excited about your kid (laughs) it should be about your kid’s experience and not how heroic you are for having a child.

**Noah:** At least trans kids eventually get to grow up and leave home but with the idea of disabling a person like that you can really hold onto them.

**Tuck:** That’s true.

**Noah:** And you hear rhetoric like, oh it would be better if my kid died, because he’s suffering so much and I’m suffering so much. Which actually leads to, demonstrably, people killing their kid.

**Tuck:** Oh my god!

**Noah:** And then they get characterized as suffering bravely, if not heroes, as regrettable martyrs. It should be seen as the murderers they are.

**Tuck:** Yeah, that’s so horrific. I thought of something that I should have asked you at the beginning and didn’t. I know some folks prefer person-first language and some folks prefer identity-first language. So that would be for people listening, that would be autistic folks vs. folks with autism. Do you have a preference personally? I was just sort of going off my own preference and not yours, which I should have checked in.

**Noah:** I just kinda going back to, at least with gender is there anything that the trans autistic community agrees on? And I think if there’s anything the autistic community agrees on, or autistic advocates tend to agree on, is that they really hate person-first language. Politically, I mean if that’s the kind of language autism parents and autism researchers have used, almost everybody prefers autistic person. Not everybody, I have met people who prefer person with or on the spectrum or something like that, but most people will say autistic first. That is a thing that comes up a lot, where I’ll read research articles where people are like, oh we’re trying to be considerate so we’re using “person with autism” but the autistic aren’t asking for that.

The autistic people are asking for autistic people. It often gets changed, so you’ll submit something that says autism first and people will be like, oh no you can’t say that, because there’s whole lobbies that it has to be “people with autism” and the whole idea is the sort of autism parent lobby idea is that it separates the person from the autism and makes it about how they’re a person first, before they’re autistic. But autistic people will mostly say, especially autistic advocates, that their autism is intertwined with who they are, it’s inseparable.

**Tuck:** Yes, I mean just to bring it back to our analogy, I say I’m a trans person, I don’t say I’m a person with transness (laughs). So, I can see it being the same, it’s a key part of my identity. So that makes total sense to me.

**Noah:** That’s actually an argument that comes up a lot in autobiographical material, which is it’s, what would the word be, etymologically unsound? Person with trans doesn’t work, why would you say person with autism?

**Tuck:** Yeah, that make sense. Well, the way we always end this show is by asking, in your ideal world what would the future of gender look like?

**Noah:** You know, I don’t want to pick one future. I just think people being able to pick their own futures, people being able to pick their own expression of gender identity and them being able to change it over time, so somebody can identify in one way one day and then another way the next day, and maybe have that change over years and nobody cares. Nobody cares except that they’re respected. I guess as regards trans, autistic healthcare I’d like healthcare providers to treat autistic people the same way they treat anyone else, which is to say, not see autism as a mental health concern or something that needs to be resolved, or considered, or addressed, or made better before they pursue transitional healthcare. Or seen as, oh we need to wait and see, because wait and see can easily turn into forever. And it’s not fair, it’s not ethical to treat autistic people differently just because they’re autistic.

[outro interview segment music plays]

**Tuck**: That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. If you had a good time or you learned something, please share this episode with folks in your community. You can find Noah at noahjadams.com and you can purchase *Trans and Autistic* at anotherstory.ca or bookshop.org. There will be more links in the show notes. You can find us at genderpodcast.com where we have transcripts of the show and our new FAQ page. We are also on Twitter and Instagram @gendereveal.

It’s the last week to buy February merch so head to bit.ly/gendermerch if you’re into that. IF you are looking for trans community and support, don’t turn to weird for-profit apps, maybe try our online community at bit.ly/genderslack2. It’s totally free, just some people hanging out. If you do want to support our work you can do that at patreon.com/gender. It is much appreciated but as always, no press. Today’s episode was produced and edited by me, Tuck Woodstock. Our This Week in Gender Segment was produced entirely by Nina Medvedeva. Thank you so much Nina, you are on icon! Our logo is by the talented Ira M. 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 and advice about gender.

[music ends]

**Tuck:** Hey, me again! As promised here are three DuoLingo themed shit posts about that new transition app. Eleanora said “The DuoLingo owl, but it calls you a slur when you go outside without makeup.” Inez says, “Hi, it’s Duo, take five minutes now to practice your daily gender performance, don’t risk your 18 day streak!” That reminds me, I’ve got to do my DuoLingo and A. Marv says “DuoLingo app but for urgent messages to take the COGIATI.” One more bonus tweet, T.L. Pavlich says “Honestly I’m just amazed they didn’t name it Euphorix. I mean are you even a trans grift?” Bye all, gotta do DuoLingo!

[END]