**Tuck:** Urbody is a gender affirming underwear and activewear brand that designs gender-inclusive collections by and for the community that address the fit, functionality, and style needs of those across the gender spectrum. Urbody created its own sizing and grading system that’s built to fit trans, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming folks. Use the iconic trans underwear promo code TUCK15 for 15% off your first Urbody purchase. Shop based on fit and style, and remember that you deserve to get dressed for the day with confidence, and that starts with what’s underneath.

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

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

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

**Tuck:** Hey everyone, hope you’re all hanging in there. This week on the show, I am excited to share my chat with Edgar Gomez, author of the memoir High-Risk Homosexual. Edgar, Ozzy, and I had a lot of fun talking about getting catfished on Grindr, writing a memoir when you’re a stoner with a bad memory, discourse around the word Latinx…

**Edgar [voice clip]:** Spanish is also a colonizer language. So I don’t have any loyalty towards it.

**Tuck:** …and whether Edgar is ever going to tell their mom that they published a whole-ass book.

**Edgar [voice clip]:** Mama if you’re listening, I’m so sorry! [laughs]

**Tuck:** But first, three super-quick reminders for you. First, we’ve got a bunch of new stuff happening on our Patreon, including a new patron-only bonus podcast feed. Last week we used that feed to post a deleted scene from the River Butcher interview in which River explains all of baseball to me in 90 seconds. So if you want to hear that, and any other bonus content we create in the future, you can find that at patreon.com/gender. You’ll also find our weekly newsletter and all sorts of other fun stuff.

Secondly, our spring grant is now open for applications, and we are specifically looking for trans people of color who are doing rad art or organizing work that supports their communities. So if that’s you, please consider applying. If that’s not you, you can still read up on the past grant winners, you can donate to the grant fund, and you can just learn more and help us spread the word. All of that information is genderpodcast.com/grant.

Finally, we’ve got really, really good merch in the shop this month. It’s always good, but this is maybe especially good. I just ordered the “Skip School, Take Hormones” shirt; my roommate got the pink knives hoodie and has been wearing it like every day. We’ve got all sorts of other good stuff in there too, so check it all out before it leaves the store on April 30. That’s at bit.ly/gendermerch. And now it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[Transition sound effect, with low metallic chimes and hi-hats plays briefly]

This week, I am delighted to share an essay from educator, artist, and activist Rebecca Kling. You might remember Rebecca from the Trans Specific Partnership podcast or from episode 28 of this very show! I am so glad that Rebecca agreed to come back and write something for us this week. So without further ado, here’s Rebecca.

**Rebecca:** A cis friend of mine recently texted me a link to an op-ed titled, “What I wish I knew when I was 19 and had sex reassignment surgery.” The piece was written by a trans woman in her forties and published in the Washington Post. And my friend was curious what I and the larger trans community thought of it.

Now, while I can’t speak for the views of the entire trans community—at least not until after the 2022 Trans Elections secure my place as an official trans spokesperson empowered to speak on behalf of all the transes in all the lands [distantly, imitating an echo] lands, lands—I certainly had some thoughts to share about the op-ed.

[Gentle, pensive guitar music plays]

At first, I liked the framing of what I wish I’d known. Many people who consider transitioning don’t have trans elders in their lives, so I love when older trans folks publicly share their experiences. But there were red flags in the op-ed that really should have been caught by a more knowledgeable editor, one who was familiar with trans healthcare and the experience of being trans.

The author claims, for example, that by undergoing gender affirmation surgery, she is destined to a life of medical problems: thromboembolism and stroke if she stays on estrogen, bone degeneration if she goes off it, and a higher risk of dementia either way. Except two of the medical papers she links to as sources about bone degeneration and dementia are studies on older cisgender men with low testosterone. You can’t just take medical studies done on cis men and apply them to trans women. That is bad science. Although I assume that’s a lot of what Caitlyn Jenner will be doing in her new role as a contributor on Fox News.

More importantly, the op-ed author says that as she’s approaching 50, looking back at having had surgery at 19, she now knows she wasn’t old enough to make that decision. But she also explains she had to persuade two therapists, an endocrinologist, and a surgeon to be approved for surgery. She implies that the system should have somehow given her more time, while also admitting that there were a number of hoops she had to jump through before being approved for surgery. Transitioning isn’t a guarantee. It’s an act of optimism, of hope for a better future. And it always will be, at least until a trans person invents hormones that can also predict the future.

The op-ed insists that today’s providers are under crushing professional pressure to affirm the choices of trans youth. Now, this does not match the experience of literally any trans person I’ve ever met, myself included, nor the hundreds of parents and guardians of trans youth that I’ve worked with professionally in my years as an advocate for trans rights. Lots of people are talking about the so-called professional pressure being exerted, but I’ve yet to see actual examples that don’t ultimately boil down to “someone wanted to be shitty to a trans person and was told to stop.” Ooh, such pressure!

[Music fades out]

So I couldn’t help but wonder who wrote this op-ed. It turns out that the author, Corinna Cohn, is on the board of the Gender Consumer Advocacy Network, a group whose mission is to empower recipients of gender transition-related care to become healthy and whole. On the surface, that mission is totally reasonable. But the organization is actually demanding that medical providers pump the brakes on providing care to trans people, and that medical providers are held legally liable should a trans person regret their medical transition.

Another board member who self-identifies as a detransitioned woman appeared on a 60 Minutes segment last year about detransitioning that GLAAD called “shameful fearmongering.” And the Gender Care Consumer Advocacy Network seems to be amplified mostly by right-wing outlets like the Washington Examiner or the Post-Millennial. Having your message repeated by apologists for fascism doesn’t automatically make you a fascist, but it’s not a good look.

And truly, I have no problem with Cohn sharing her experiences. She is absolutely entitled to say that medical transitioning is a big deal and should only be done after careful care and consideration. She could even say, “Hey, I had surgery at 19 and I personally was really too young to make that decision.”

[Gentle, hopeful guitar music fades in]

But that’s not what this op-ed is doing. While Cohn doesn’t quite come out and say it explicitly, she implies that trans kids are inherently too young to medically transition. This is simply not backed up by the best available research or the recommendations of experts in the field. Or, you know, actual trans people seeking medical care. Putting a trans adolescent on puberty blockers or a trans teen on hormones is not a decision to be taken lightly, which is why literally no one is handing out hormones or surgery like candy. And remember, Cohn was an adult when she underwent surgery. At some point the freedom of being an adult means the freedom to make decisions that you later regret, and I’m not sure who Cohn believes should have protected her from her decisions.

Cohn’s piece is especially troubling right now, a moment when trans people are under legislative attack across the United States. North Carolina and Oklahoma are considering banning gender-affirming medical care for anyone under the age of 21, and some states are even considering making it a crime for parents to take their trans children to other states for care. Far from being a thoughtful encouragement for trans folks, particularly trans youth and their families, to slow down—take their time before rushing into a medical transition—this op-ed may very well be used to sway lawmakers into prohibiting *any* gender-affirming medical care for *all* trans youth. And frustratingly, Cohn’s piece is not alone; it appeared just as similarly problematic stories were published in the LA Times and the New York Times.

So to borrow Cohn’s framing, what do I wish I’d known when I was first thinking about transitioning? Well, I wish I’d known that no one else gets to tell me how to be trans or what my transition “should” look like. And that while Cohn is certainly not the only person to ever undergo a procedure they later regret, the vast majority of trans people never regret the decision to receive gender-affirming care. And finally, I wish I’d known that the world is just a better place when we affirm trans people’s identities and medical needs, rather than pile on gatekeeper after gatekeeper in hopes of only allowing the “real” trans people to pass through.

[Music fades out]

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

[Transition sound effect, with low metallic chimes and hi-hats plays briefly]

**Tuck:** We’ve got a Theymail message for you today. Theymails are tiny, sliding-scale ads from listeners, and this one is from Cambridge Solidarity Fund. And it says: “Want stickers with ‘Be Trans, Do Mutual Aid’ on them? Want to help a mutual aid fund in the most unequal city in the UK? You can have both of these things at once by going to bit.ly/solidaritystickers. We can post internationally. Help us, it’s bad over here.”

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

**Tuck:** Edgar Gomez is a Florida-born writer with roots in Nicaragua and Puerto Rico. His words have appeared in Poets and Writers, Narratively, Catapult, LitHub, The Rumpus, and elsewhere online and in print. His debut memoir, High-Risk Homosexual, is out now and was called “a breath of fresh air” by the New York Times. Find him or her or them across social media @otroedgargomez.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

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

**Edgar:** Oh, okay, we’re just jumping into it. It’s funny, when I first found out I was gonna be on the show, I was like, “Okay, they’re gonna ask you what your gender is. So you have like three weeks to come up with a good answer.” And I was like, “Okay, now you have two weeks…now you have one week…” and now I’m here and I don’t think I have an answer still. I really say just nonbinary or genderfluid. I sometimes get confused between like, what the difference is between the two. But right now I’m just saying nonbinary. So…

**Tuck:** Perfect.

**Edgar:** Yeah, it’s weird because nonbinary is like nonfiction in that it doesn’t really mean anything. It just means it’s *not* that—so I feel like it’s an answer, but it’s also a non-answer. [laughs]

**Tuck:** You’re 100% correct, and I love that analogy. That’s perfect. Well, I saw that you are using all pronouns, but we also noticed that despite you listing all pronouns, people tend to have been using just he/him for you. How are you feeling about this? What would you prefer in the world?

**Edgar:** Wow, I can’t believe you noticed that, that’s so funny. It’s always very interesting to me to see what pronouns people use, and it’s like, almost always he/him. I will say when it’s a publication where there’s like a trans person in charge, or a queer person that’s like an editor or something like that, I have had people reach out and be like, “What pronouns do you want to use, since I see that you use all?”, and they will sometimes use they/them for me. But in general, it’s just he/him. And I don’t know. I just think it’s like a funny little…I’m just like, on the sidelines waiting to see what people use; it’s just funny to me.

**Tuck:** Yeah. That’s how I feel also, for me, is when people are like, “Do you have a preference between this pronoun and this pronoun?” and I’m like, “Actually, I want to see what happens when I just tell you to do whatever.” Like, that’s what’s fun for me.

**Edgar:** It’s interesting what their default is.

**Tuck:** Yeah.

**Edgar:** At the same time, it’s like, I use all pronouns; and in real life, people mostly use he or they. And yeah, I haven’t gotten a lot of she, which is, you know, neither here nor there since I really don’t have a preference.

**Tuck:** Do you not get the gay “she”?

**Edgar:** Oh, well, yeah, okay. I get the gay she. I don’t know if that counts. Sometimes I’m like, because sometimes somebody will be like, “Oh, *her,*” or she, referring to me, and I’m like, “Okay, you’re doing a joke, but also, no, this is real, too.”

**Tuck:** It’s so interesting, right? So your book is in many ways about manhood, masculinity, machismo, all of these things. And in the book, you allude to having complicated gender feelings; at one point you say you don’t identify with any gender. But then also, on the back of this book, it says, “A debut memoir about coming of age as a gay Latinx man.” So yeah, is this a gender evolution that was happening during the book? Was this just like a marketing situation? How are you sort of—because I think in the book you both refer to yourself as a man and refer to yourself as not a man, and I think that’s sort of like Schrödinger’s gender situation, and I think that’s very relatable—but I’m just curious how you’re thinking about it.

**Edgar:** So, it’s been an ongoing journey. I will say definitely when I was writing the book, I was having these thoughts about gender. I think it was just like, I don’t know, the book is about machismo; it’s about being “socialized” as a man, but I know “socialized” is also like a weird thing, and I’m still like learning about it, like that word is supposed to not be the greatest…. And so on the cover, or on the copy of the book, yeah, that’s why they said man, because it’s about machismo, and I feel like, my experience of somebody who’s socialized as male with machismo. There’s some places and definitely some bios where I have changed it to “coming of age as a queer Latinx *person*,” but that’s just a work in progress—like gender is for me. Yeah.

**Tuck:** Absolutely.

**Edgar:** I will say that like, I feel like my gender—first of all, I feel like it changes all the time. Like I wake up one day and I’m more like on one side of the spectrum than on the other. And that’s why I feel… that feels like genderfluid. Whereas nonbinary feels like a whole other thing. But as of late, I’ve been feeling like I don’t have a perfect way to describe myself. But I think of myself as a tomboy, which doesn’t make any sense. But I consider myself foundationally femme, but I also like to dress up in sporty, campy outfits too. So I don’t know what that means.

**Tuck:** Yeah, very like Sporty Spice energy. I love it very much. I think that’s great. Well, I promise we’ll talk about your book for the bulk of this, but I do want to talk to you about the word Latinx, which, you know, I know, people don’t want to use Latinx or Latine because of transphobia. But they’re using a lot of different arguments. And you’re quoted in that Cristina Silva piece for USA Today that I loved, and made some good arguments. So I just would love if you would talk about sort of your take on the use of Latinx, particularly considering this argument that’s like, “Well, real Spanish speakers won’t know what you’re talking about if you use Latinx.”

**Edgar:** I mean, yeah, Latinidad in general is just like…to be Latin at all, it’s just an insufficient word as a descriptor. It’s like saying somebody’s European or Asian, like, “Are you from India? Are you from Japan?” Or if you’re European, “Are you from France? Are you from Spain?” It’s completely, it’s just different depending on where you’re from. But I found it useful in the past, growing up as a half-Puerto Rican, half-Nicaraguan person, especially in Orlando, Florida, I grew up with my Nicaraguan side, there weren’t a lot of other Nicas around. And so I sort of related to other people under the umbrella of Latinidad, like I didn’t know another Nicaraguan person, but I knew Dominicans that spoke Spanish, and are first generation, and speak Spanish at home. And because there’s only like two Spanish channels on TV, we would watch like Telemundo and Univision, and Caso Cerrado and Sabado Gigante. And then growing up going to gay bars, I found Latinidad to be a little bit useful, just because there was Latin Night, so this was a night where I could go and listen to Spanish music and speak Spanish to other people.

But in general, Latinidad is also very racist, and marginalizes a lot of people. And weirdly, also marginalizes *me*—as a Central American person, we’re not often represented in Latinidad, in the narrative. And then also as a queer person; I mean, a lot of my favorite queer Latinx idols like Juan Gabriel, like Walter Mercado, they never came out. But yeah, so when it comes to Latinidad, I’m all for burning it down and starting something new, while at the same time acknowledging how it’s been useful to me specifically in the past. I don’t know.

And so when it comes to Latinx, it’s a weird thing because it’s like, I want to identify as Latinx, while at the same time, I want to like, get rid of Latinidad a little bit, or make it better, at least. But I’ve seen people use Latinx in all parts of the world. I’ve heard Latinx in Puerto Rico, in Mexico. I live in Jackson Heights, Queens, and we have a very queer and Latin population here—a lot of people from Colombia, a lot of people from Ecuador, a lot of people from El Salvador—and people say Latinx! Like I don’t, I really don’t—I mean, I know what the arguments are against Latinx. And it’s all like you said, it’s just transphobia, homophobia. It’s like they’re trying to be slick and wrap it up, but it really is as simple as that.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Well, you mentioned living in Jackson Heights. I know that you also were living in Puerto Rico for a while. We talk a lot on the show about gender being like a very localized project, and I was just curious if you feel like your experiences as either performing gender or like, being gendered by other people felt noticeably different depending on where you were living.

**Edgar:** I feel like in Jackson Heights, I get catcalled every now and then, which is like, I know it’s not great, but I kind of live for it. In Puerto Rico, I feel like the assumption was just like male, you’re male. That was it.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Because I was thinking about that too—folks who speak multiple languages, not only do we have to think about in terms of gender, how would you describe yourself in English. But like, then we have a whole other language that we also have to be like, “Okay. How would you describe yourself in Spanish, and how are we using pronouns in Spanish and just gendered language in Spanish?” And that’s like a whole other thing that gets complicated.

**Edgar:** Yeah! I feel like one of the big arguments from people who like to pretend that Latinx isn’t a bad word, but they’ll be like, “Oh my god, Spanish is such a gendered language. Like everything has a gender, you know? A doorknob is, you know….” Wait, what is a doorknob? [laughs]

**Tuck:** I’m like, I don’t know, actually.

**Edgar:** Well, a mirror would be, you know, a man, a candle is a woman, a computer is a woman for some reason. And so one of the arguments is like, “Oh, but we can’t change every single word, that’s gonna be super hard.” And the thing is, I’ve never—I mean, maybe they’re out there, but I’ve never met a Spanish-speaking person, who is trying to make Latinx happen, claim that they are trying to change every single word. And so it’s just like a weird argument that I feel like people made up so that they can argue against it. But nobody’s trying to do that.

**Tuck:** Right. Someone asked me that in a workshop the other day because I was talking about gender in Spanish and other languages. And they were asking like, “Oh, does that mean that people are trying to get rid of the genders of like every object?” I’m like “No, honey, we’re trying to stop gendering *people* so dramatically when we’re talking about *people*, but not when we’re talking about the doorknob and the computer.” Like, the computer isn’t going to be offended if it’s misgendered. It doesn’t matter. People really can’t focus.

**Edgar:** Yeah, it’s so dumb. Nobody is trying to do that. And the other thing is like, I don’t have a strong loyalty to the Spanish language either. So even if they were trying to like, alter it or change it, I don’t care! Spanish is also a colonizer language. Perhaps even like, the biggest colonizer language in Latin America. So yeah, I don’t have any loyalty towards it. So yeah, let’s fuck it up.

**Tuck:** Yes, 100%. Great. So I have interviewed other people that wrote memoirs on this show, but I forgot to ask them this, so I’m just gonna ask you: How does one write a memoir and remember things? Do you have a good memory? Do you make them up? How do you do this?

**Edgar:** Oh my god, no, I have the worst memory and I’m such a stoner and it’s like, the stupidest thing. Like the one thing that I shouldn’t be doing, because it makes me forget words and memories, is a thing that I do every day. So I don’t have a good memory. I will say for a lot of it, my book took me like seven years to write. So one of it is like, I just gave myself a lot of time to sit around and try to force those memories out. But there’s also a lot of things you could do, like you can do research. Like I have photos; I have old diary entries; even, you can go on social media and scroll back to what you were doing at the time and figure out that way.

And I will say like a big chunk of the book happened in recent years. It’s like, only three or four chapters, like the first half of the book, is stuff that I really had to dig for. Everything from basically the Pulse nightclub chapter onwards, it was like I was basically writing as things were happening. And so that made it a lot easier too. But it is hard. And a lot of times I have to check with other people and be like, do you remember this happening this way? And ultimately, it’s not going to be perfect, like it’s not a photograph. It’s a memory, and memory is very subjective too. So even if I am remembering everything as it happened, it would be as it happened from my point of view, which is still like there’s a lot of room for error there too.

**Tuck:** Yeah. So you said that you wanted to write a book with no villains, which I think is interesting in any story, but especially one that also includes, for example, the Pulse nightclub shooting. Can you talk about why that was important to you and also like where you looked for stakes and conflict outside a classic villain?

**Edgar:** Yeah. When I say I didn’t want villains, I mean I didn’t want anyone to come off as one-dimensional and evil. And I think a lot about how nobody thinks that they’re the bad guy; nobody thinks that they’re the villain. Everybody thinks that what we’re doing is right, at least for themselves. And so I really had to, as I was writing about characters—or people, I should say—that did harm to me or did harm to my community, I tried to ask myself, “Why did they think that they were doing the right thing? What were their motivations?” And through asking myself those questions for them, and a lot of it was just speculation, I was able to flesh them out a little bit more and at least make them more rounded than just like, “Oh, they did something shitty and they’re evil.”

Particularly with my mom, I had to do that when I wrote about her. Like, she did do some not amazing things when I first came out of the closet. But over time, things got better. And I wanted to write about both the lows and the highs. And as I was finishing the book, I was like, “Oh my god, I love my mom so much. She sacrificed so much for me. She’s such an amazing human being, despite all this bad stuff that she might have done.” And so I really felt a lot of urgency to ask those questions of her, what her motivations were when she was acting badly, because she wasn’t just like being a *novela* villain. She was trying to protect me. Although that doesn’t excuse her behavior in any way, it does add necessary nuance to it.

With Omar Mateen, the Pulse nightclub shooter, I mean, I’ll just say, you know, fuck that guy. Like, I don’t care about him at all. Like he’s the worst, obviously. But when I was writing about him, I started writing about Pulse like the week after. And it was just because I was just in such a state of shock and confusion. And while I shouldn’t really have been surprised, because historically, queer people are just treated terribly, blah blah blah, I was still surprised because it was just so close to home. And it was this bar that was thirty minutes away that I would go to Latin Night, you know, on Saturdays and it was like, I just couldn’t wrap my head around why somebody would do that. And so I had to ask those questions of him, too. What were his motivations? Where was he coming from? What was he responding to? Not because I wanted to humanize him or whatever, and I know that there are a lot of stories about mass shooters where it just feels kind of gross, like they’re trying to, like, make them a hero or something like that. And I wasn’t trying to do that at all. I was trying to figure out *why*, so I could figure out how to prevent it, or what I could do next time to, I don’t know, make sure something like that didn’t happen again.

**Tuck:** Yeah, it’s really interesting the way you do that, the way that you draw similarities between both of you. Again, I don’t know if that makes it sound like I’m mischaracterizing it for people that haven’t read it. Not to be like, “Oh, me and this shooter are the same,” but you can pull these pieces out where you’re like, “Oh, we have these things in common and then we went in these two different directions. What does that mean?” And like that… it is really interesting that you did that. So I didn’t mean to ask it to be like, “Why did you do this thing?” I was more just like, “Oh, this is so interesting.” And it takes a lot more effort and more creativity of thought to go into what other people might be thinking and their motivations instead of just being like, “Fuck that guy, end of story.” Even though also, fuck that guy. So yeah, I just really appreciated that exploration that you did.

**Edgar:** Thank you!

**Tuck:** Has it been difficult? You said you wrote a lot of this right as it was happening. Has it been difficult to have the emotional distance to analyze something and get perspective on something that happened to you when you’re writing that quickly afterwards? Or is that just like also maybe not important? Maybe you’re like, “I actually just want to be in the moment that I was in then, and I don’t need to get retroactive distance.”

**Edgar:** Yeah, I feel like I have no emotional distance. A lot of times people say, “Write from the scar, not from the wound.” Meaning write from a place where you’ve healed a little bit so you can look back and have a little bit more of that distance, maybe objectivity. Although objectivity is also a lie, too. And for me, it’s like yeah, you could do that. And I believe there are some stories where maybe you should do that. But in general, you also—what happens if you do that is you lose some of those emotions, those urgent emotions that you were experiencing at the time. And I think there’s value in those too. For me, a lot of my writing comes from a place of, there’s like a memory that haunts me and I’m just trying to, like, get rid of it. Rather than just keep avoiding it, because it’s just gonna keep following me. And so I just sit down with a memory for, you know, seven years and really unpack it, then I can like, at least, you know, forge some meaning or some resolution or figure out why it’s been bothering me so much and then move on.

Especially with Pulse. It was just like, I tried avoiding it; I tried not to think about it, but it was just inescapable. Especially in Orlando. It was everywhere. It was, you know, every restaurant had a sign, everybody was wearing the “Orlando Strong” t-shirts. McDonald’s, on their billboard, had “#OrlandoStrong.” All my friends—obviously, queer people who are Latinx people in Orlando—it was just all they could talk about as well. And so I am like such an avoidant person, but with Pulse, I could not be an avoidant person. And so I was just like, “You know what, just like, sit with that and figure out something, write about it and then reach a place where you can let it go at least momentarily.” And was it hard? Yeah, it was really, really hard. And like, hard in super unexpected ways that I didn’t even think were possible. Like with the Pulse chapter, I had to do a lot of research on Omar Mateen, just to figure out about his early life, his background, stuff like that. Now what would happen is, because of the algorithm, every time I would go on Facebook, I would have a suggestion—a friend suggestion—for Omar Mateen. And so just in that way, I was like, oh, I would go on Facebook, and then it’s like, “Oh, here, do you want to be friends with the Pulse nightclub shooter,” you know? So it’s just constantly triggering. But I’d rather just, you know, sit down and confront it than avoid it.

**Tuck:** That’s one of the most wild algorithm stories I’ve ever heard. I didn’t know that was just a thing that can happen. Wow. Huh. Yeah, that sounds horrifying.

**Edgar:** Yeah, the first time I saw it, I just burst out laughing. I was like, “What the fuck?” Yeah, it’s so weird.

**Tuck:** Well, there are a lot of emotions present in this book, and you said that you’re a pretty private person. And publishing a memoir is just like showing all your thoughts and feelings, or many of your thoughts and feelings to the world. High-Risk Homosexual, it’s been out for three months now. I’m curious what your experience has been like having these experiences out in the world and doing interviews like this.

**Edgar:** It’s weird because—okay, I want to start by saying I am very confident in my work. And that’s because I work very hard at it. So I wasn’t like, “Oh, this book is gonna suck and nobody’s gonna care about it because it sucks.” At the same time, I was like, this is a book called “High-Risk Homosexual.” It’s an indie press. I had my expectations very low. I was like, maybe, you know, nobody’s gonna read it. Maybe nobody’s gonna interview me and maybe it’s not gonna get reviewed. It might just like, come and go.

**Tuck:** I mean, I make a trans podcast so I understand this completely. [laughs] Totally.

**Edgar:** And it has nothing to do with insecurity around me or my work. It’s just like, I was just trying to be realistic. And so when people did start reaching out, and it did seem like people were reading it, and then like, the New York Times reviewed it, it just felt like an unexpected blessing. And I was just so happy and delighted that I was just like, yes to everything. And even though giving interviews sometimes do still make me nervous—just because yeah, like you said, I am a pretty private person; I don’t really like to share too much, even though I’m a memoirist—it’s part of the job, right? All my life, I’ve been like, if this book gets published, you’re not gonna get in the way of your own success; you’re just gonna do everything, and you know, like, push yourself.

It’s kind of weird because I’m also a double Pisces. And I’m like, very, like, energy affects me. Like a lot. That’s why I have my evil eye bracelet that I’m constantly shooting at people, like don’t give me that negative energy. But at any given time I’m like, on Goodreads, there’s this feature where it shows you how many people are reading your book in this moment. And so like every now and then I’ll check it and I’m like, “Oh my god. 50 people are reading my book right now. 50 people are having thoughts about me.” And then I just like, I guess I just smoke weed and try not to think about it.

**Tuck:** It’s such a weird feeling as someone who doesn’t want anyone to have thoughts about me ever. I’m just like, “Oh, no. You’re listening. You’re listening to the media that I specifically put out for you to listen to?”

**Edgar:** That’s the difference. I’m not as afraid when it comes to my book because it’s also a very curated thing that I spent a lot of time on. And I was like, I crafted it and I shaped it. So like you got certain memories, but you don’t get everything. When I’m like meeting people or it’s like a reader comes up to me, it’s like, that’s different because then it’s like all off the cuff stuff. It’s not curated, and half the time I don’t even know what I’m saying. I’m just like blurting stuff out, and that’s when it can get kind of weird.

**Tuck:** Yeah. That makes total sense to me. It’s fine if you don’t want to talk about this, but you wrote a piece for Electric Lit about how your mom kept asking you how your memoir was coming out and you’re like, “Lol, just kidding. I’m not writing a memoir.”

**Edgar:** Oh my god. [laughs]

**Tuck:** Because you didn’t want her to know about the book. And I swear to god, like once a week since I read that story three months ago, I’m like, “How’s their mom doing? Does the mom know yet? I’m so stressed out.” So just wanted to check in.

**Edgar:** First of all, I love that you said they. Yeah, I feel like my biggest fear was around my fam and what they would think of the book just because…. I consider myself private, they’re *hella* private. They’re like, no new friends. It’s like, all their friends are like their siblings. It’s only—it’s a very close circle. And so we’re not the type of people that put our business out there. And what worried me was like that, especially I feel like Latinx moms you can, you know, say 100 amazing things about them, and like one like slight critique, and then they’ll be like, “Oh my god, okay, so I’m the villain now! Okay, so I’m the enemy! So I didn’t sacrifice all this for you, huh? So why don’t you go over there and live with your dad, huh, how about that?” And so that was my worry, that she would only see the parts of herself that were behaving badly, I guess. And a lot of the redemption also comes later in the book. Obviously, when she first found out that I was gay, it wasn’t great. And so I was like, will she even finish the book if she reads it?

Fortunately for me, it’s like my family doesn’t read a lot. If they do read it would be in Spanish, and it probably wouldn’t be memoir, and it almost definitely wouldn’t be a book called High-Risk Homosexual. And so I do feel like, a bubble of protection. And even all of the interviews and stuff that I’m doing, it’s like these are, they might be big outlets, but they’re just not places and stuff that like my family’s really checking for; they’re checking for like Telemundo and Univision, and stuff like that. And *they* haven’t invited me to do anything. But yeah, where am I with my mom? I’m still slowly trying to tell her. I’ve been working my way up. I will say, recently I introduced her to my boyfriend, and that went really well. And so that felt like one step. Then the next step is, I went to a writing conference recently and I told her about it, and I was like, “Oh, and I met an agent and she is thinking about buying my book.” And so when I—oh my god, Mama if you’re listening, I’m so sorry.

**Tuck:** Your mom gets really into like, transsexual podcasts in English. [Both laugh]

**Edgar:** I mean, you don’t know! You never know. What I’ve decided my plan is, is I’m gonna tell her my book is coming out in like a month or something. I’m gonna be like, “Oh, I just got this agent and they want to publish,” and she doesn’t know a lot about the publishing industry. She doesn’t know that it takes like two years after you just sell the book with all the editing and all that stuff. So I think I can just be like, “Yeah, I sold it” or “it’s gonna publish next month.” And I’m gonna try to do it as soon as possible, especially… there’s this other urgency—I just got this TV/film agent, and they’re thinking about maybe making it into something. It’s still super early; I haven’t gotten any money for that. I’m like fingers crossed, I’m trying to be rich so I can move to Puerto Rico and mind my own business, like Bad Bunny. But, like, if a TV series or if a movie does happen, that’s pretty unavoidable, because she does have Netflix, right? So yeah, I definitely do need to tell her. The other thing is recently she’s been having, or she was having more so, some health issues. And I didn’t want to be like “Oh, by the way, I wrote a gay memoir, I told all the whole world all our business,” right. And so, that is part of it. Part of it is also that I just like, I have to like you know, be braver, but a big part of it is like I am trying to ease her into it and not just be like “Bah!”, you know?

**Ozzy:** I guess I kind of had a follow up to what you were talking about. I’m just curious, did writing this book at all change your relationship with your mom or how you thought about your relationship? Because you do explore so much about the good and the bad, and I’m just curious if you’ve thought about your relationship differently since then.

**Edgar:** Yeah, definitely. I mean, just in the process of trying to make everybody as fully dimensional as possible, that challenged me to be more empathetic and more compassionate towards her and her experience, and do research just so that I could get context for why she reacted the way she did. So when I was writing about my mom, especially in the later chapters, when I’m really reflecting on the journey our relationship took, I had to be like, “Well, why was she so scared of me being gay? Oh, it’s because you know, in Nicaragua, it was illegal to be gay until 2008 or 2006.” One of those. In Nicaragua, she didn’t know any openly gay people. When she immigrated to Miami in the eighties, what she encountered was just the AIDS epidemic, right, the AIDS crisis. And so she basically thought when I came out to her that I was just going to die. And so to try to protect me, she tried to do everything she could do to make me *not* gay, and make it clear that it wasn’t okay for me to be gay.

And while that was super traumatizing at the time, just having that extra context, and being able to understand that she wasn’t just being chaotic evil, but that she was trying to save me in her weird way, just helped me, I guess, extend more compassion towards her. While again, at the same time, it doesn’t excuse any of that, it just helps me. I feel like if she was just being chaotic evil, then I would live in a world where people are just acting horribly to me for no reason all the time. And so I’d rather get to the bottom of why they’re acting the way they are,and not pretend that they’re just acting on like, mean impulses, because at least that provides some kind of structure to the world. And I’m not just living in a chaos planet where people are just going to be awful for no reason. [laughs]

**Tuck:** I have read in a lot of other interviews you said something like, “I didn’t think this book was gonna get published, so that freed me up a lot while writing it.” But there’s also like a lot of, I would say like, gay cultural touchstones that you do take the time to explain—like you explain what poppers are; you explain a lot about what PrEP is; you explain Compton’s Cafeteria riot and Pulse and pride a little bit. So I’m curious at what point you decided to make sure to explain those things, and who you were imagining your audience being when you were doing that?

**Edgar:** Yeah, I think my audience really shifted a lot throughout the book. I mean, like I said, it took me seven years. So just like, I just grew a lot as a human being in that time. And a lot of what I wrote, I wrote for creative writing workshops, and then a lot of the creative writing workshops that I was in oftentimes, I was either the only queer person, or queer Latinx person, or one of very few. And because of some rules in workshops, where, like, for example, when you turn in a story, in the traditional workshop model, you’re not allowed to speak. So you basically sit in a room with people who read your story and just listen to them give you feedback, and you’re not allowed to say anything. Which is dumb, and I don’t do that when I teach. And it’s historic; it goes back to the Iowa Writers Workshop, but it’s supposed to replicate the real-world experience of how like, if somebody picks your book up at Barnes & Noble, they’re not going to have you right next to them to explain everything or if they have any questions. And so it’s supposed to replicate like the real world experience, but it’s also like another racist thing that I don’t really have to get into.

But in the workshop, I basically had to learn to anticipate what people were going to ask me about and just put that into the story. And so I remember when I first started, I would have lines like, “Trade forgot to bring poppers to the session,” or something like that. And I was sitting in a room and everybody would be like, “I don’t know what trade is. I don’t know what poppers are. What session? What are you talking about?” Well, there were like two camps. There was one camp that didn’t even bother to look it up. And there was another camp of person that would Google like, poppers or trade, and find these really antiquated definitions. For example, poppers: they would find out that it’s like a drug and they’d be like, “Oh my God, you’re a drug addict.” With trade, they would find like the antiquated definition of like, men who consider themselves straight, but have gay sex. And so people would be like, “Oh my God, you’re having sex with married men! Like, what is going on?”

And so gradually, I was like, “You know what, I’m just gonna try to weave in some of the definitions into the story; that way people just know.” And then I had to unlearn *that*, because I was like, then I started thinking about audience and I was like, “Well, my audience would know what trade is, what poppers are, what session I’m referring to.” And so I don’t need to do that. I don’t have to include these definitions. And it also made for really clunky sentences, because it would be like “trade—traditionally, a man who would blah blah blah, but now it’s just used to refer to men who are kind of masculine—forgot to bring the poppers….” And it was just really awkward. But ultimately, I reached a place where I was like, I want to write towards my intended audience, and my intended audience is queer Latinx people, but also queer people in general. And a lot of the things that I kind of provide definitions for, like poppers—those are things that I might not have known as a queer Latinx person when I was 16, 17. So for them, I don’t mind including those definitions, if I can do it in a way that isn’t super clunky, that doesn’t take anything away from the scene, or doesn’t pull you out, then sure, I’ll do that.

**Tuck:** Yeah, yeah, that makes total sense. I love that when you were doing your example you went into straight voice to define trade. You’re like [in a serious announcer tone] “Well, when two men…” [both laugh] I was thinking a lot about the ending—and I think this ties into a lot of other things we’ve already talked about, but—I don’t know if ambivalent is the right word, but you definitely end it with this tone of like, “Is coming out worth it? Sometimes it’s not. Sometimes it’s really hard and scary.” And I’m like, is this where we’re ending this book!? [Edgar laughs] And I don’t even know if I have a question. I’m just like, “What?” [Both laugh]

**Edgar:** Yeah. Well, I do feel it was worth it for me. But I didn’t want to speak to everybody else’s experience, because for a lot of people, it isn’t worth it. But the question of whether it is worth it is just something that was circling through my mind, basically in every chapter. I mean, there are people who don’t have to come out, but for a lot of people, that is a question you have to ask yourself, like, is it worth it? Like, should I do it? And when I was thinking about my audience, queer Latinx kids, I was like, I feel like they’re gonna be asking themselves the same question. And I want to give them an honest answer. And the answer for me was that it was worth it because of all of these amazing things that I got to experience. You know, I have like an amazing community of queer people around me. I get to go to gay bars and make out with randos at watch Drag Race.

There’s the fact that because queer people have been rejected by institutions like marriage and by the church, we get to define spirituality and relationships for ourselves. And then ultimately, one of the biggest things is like, I don’t have to hang out with straight people. That is like one of the things that makes it most worth it, because I think if I were still closeted and trying to, like maintain the illusion that I’m straight, I wouldn’t be hanging out with gay people. I would be hanging out with all straight men. And that just sounds exhausting. And so the fact that I don’t have to do it, that alone makes it worth it. Then again, I go on Grindr, and I see you know, a DL guy every other square, and for them, it isn’t worth it, or they wouldn’t be DL, right? And so I just wanted to make space for them too, and be like, it might not be worth it for you. And acknowledge just, the risk, because you do stand to risk a lot. But hopefully, there’s also like a lot that you can gain, and the risk might be worth it for you. So.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I feel like I just galaxy brained in the weirdest possible way because I’ve never seen a DL guy on Grindr and been like, “That guy is having a good time with his life.” But like, I feel like he could, you know? He could be! This could be what works for him, and for some reason that just never occurred to me. I was like, “Seems bad!”, because I just like, love to be gay, you know? But like, I guess it could be going well for him.

**Edgar:** Yeah. And sometimes I wonder about, I wonder if they’re scam artists. In that, in the queer community on Grindr, the idea of being DL is also kind of held on a pedestal, or it’s like, “Oh, my God, like, I got to hook up with a DL dude, he’s into me,” right? And I wonder how many of these people who claim to be DL are just saying that they’re DL to attract other people, but that’s neither here nor there. [laughs]

**Tuck:** Or to get an excuse to not show you, because they’ll be like, “I can’t show you a face pic. I’m DL.” And I’m like, “We were gonna meet! I was gonna see your face! Like, just tell me the face.” And they’re like, “No,” and I’m like, “Okay, goodbye.”

**Edgar:** Or they’ll show you their face and then just end up catfishing you, which has happened to me so many times. And one time I got catfished by a guy who was hotter than the picture that he sent me. And I was like “What is going on? Like why would, like…what was your motivation there?”

**Tuck:** Reverse catfish. I heard you’re working on another book that’s about money and how money affects queerness. Can you talk about that?

**Edgar:** Yeah, so High-Risk Homosexual felt like my gay book. And in the process of writing it, like, obviously, it’s my life. So there were intersections of class. And I just didn’t feel like I got to explore that as much as I wanted to. And so now the next book is going to be all about money and class, and about growing up poor and how the lessons I learned helped me survive as a queer Latinx adult. And I’m really, I’ve been thinking a lot about the idea of strength, and how a lot of times when people will talk about something that they’ve experienced, or trauma, they’ll be like, “Oh, but in the end, it made me stronger,” to try to like tie a neat little bow on it. And I’m trying to push back on that and be like, “No, growing up poor did not make me strong at all.” Growing up poor made me hungry, you know, it made me desperate, it made me kind of evil sometimes. But it didn’t make me strong. And so yeah, I’m trying to push back on that and talk about what it did make me, and all the positive things that that it made of me.

When it comes to queerness, sexuality, and gender, there are so many ways that money impacted that. For example, I’m working on a chapter about working at a gay bar in Hell’s Kitchen called Industry, where I was a cocktail server and I also did coat check for a minute, and how I sort of had to butch myself up to make tips, and really start thinking even more so about how gender is such a performance. And it’d be funny because I’d be in the back room, and all of the bartenders and other cocktail servers would be like, “Oh, hey, girl, oh, how was, you know, ballet class?” and they’re all like, you know, Broadway actors and stuff. And then they would emerge from, you know, the back room and stick their chest out and be all tough to make money. And so that’s just one specific way that those intersections collide.

**Tuck:** Interesting. Well, I’m excited to one day see it. No rush, you just put a book out, but just one day. Well, the way we always end the show is by asking, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**Edgar:** So for me, I am ready for all queer, trans, gender nonconforming people to enter our villain eras. I want more villain representation. I want an evil trans billionaire. I want just, like, mayhem and destruction and rampage. [laughs] So that is my ideal future.

**Tuck:** It’s so interesting because I feel like if you look at Disney, we’ve only been allowed to be villains, right? Like, queer villain only.

**Edgar:** And I love that for us, and I want *more*. I want there to be a billionaire politician who signs a Don’t Say Straight bill. I want every straight book to be banned. You know on Ok—have you ever been on OkCupid?

**Tuck:** Yes. I don’t want to see or be seen by straight people.

**Edgar:** That’s exactly it. [laughs] You knew exactly what I was gonna say. Yeah, that’s exactly what I want.

**Tuck:** Absolutely.

**Edgar:** Or alternately, and I feel like this could lead down a dark path, but I would also not mind if there was like, a queer island where we all just went and got to chill there, and then everybody can have the rest of the planet and we just have this island. But that seems like it could go dark. [laughs]

**Tuck:** That’s Fire Island, I think! [laughs]

**Edgar:** Oh, yeah! [laughs]

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

**Tuck:** That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. If you had a good time or learned something, please consider sharing this episode with someone else who might like it. You can find Edgar at edgargomez.net, and their book high risk homosexual is available at softskull.com or wherever you get books. Special thanks this week to Rebecca Kling for writing our This Week in Gender segment. You can learn more about Rebecca and her great work at rebeccakling.com. We are @gendereveal on Twitter and Instagram and at genderpodcast.com, where you can find transcripts of every episode, an FAQ page, and a list of previous grant winners, among other things.

And speaking of which, don’t forget that our spring grant is currently open for applications at bit.ly/tpoc22, and you can learn more about everything about our grant program at genderpodcast.com/grant. Of course, 98% of our budget comes from donations from listeners like you. That includes the grant funds, that includes the money we used to pay Rebecca; it also includes the money we use to pay me and Ozzy. So, if you’re up to help us keep the show running, please consider joining us at patreon.com/gender. We’ve also got a lot of really excellent, aggressively trans merch available, plus some stuff for allies. It’s all available through the end of the month at bit.ly/gendermerch.

This episode was produced and edited by Ozzy Llinas Goodman and by me, Tuck Woodstock. Our logo is by 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 about gender.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

**Tuck:** Well, you mentioned Drag Race in passing, and you do have a chapter in the book about going to DragCon also, and I’m just looking for any excuse to talk about this season because none of the queens are allowed to come on my show and I think that’s transphobic. So are you watching it, and tell me your thoughts and feelings!

**Edgar:** [gasps] Wait, they’re not allowed to come on your show?!

**Tuck:** Yeah, the company that represents the show gets to decide what press they do. And they’re just like, no one’s coming on your show. And I’m like, but they’re all trans. You have to let them talk to me.

**Edgar:** Wow. I know, especially this season. I live for it. Yeah, this was a very interesting season. Weirdly one of my favorites was Jasmine Kennedie because she just has this relentless positive energy that I was attracted to. And so yeah, I kind of miss her. But I mean, the frontrunners for me are Angeria and Willow. I’m kind of over Bosco. Oh my god, I hope—do—yeah, I don’t know—I feel—I don’t want to—

**Tuck:** I don’t think Bosco listens to this podcast. If so, Bosco, come on the podcast! [laughs] But…

**Edgar:** Who are you rooting for?

**Tuck:** Willow, and then everyone else second. Jasmine did have really powerful positive energy in the face of just everyone shitting on her; I think she did great. I just was so glad that Jorgeous finally went home, not because I’m anti-Jorgeous but because it was getting ridiculous.

**Edgar:** Hellotus! The thing about Jorgeous is that she’s a stoner, and when you go on the show—this is so fucked up—they don’t let them smoke. Yet they give them all the alcohol they want, right? And so obviously they’re different, and they’re probably detoxing and experiencing withdrawal.

**Tuck:** I’m just glad that they don’t have to detransition to go on the show, you know, because they used to. So I’m like well, okay, first step, you can be trans.

**Edgar:** Yeah.

**Tuck:** Second step, you can be trans and a stoner, and then we’ll just go from there.