**Tuck:** Queer Candle Co is a trans-owned business that makes small-batch, hand-poured soy wax candles topped with a variety of botanicals. My favorite thing about Queer Candle Co is that 10% of profits get donated to the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, and if you buy an orange grove candle this month, which is their special pride month scent, they will donate extra money on top of that. Best of all, you can get 10% off your first order with the promo code GENDER10. That’s all at queercandleco.com.

[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 *so* hyped to share my conversation with Fran Tirado, who you might know from the hit podcasts Like a Virgin and Food 4 Thot. In this episode, Fran and I start by talking about faggotry as a gender, and the continued obsession with pronouns.

**Fran [voice clip]:** I kinda want to be like, “I care about a lot of other things related to my gender. Do you want to know about those?”

**Tuck:** Before moving on to talk about queer reality TV, trans Sex and the City, and whether it’s important to find partnership.

**Fran [voice clip]:** I would love a nice strong thembo to do household tasks for me.

**Tuck:** But first, just a reminder, we’ve got so much merch in our shop this month for Pride. We restocked a bunch of your favorites, like the $5 Misgendering Fee stickers. Plus, we’ve got three new designs, including two that actually say “Gender Reveal” on them for once! Can you even imagine? As always, profits are split between trans artists and trans organizations, and everything disappears out of the store at the end of the month. So check it all out before it’s gone at bit.ly/gendermerch.

Also, there are two podcasts I need to tell you about this week. Full disclosure, these are technically ads, but I also wouldn’t take the ads if I didn’t genuinely like these shows. So, the first podcast I think you’ll really enjoy is LGBTQ&A, hosted by Jeffrey Masters. They’ve got a new LGBTQ elders series that features conversations with the oldest members of our community. This includes people like Barbara Satin, who is an 87-year-old trans woman who talks about how the trans experience today compares to 50 years ago. LGBTQ&A also has an interview with me, if you’re looking for a good episode to start with**—**not for the elders series**,** just in general. You can subscribe and listen to these interviews on LGBTQ&A right now**—**that’s Q&A with an ampersand.

The other podcast I want to tell you about is Zoned Out. Zoned Out is a podcast that examines the capitalist city, and attempts to imagine how the socialist city could replace it. The show is hosted by Rynn, an urban planner and a person who does have a last name but really values privacy. She does deep dives into various facets of urban geography, planning, and economics in this monthly podcast. You can listen to the show wherever you listen to podcasts and can support the show at patreon.com/zonedoutpodcast. I am so glad we are talking about Zoned Out today particularly, and to find out why, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

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

**Rynn:** Hello there, I’m Rynn from Zoned Out, the podcast about socialist cities you might have heard about. There’s really not a lot of good news for us lately as trans people, so that makes clinging to the bright spots all the more important. I reached out to Tuck and Ozzy about one of those bright spots from Madison, Wisconsin, and they invited me to do a little segment about it. So here I am.

[Gentle background tones begin playing]

**Rynn:** Madison is the capital of Wisconsin, and is generally known as one of the most liberal places in the Midwest. The local government makes an effort to support the trans community here as well, offering trans-inclusive health insurance to staff**—**​​a rarity in employment**—**and having a nondiscrimination ordinance protecting gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodation. That said, being the state capital, reactionary political groups descend on the city from time to time as well.

This is what happened on a Saturday in April, when the local Women’s Liberation Front chapter leader booked Madison Central Library’s main conference room to host Sisters4Sisters, a TERF conference inviting transphobic cis women from across the country to come together and talk about how much they hate trans people. The library asked the city attorney if they could block the event from occurring at library property, but the city attorney said the First Amendment trumps local nondiscrimination ordinances**—**which, of course, begs the question, what exactly are those ordinances for, then? I feel this was a dubious justification, and an example of how trans lives are still treated as abstract concepts rather than flesh and blood human beings, but that’s beside the point. The library did not require any staff to work at the central branch during the event if they did not want to, though, so that’s good.

Now, it sucks that this event happened, and the TERFs did a lot of awful things while they were in Madison that I don’t feel it’s necessary to get into. But the upshot is that it gave the Madison trans community the opportunity to show up for one another in truly spectacular fashion. If you were a trans person or trans ally in Madison on that April Saturday, and you wanted to publicly show up for trans people, you had at least four different ways of doing it. And each of these events individually had equal to or greater than the number of people at the TERF event.

If you like to bike, you could go to the Ride Against Hate, where more than 60 people showed up to bike down Madison’s main street, Washington Avenue, to the Capitol Building and Central Library Saturday morning. The TERFs were planning a bike ride of their own, but ended up canceling it, and I imagine one reason they did that is because they saw how many trans-supportive cyclists were going to show up, in a city where cyclists are known for being aggressive.

If you wanted to confront the TERFs directly, there were protests all day outside the Central Library and at the Capitol Building, where protesters outnumbered the TERFs two to one. Trans Advocacy Madison on Instagram posted a glowing review by an anonymous TERF, who said of the protests, “The Madison trans supremacy activists are pretty strong. They brought a lot of signs, they brought a lot of people, and they brought a lot of noise.” Hell *yeah* they’re strong! Transphobes are not going to be suffered in Madison. Also, trans supremacy something-something, equality looks like oppression when you’re used to privilege something-something.

Madison Public Library also hosted a trans-positive, day-long event at a different branch, Sequoia Library, which included crafts and storytime for kids, as well as a panel conversation by trans people talking about a variety of trans-related topics. This event was organized by the library staff’s LGBTQ+ affinity group. More than 100 people showed up to the panel discussion alone, not counting all the people who came through for the other activities. The TERFs couldn’t even host the largest trans-related event at a Madison *library* on that day. Also, remember to support your local library, because in my opinion, libraries offer an amazing template for building more cooperative communities.

Finally, the biggest trans-positive event of the day was the Trans Day of Joy, organized by Outreach Madison, an LGBTQ+ community center and advocacy organization in the city. This event had a *lotería*, games, food, tote bags, and a clothing swap at Madison’s Botanical Garden, which is beautiful, if you haven’t been**.** This event drew more than 400 people, and was such a success that Outreach has said that they plan on making it an annual event going forward. That’s right**—**by hosting their pithy little 70-person conference, the TERFs ended up creating a wildly successful new annual Trans Pride in Madison. I have never personally witnessed a more perfect instance of poetic justice in my life. Also, shoutout to my friend who volunteers at Outreach and introduced me to Gender Reveal. You rock!

Look, is Madison a trans paradise? Obviously not. Transphobia happens even when the TERFs aren’t flying in from all over the country to do it. However, on this April Saturday, the Madison community stood firm against transphobia, and that deserves some celebration. I’m so proud of the Madison community for turning what could have been a very dark weekend into a triumph of solidarity and trans joy that will persist for years to come. Be safe. And if you’re able, show up for each other however you can, because the world isn’t creating many bright moments for us right now, but we can still find ways to make bright moments for ourselves.

[Gentle tones come to a close]

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

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

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

**Tuck:** Fran Tirado is a writer, podcaster, and creator in queer entertainment. You should listen to their new show, Like a Virgin, with Rose Dommu.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

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

**Fran:** I would describe myself gender-wise as WIP: work in progress. An ongoing project that’s definitely, you know, crystallized in a lot of ways over the last two years. I identify as gender nonconforming; I consider myself also a faggot. I consider myself in the trans community, on the trans spectrum. I don’t know, and I’m a little futchy, like I don’t even know how to describe my gender a lot of the time! I feel like it really is in and out. I think I had a lot of anxiety answering that question for a while, like when the pronouns thing comes around, I often just don’t care a lot about how I’m referred to. But over the years, I think I’ve come to terms with the fact that it’s actually a lot more comfortable to not know. I am comfy not having total clarity on where I am gender-wise, and I think that that should be okay. Because especially where we are culturally, like where we’ve arrived on the gender conversation, now everyone has to lead with their gender and pronouns, and I just want to make the space okay enough to be like, you know, “Kind of this, kind of that, and the rest, I don’t really know!”

**Tuck:** Yeah, I mean, with pronouns, I’m trying to remember for the show, because that’s one of the contexts where I do need to ask them, to phrase it as like, “What would you like us to refer to you as on this show?” Because I think that’s a different question than “What pronouns do you use?” You know, maybe you have a preference for this context**—**I know when people ask me, I’ll skew it a little bit based on who’s talking to me. But speaking about *me* and my feelings, I am so excited you mentioned faggotry, because I was thinking about how increasingly when people ask me my gender, for whatever reason**—**it’s almost always a cis person interviewing me for something**—**I want to give them a printable answer, but I also feel like the answer increasingly is “faggot.” There’s not a more accurate one. Do you see faggot as a distinct gender?

**Fran:** Absolutely. I was literally thinking about this earlier today. Or rather, I’m kind of thinking about it every single day. But the word faggot, I think, is a lot more versatile than people let it. And I think that nine times out of ten, when we’re saying faggot, usually intra-communally, we as queers are saying the word faggot, we’re kind of saying it in a pejorative way to refer to cis gay men. And obviously, that is how it’s predominantly been used. But I think my kind of concept of faggotry and how I understand it includes trans people, includes trans women that identify as faggots, includes people that are on the margins of even queerness, sometimes. I think a lot about Larry Mitchell, *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions*, and how the kind of conceit of that book and the fable that it tells is a distinction between men and faggots, and how there is such a kind of**—**there’s a complete separation between assimilationist gays**—**not to demonize them, of course**—**but there’s a huge difference between assimilationist gays and faggots. And to me, I think that my gender in faggotry is so much different than the people I’ll bump into in West Hollywood, or the girls that go to Thai tea. You know what I mean?

**Tuck:** Mm-hm. What pronouns should we use for you on this? Do you care?

**Fran:** Yeah, I don’t really care! I use—I’ve been using she and they pronouns more these days, but I’m not really, you know—I mean, this is just for me. And I’m gonna say this because I’m on Gender Reveal, okay, I wouldn’t say this anywhere**—**but for me and me alone, I think pronouns are boring. And I think that on paper, they should be purely functional pieces of speech that don’t actually have to have all the cultural meaning that we place on them. What’s important to me is that I’m not referred to as a man**—**that you never call me sir, or boy, or mister, or whatever. That is kind of where I start to get bothered. And I know this is not true for everyone; it’s just true for me—when it comes to how my pronouns are right now, I don’t really care.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I mean, I just think that it’s such a common sentiment *because* I think that cis people who are trying to be allies took pronouns, and they’re like, “Oh, it turns out that being an ally is simply obsessing over parts of speech.”

**Fran:** *Obsessing!*

**Tuck:** It’s like, “Okay, you’re actually doing this way too much, or thinking about this way too hard. Please stop.”

**Fran:** Ob-*sessing*.

**Tuck:** “Do literally anything else.”

**Fran:** Yeah, and I mean, I don’t want to go there, but not *just* cis people. Obviously cis people are kind of very reactively responding to a cultural moment we’re in. Movement workers, activists, people on the gender spectrum have been pushing and pushing and pushing for there to be more attention around pronouns. And so I don’t want to take that away from people that have been doing that work. It is really important that we as a society acknowledge the very gendered structures that our everyday**,** our modus operandi exists within, because that is painful for trans people to experience all the time. But as is the case with anything driven by social media and driven by cultures of fear, of course, you know, cis people are going to overcorrect and maybe place too much import, in my opinion, on pronouns sometimes, and queer and trans people as a byproduct of that, ride the cultural waves and lean into it. And I think the reason I said, you know, it’s not just cis people, is because I do often feel like people are kind of forcing me to care about it a lot more than I should. And it makes me feel like I’m not trans enough or something. But I think it’s just a failure to kind of understand a spectrum of transness. Like the other day, someone asked me my pronouns, and I was like, “Oh, you know, I don’t care,” which isn’t always my answer, but if I really don’t have the spoons that day, I will just be like, “Oh, I don’t care.” And they’ll be like, “You don’t care!?” Like, they say it in kind of a way that’s *accusatory*. I kinda want to be like, “I care about a lot of other things related to my gender. Do you want to know about those?” Like, if that’s what you’re asking, but I don’t know. I think it’s interesting, what we’ve done culturally.

**Tuck:** For me, when I’m more secure in my gender, I have more flexibility around the way that people are talking about me, because I just need them to know who I am, like you said. I want them to know who I am as a person, and as long as I feel that that is true, I do not care what they’re saying because I know that they’re using it in a way that is affirming to me. And I’ll give you an example, and it’s that when you emailed me back, I think you called us “girls” collectively, and it took me about five minutes for it to hit. And I was like, “Fran just called me a girl,” and it didn’t register because it was so clearly like the gay “she” type of girl that I was just like, “Ah yes, that is gender affirming to me.” Like, it did not occur to me to not feel affirmed by that until like five hours later.

**Fran:** Did I really?

**Tuck:** Yeah, but that’s the thing is like I knew exactly what you meant and it did not in any way register as bad. Whereas if you were a cis person, I would be like, “Excuse me, ma’am/sir.” [Laughs]

**Fran:** That is funny. Yeah, it’s so funny that there is a queer, colloquial, gender-neutral “girls.”

**Tuck:** Exactly.

**Fran:** But like my friend Mikelle Street once said very wisely, about the queer colloquial “girl,” he said, “Listen, when it comes to queer people, everyone is the girls. Except for the boys.” [Both laugh] And I think that’s so fucking funny, because it is kind of true. Like, I’m obviously specifically talking about transmasc people. And outside of that, everyone else really is “the girls” to me. And I do think that nine times out of ten if you’re in community with people, it is okay sometimes to say “you guys” or “you girls” if you are in good company, where you know everyone kind of jives with that. I, myself, I do get really bothered sometimes when I feel kind of gender microaggressions in the everyday, from strangers or people I don’t know that well. And for the most part, I tend to feel like the path of least resistance is the one for me, like I would much rather not make myself miserable getting mad about it.

And that is, I’m sure of, a privilege. Or rather, maybe this is my own gender**—**my gender insecurity here, but I feel like for as long as I have a mustache, and this is so true, I wish facial hair wasn’t this polarizing intra-communally and outside of the trans community, but for as long as I have a mustache, I’m always going to have**—**at least in someone else’s eyes**—**a kind of privilege of how I am perceived on a day to day as a man. And that is an ongoing conversation for me internally. But I also know that I’m just not going to have the same kind of experience of gender as everyone else. And so that’s something I’m very cognizant of when I’m working through how I exist in a day to day as someone on the trans spectrum. And so, you know, I don’t ever want to conflate my experience of gender with other people’s. But yeah, it is a kind of ongoing thing.

**Tuck:** I mean, it is really funny to hear you be like, “Oh, well, I’m always**”—**I’m not saying you’re wrong, because I don’t know what your life is, but to be like, “Oh, I have this privilege because I have a mustache,” looking at what you are wearing right now…

**Fran:** [Laughs] My embroidered doily cami.

**Tuck:** You’ve got a green manicure coming into and out of the frame, you’ve got this doily cami with pink butterflies on it, and I’m like, “Yeah**—**”

**Fran:** And a pearl necklace.

**Tuck:** Yeah, and a pearl necklace, “That person’s not going to have any problems with their gender being perceived.” No, it’s fine. But anyway, you co-host two podcasts. I’d love to talk about the podcasts, but I know you’re always working on a bazillion things.

**Fran:** I am.

**Tuck:** So are there things you’re working on that are not the podcasts that we should know about?

**Fran:** Yeah, Like a Virgin takes up most of my time these days, my podcast with Rose Dommu about pop culture told through a trans perspective. But I’m finishing a book right now. And by finishing a book, I mean, finishing the proposal. [Tuck laughs] I really want to try, I’ve been working….I kind of had an idea about two years ago that I was really jazzed about. And then two years happened and I was like, “No, this isn’t really the book I wanted to write anymore.” And so I finally kind of set myself free, and I’m writing the book that I really want to write. I mean, I shouldn’t even jinx it. But yeah, I’m writing a book about how movement work and a popularization, if not commodification, of activists and activism has created a very interesting kind of justice culture that has been accepted into the mainstream that got strong after 2016 and then shifted, you know, irreversibly in 2020. You know, it’s kind of a cultural criticism, kind of an assessment of how we, as people, exist in a very new society wherein we’re trying to use brand new tools to fix very old machines. And that that doesn’t always work when we’re trying to just do good in the world, so to speak. And then a lot of that is wrapped up in the question of representation and what kind of visibility has a part to play when it comes to things like celebrity advocacy, institutional justice stuff, corporations creating nonbinary M&Ms and people greenlighting shows about activists competing against each other, like, when activism gets wrapped up in capital, what happens? And so that’s kind of what the book is about.

**Tuck:** I’m so extremely hyped for this book. I am thrilled to hear about this. I have so many questions that will be answered by this book. But let’s talk about the representation of it all, because I think that’s an easier thing to get into, and there’s so much discourse about representation that I don’t even know if there’s a specific thing I want to pick apart, but I was talking the other week on this show about representation, and I was like, “Look, this isn’t a new observation, but I am re-realizing that even though there is more gay representation, I’m not seeing more examples of gays having a good time, and actually, I’ve decided that that’s what I need.” But I understand that other people need very different things, and that some people want all of the queer and trans representation to be very, very overt and specific, whereas I think some of us older**—**and I’m not old, but you and I think are the same age**—**but older than Gen Z, are so used to it being implicit that I almost don’t even know what to do with myself when there’s overt trans representation. I’m like, “Wait, what? You have perceived us? You know about us? Maybe that’s bad. Maybe I don’t want you to know about us, maybe I don’t want you to have TV about us.” So I’m just curious where you land on this spectrum of what you think we should be asking for or demanding or looking for in terms of representation.

**Fran:** [Deeply sighs] It’s tough. Okay. Like, anybody that knows me knows that I am extremely critical, but also a complete cornball. So obviously, I could be really mad about something like the Queer Eye reboot, or Heartstopper, or, you know, whatever, things like that. Or I could also just revel in the fact that it exists and keep going.

**Tuck:** Well, that’s what I’m saying, is I accidentally was really, really impacted by Heartstopper, and I’m like, “God dammit. Shut up! Shut up!”

**Fran:** Yes! How dare! How dare! I don’t know. This is an evolving conversation for me. And I honestly think every time I dive into this conversation, I leave with more questions than answers, which I think is very telling. As audiences, when we consume something, I think we approach representation in a way that is kind of often too esoteric. We are thinking like, “This doesn’t represent me specifically, and therefore it’s bad.” You know what I mean? And I think that sometimes that is a correct assessment, because sometimes the cultural object is trying to paint a picture of a certain community and is erasing a community within that. Sure. That’s totally real. But I think other times it’s like, the other day, I was talking about Euphoria. I’m unfortunately a Euphoria girl.

And I was talking about Euphoria and Hunter Schafer’s episode, the special episode where she talks about her gender in a therapy session, and I was talking to my other friend who’s trans, and they were like, “Yeah, but you know, it’s just really hard to watch that show and to think about how easy it is for Hunter to talk about that when so many Black trans people don’t have access to health care, blah blah blah.” And that wasn’t exactly what they said, but that was kind of the gist of what they said. And I was like, “Okay, well, your reaction to that is yours, and that is a valid reaction, and I think that there is worth inside how this show made you feel, but this is not a show about Black trans people.” It’s not. You know? Just because something is about transness doesn’t mean it’s about *all* trans people. To make something about all trans people would just set it up for failure. I think what this person was mad at is scarcity and the fact that we don’t have enough things out there documenting the lives and joy of Black trans people, and I think that is legitimate, but I’m not going to be mad at Euphoria for that. You know what I mean?

And I think that more and more, I’m always trying to remind people that we are not**—**the LGBTQ community as a demographic is an artifice. We comprise of so many different subcultures, and I just hope that with multiplicity of perspective, and the more and more things that we make, the more likely you are going to find, you know, your favorite show or your favorite movie. And that it’s disappointing that it takes a while to get around to some of those representations. But you don’t walk into When Harry Met Sally, and you’re like, “Oh, I just wish it was about the Cold War.” You know what I mean? It’s just not how we assess things on the other side. And I think that sometimes when we get over-critical of queer and trans objects, it’s kind of a product of the oppression. I’m not gonna lie.

**Tuck:** No, you’re 100% right. I think that when we’re thinking about trans and nonbinary characters, the same thing happened, maybe that happens with any—and this is gross to say, like, “trend” in media, where one thing is just replicated over and over and over again. So like, a critique I see by like, Tre’vell [Anderson] is that a lot of the nonbinary characters are all kind of the same nonbinary character replicated. And so I can hear someone be like, “I wish that there was representation of me,” but I wouldn’t put that**—**and no offense to your friend, I wasn’t in this conversation**—**but I wouldn’t put that on Euphoria specifically, I would just be like, “Wow, what if one of these ten shows that made the same nonbinary character played by a 23-year-old white trans masc is doing something else here?” You know? So, I don’t know. I understand the instinct, but I don’t think we need to blame an episode written by Hunter Schafer.

**Fran:** And that’s the other thing, is I think that we have to make space for queer and trans things to be mediocre, you know? I think that sometimes we don’t have to attack things. Sometimes it’s just fine. And if it wasn’t for you, it wasn’t for you. Like, just keep going. You don’t have to watch the show, you know?

**Tuck:** Well, there’s the queer habit of “anything that I personally don’t like is abuse and harm.”

**Fran:** Uh-huh!

**Tuck:** So I think we can put that on TV too. And it’s like, is this deeply problematic and should be canceled? Or did I just not really like this show that much? You know?

**Fran:** Yeah. Well, that’s the thing is we fall into this trap of self versus entity. And I think that is part of what creates the kind of punitive thing that I was talking about earlier of how, you know, we really have it out for each other when we get into these debates about holding certain cultural objects accountable to certain things. And I love those conversations, and I love those debates. But I think a lot of times, we make it more personal than it needs to be. And that’s obviously, you know, we’re all traumatized. Like, we all just have baggage, and we all have abandonment issues, and we all have things that, you know, make us the kind of fighters that we are, but I just always implore everyone to be as fluid as they can when they go into these conversations, because fluidity is our power, our superpower, first of all. But fluidity and how we think about things is going to be our ticket out. It will be the way we find resolution in the things that are not perfect, so to speak. But perfection is not the goal, obviously.

**Tuck:** Right. Well, a related question that I want to give so many more details about than I can on the show because of NDA reasons, but I was doing consulting for this LGBTQ reality show concept, and one of the ways that I was coping with the psychic damage of working on that project was to brainstorm for myself personally better queer reality show concepts that I would do if I was in charge, and then not telling them because of IP. And I was wondering, because when I was doing this, I was thinking of all of the queer and trans media people who’d be so good at making queer reality shows if they would just give us the money, and you’re one of the many people that I thought of.

**Fran:** Oh my god!

**Tuck:** So I was just wondering what you would do**—**again, don’t waste your IP, but what you would do if someone actually gave you creative control over any reality TV show, what would you want to do?

**Fran:** This is the perfect question for me. Thank you. I *love* reality TV. I myself really want to be on a dating show. If you listen to the episode of Like a Virgin with Honey Pluton, which is one of our best episodes, we brainstorm queer reality shows and it’s probably our funniest bit ever. And in it, I actually really love this idea of Fuckthey Island, a spinoff of Fuckboy Island**—**which is an amazing TV show about the crisis of heterosexuality, which is a crisis in this country right now that, you know, needs attention drawn to it. And how, you know, heterosexuality really is a prison that people are trapped in and we must, you know, free our brethren and our sisters. But if there was a spinoff that was a Fuckthey Island where in we put a bunch of gender diverse people that are, à la the eighth season of Are You the One**,** attracted to every gender, that to me would be *so good*! But I don’t know if I want to be a contestant on it or if I want to be one of the puppeteers.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Right!

**Fran:** If I want to be a psychological manipulator in that scenario, but I love reality TV as a vehicle for queer people, in large part because we are always underutilized in reality TV shows.

**Tuck:** Oh my god, yes.

**Fran:** And yet *we are drama*. We are centuries-old drama, and we know how to make it out of nowhere. But we also can resolve it a lot better than our cishet compatriots. You know what I mean? So yeah, I don’t know, I—thinking about a dating show, something like that. What about you?

**Tuck:** I mean, first I just want to say when I saw that eighth season of Are You the One, I was like, “I want to be on this show”—I was already probably too old to be cast on that show, now I’m hundreds of years old, because, you know, they cut it off at, what? Like 27, 26—but god, I was thinking about this and one, less a concept, but I think still strong, is Housewives-style following people around but it’s a polycule. [Fran gasps] And then as the polycule kind of breaks and fractures, we follow those different channels and that’s how you get new characters, and then at the end of every season, there is a three-part finale hosted by Andy Cohen. [Fran gasps] Yeah, I don’t know. I just—I think that the representation that I want to see the most in reality TV is actually just nonmonogamy, because so many shows are doing nonmonogamy while being like, “Monogamy is the most important thing in the world.” And something that I come back to is the one episode of The Bachelorette that I ever saw, where at the very first episode of the season, a guy gets thrown out for having a girlfriend back home, and the bachelorette is like, “How could you possibly do this?” And he’s like, “Aren’t you dating 30 guys right now?” and she’s like, “That’s different.” And I’m like, “It’s extremely not different.”

**Fran:** Wow, that’s so tea!

**Tuck:** Yeah. So just that kind of element of a show where instead of the premise being like, “Who is the one?” Being like, “Oh, maybe some of the drama is that there isn’t the one; there are weird messy triangles or hexagons or whatever.”

**Fran:** It like, yeah, there really is, it is “the one.” Like that’s all it’s about, in every reality TV show. And also in non-reality TV shows too! Like there is just no poly representation. But that is *good drama*. I just wonder if there are no openly poly—maybe it’s just like there are no openly poly people in Hollywood that care enough about it. Like, I’m sure if people are poly in Hollywood, they’re closeted, and so they’re never going to make something about it, you know?

**Tuck:** Yeah. Well, you’re a Taurus. I am energetically the opposite of a Taurus, but I used to read your newsletter, which had product recommendations among other things, and then I would after like 20 minutes, I would close the tab having in a fugue state spent $80 on like gay butt scrub and be like, “What the fuck just happened to me? Who am I?” Is that kind of self-care via doing nice—just the concept of doing nice things for yourself, is that something that comes naturally to you, or is that something that you had to work on to see yourself as someone who deserved those things?

**Fran:** I have kind of always been like that! My mom is very oriented around comfort and cheese boards and cozy blankets and things like that. Like I didn’t grow up rich; my family didn’t grow up with a ton, but we knew how to save up or to find opportunities wherein we could still find joy and comfort and things like that. And so I think I just always grew up as a joy seeker. I was taught to do that. But yeah, now it very much so is me. I have to set an ambiance, I have to have a nice candle and a playlist going and a good vibe. Like I love to have a party and hosting and I love to host people in a kind of space wherein we all feel psychosocially safe, and like we’re all happy to be there. I don’t know. I think that attention to detail is something that I’m always gonna have. But for self, I wouldn’t call it self-care. In fact, I think honestly, self-care has become another one of those meaningless buzzwords.

**Tuck:** Literally as soon as I said it, I was like, “Fuck, let me rephrase this.”

**Fran:** No, because—

**Tuck:** No, but it doesn’t mean things, is the thing.

**Fran:** Well, here’s the thing, the people that invented self-care, those are activists that were trying to make something big and then capitalism got ahold of it, and now it kind of means nothing and I feel very strongly that self-care does not mean, “I need to stay inside and not see anybody and indulge and pay for a bunch of things so that I feel better.” *Sometimes* it’s that. I love nice things. But other times, it looks communal. And to me, I’m all about community care, and I’m all about self-work. And I think that self-work is actually really hard. I think a lot of people that are looking for self-care are looking for the easy way. And I think that self-care in its truest form is still work; it still is difficult sometimes, and I think that yeah, you have to be honest with yourself about what your actual needs are in order to figure out what you are healing, if that makes sense.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I mean, we’re just coming back to the idea that people are seeing “think hard about pronouns” as easier than “rethink my entire concept of gender,” and people are seeing “buy bath bomb” as easier than “rethink my entire concept of self and community.” You know, it’s just like we’re all trying to cut corners and it’s not really working. Yeah, well, speaking of work, one thing that you and I have in common: we’re both not only professional homosexuals, but also have reputations for being people who are always working. So the thing is, in the times where I have worked for a corporation, it’s so easy to do the bare minimum and then clock off at 4pm and be like, “That’s enough for today.” But when my work is trying to keep trans people alive, raising money for trans people, it’s very hard to make myself take breaks and then sometimes my work is just very fun. Like my work for the last day has been like, “Listen to eight Fran podcasts and then talk to Fran,” and that’s fun and I want to do that. So I was just wondering if you have figured out a way to have work-life balance when your work is gay and fun, or if that’s even something that you aspire to.

**Fran:** My thinking has changed a lot on this. Yeah, in the last two years.

**Tuck:** Weird, Fran. Things keep changing for you in the past two years. What happened two years ago? [Laughs]

**Fran:** Yeah, what the fuck happened two years ago? I don’t know. It’s like a complete and total societal collapse puts things in perspective sometimes. But it really—so I’ll be real with you. I was**—**I still am**—**a workaholic. I’m a recovering workaholic. And I clocked kind of a number of hours on a New York day that were *ugly*. And I was very proud of that. And I think that everyone deserves a period in their twenties where they are hauling ass and really dead-set and laser-focused on the thing that they want to do with their life. I think that that is when you have this, you know, the metabolism and stamina to do that. Like that’s amazing. I just kept going and I broke my brain and I burnt out. And I think that I’ve been learning very slowly, and still am learning, how to value myself without using productive time as a metric for that. Because I do need to be productive around things, but I don’t need to conflate my self-worth with that. And I think that gets really hard because we learn from capitalism and the workforce, and the workforce teaches us to not have idle time.

I just read this book called *Do Nothing*. And it’s so, so good by Celeste Headley, and has a lot of research about the invention of the workforce. We as a country are—we clock the most hours out of almost any country, and yet we get the least amount of work done, and that people that take more vacations and do less work statistically through the roof always outperform the ones that overwork. Even**—**there were studies of ants in this book. And you think ants are like, “Oh, yeah, ants are the hardest-working animals in the kingdom,” or whatever. Like, they must work their asses off. But the study found that really only 30% of the ants were doing work at a given time and the rest were just chilling. Ants have superhuman levels of productivity. And so I think that as a society, and especially as freelancers, you and I, when we leave our nine-to-fives and our, you know, our nice healthcare, things that you know, we’re like, “I’m choosing freedom, and my time is gonna be my own, and I’m gonna be to my own devices!” And then you wake up every day at like 7:30 hunched over your computer being like, “Oh my god, I have to finish everything,” and you’re still punish—*I* was still punishing myself as a freelancer and working 24/7, honestly. And so I think that when your work is activism, that gets really hard. You know, my work-life balance basically doesn’t exist, because my work is very life-giving, right? But I think that in movement work, it’s imperative that you organize with other organizers so that when you are tired, other people can step in, you know what I mean?

**Tuck:** Yeah. Yeah, *I* *guess*.

**Fran:** Like when we do Brooklyn Liberation, that is a really, really, really difficult action that we do with a pretty lean team, all things considered. But we do all still overwork ourselves. And we have to challenge each other to take breaks, like we have to say, “Hey, you really have been working three late, late nights in a row, and so actually, how about I do this for you tonight?” You know? I think that’s kind of what it takes sometimes. But it’s hard. It’s hard to undo centuries of the ways we’ve learned how to do work. I just have to have that when I catch myself overworking, I just have to have that conversation with myself where it’s like, “You can just let yourself be,” because the reason you work is to live, you know, not vice versa.

**Tuck:** Well, that brings me to my other “Oh no, we have the same brainworms” question, which is that I come from a family of workaholics, and also a family with few to no models for successful relationships. And so I find myself being like, “Does it just make more sense to accept that I’m just going to be powered by work and friends and art and cats for the rest of my life?” Is that actually why**—**

**Fran:** And single forever?

**Tuck:** Yeah**—**“is that actually smart and wise of me to accept that? Or am I doing a weird defense mechanism and rejecting something before it can reject me?”

**Fran:** It’s definitely a defense mechanism, I promise.

**Tuck:** It is for sure!

**Fran:** I’m sure it’s legitimate.

**Tuck:** I was laughing because you have said, you said like so many times, like my inspiration is Eartha Kitt, Fran Lebowitz, Tracee Ellis Ross. And I feel like when you say this in a vacuum, it’s like, “Mm. Yes. Wise. Good. They’re women who never need anybody.”

**Fran:** Never need anyone.

**Tuck:** Like it’s just them and they’re—

**Fran:** Yeah.

**Tuck:** And then I heard you say it on Food 4 Thot and everyone just laughed, and they’re like, “Babe, like, are you okay?”

**Fran:** They don’t get it!

**Tuck:** Like, “That’s pathological.” And I was like, “Oh, no, this is me. Everyone’s laughing at me!”

**Fran:** No, I’m so glad you relate to it, because it is something of a defense mechanism. It’s a means of telling yourself—and I think it’s, it sounds sociopathic, but I think it has healthy intentions—

**Tuck:** We’re trying!

**Fran:** The intention of health! [Laughs] That’s such bullshit. All I’m trying to do is create a world for myself wherein it’s okay if I don’t find anyone. And it is a defense mechanism. And I think that you don’t want that to be a story you tell yourself. I think it sometimes is a story I tell myself that you know, “I’m just going to be this loner and I’m going to be everyone else’s auntie forever,” which I would honestly, like, I’m so excited to be everyone’s auntie, like, I’m ready. But I also know that it’s too easy to kind of resolve to the narrative you’ve kind of built for yourself, and I don’t want that for me either. But Eartha, Tracee Ellis Ross, you know, all those people, they are like models for a kind of solo girlhood that I would be so happy with at the end of my life.

But when André Leon Talley died, that was a pretty big shift for me as well. Because one of the big sentiments that came out of things about him was that he was sad he never found love. And he very specifically in interviews used himself as a cautionary tale to say, “Hey, my life is fabulous, I love my life, but I regret this. And all the little babies out there shouldn’t do the same thing.” That was a huge shift for me, because I am someone who—I mean, I was gonna say like André, but I could never hold a candle to André. But obviously, I would love to emulate André in being someone who is fabulous, who is known for their contributions to culture and to conversation, someone who is known for convening spaces and making everyone feel good in that space, like that is my joy, and cultural criticism was his currency as it was mine. And I would be so happy for that to be my legacy. But I don’t want to do that totally alone. And I am investing now in trying to date people and trying to—I would love a partner. I would love a, you know, a nice strong thembo to do household tasks for me. I really like**—**I can barely take care of myself. I feel like sometimes it’s hard to do this alone.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Every piece of Ikea furniture and every hanging potted plant I have in my house has either been built by someone I was dating at the time or my roommate and I’m just like, you know, I can’t. Sometimes I’m like, “I’m a strong independent whatever and I can do all of this myself,” and then I go to Ikea and then I’m like, “Fuck, I actually can’t and I won’t.”

**Fran:** Oh my god! It’s so hard. I just have art that I’ve been wanting to hang forever, like little household tasks, like any sort of manual labor I am very resistant to!

**Tuck:** Same. But you know, I have an important dyke roommate for that. Like, I don’t need to date!

**Fran:** Yes! That’s what they’re there for.

**Tuck:** Yeah, exactly. God. Ah. All right, good. Bleak, good. Well, we’re recording this three or four days before Pride, releasing it sometime in Pride. I feel like before I go, I should ask you if you have any sort of hopes, dreams, nightmares, or predictions for this Pride season.

**Fran:** I mean, I just hope that we can all find joy in it. I hope that we can all be less cynical. You know, capitalism really ruins a lot of the things that make this month really great. And I think that that has created an entire class of queer and trans people that think Pride is some kind of joke because it *is*, like, it really is a joke most of the time. And it is a funny joke to make—like I love Pride jokes. But I’m literally flying to New York for the entire month of June so I can soak up my fam. And it’s not *because* it’s Pride month, but there will be tons of parties for us to go to. And we’re gonna have that day on Riis Beach where everyone goes instead of going to the parade and it’s the most beautiful day of the entire year. And that, to me, is what Pride is about. And I think that using your energies to create specialness and celebration of your own construction is how you learn to love Pride, because just going to, you know, whatever party Uber is throwing or Chase Bank or, you know, Fluid Beauty or whatever, it’s like yeah, all those things are great, but that’s not going to be the kind of “Aha!” moment of why you love your community, why you love being queer, why this whole month exists in a legacy of sacred activism that changed all of our lives, you know? That to me is something that’s worth going ham for. And I think that as soon as everyone can learn to do their own beach days, their own barbecues, have, you know, theater shows, productions, plays, make art, find a reason to love this month. And use it as an excuse to get out of work! You know what I mean? Like, stop working and just enjoy yourself. This is what the celebration is about, you know?

**Tuck:** I love that. This is a part of the show where I ask if there’s anything else we haven’t talked about yet that you want to talk about?

**Fran:** I mean, I guess I will say when I say, “make art together,” I’m trying to make a show right now. I’m putting it out into the world. I don’t care if it’s a fuckin’ web series that I have to do on Kickstarter. But I’m in a moment where I just want to make shit with my friends. And I want to cast my friends and I want to produce with my friends and ideate with my friends and I want to scam someone into paying for that.

**Tuck:** Yes!

**Fran:** You know what I mean? I think that is the tea and the show that I’m working on right now is a kind of trans Sex and the City called Saturn Return that I would never trust**—**I mean, I would totally sell the show to an HBO Max or whatever. But I don’t think, you know, I would have to make so many compromises. And so I would love to figure out how to do it on my own. And it is, the show is like a love letter to drag and to nightlife and I’m just excited to rev the engines on it. It’s kind of embarrassing to talk about, honestly, because it doesn’t even exist yet. But I’m looking for, you know, showrunners and production leads who can partner with me on a vision with all my Brooklyn fam to make it. I mean, that’s the curse of being on the west coast; it’s like all of a sudden you become a screenwriter. But it really is something that is fun and comes naturally to me, because my first love was playwriting when I was in high school.

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

**Fran:** I don’t know if I have a concrete answer. But in the future of gender, I would hope that it’s something that we can find joy and play in. Like I think gender, no matter where you are on the spectrum, is a playground. And I think that the majority of the conversations surrounding gender right now are really somber, and really taxing, and really confusing. And also everyone wants to be right. And I just don’t really feel like my gender is something that I need to enforce. And the kind of lack of joyful conversations around gender, obviously a consequence of a lack of proper health, a lack of proper legislation, a lack of truly**—**resources and safety around whether or not we feel safe. And so obviously, the world that I’m imagining doesn’t exist for a lot of reasons, but I do wish for a day where we can one day arrive at a place where gender makes us happy all the time. And that other people’s genders don’t threaten our gender. And I don’t just mean that from cis people; I mean that with trans people too. You know? ’Cause there are a lot of like…trans people are really mean! [Laughs] Like, I just feel like a lot of times we fight intra-communally, and it’s just not what utopia looks like and so I don’t know, I just**—**I want us to be better to each other. That’s all.

[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 share this episode with your friends and community. You can find Fran @fransquishco across platforms as well as on Instagram @likeavirgin42069. They’re also of course on the podcasts Like a Virgin and Food 4 Thot, which, by the way, also features Denne Michele Norris, another Gender Reveal alumna. We are @gendereveal across platforms and at genderpodcast.com, where you can find transcripts of every episode and all sorts of other resources. If you like what we do here at Gender Reveal, please consider supporting the show at patreon.com/gender. By signing up, you’ll automatically get access to our weekly newsletter and our monthly bonus podcast, plus you’ll just be helping us continue to make the show. We’ve also got a ton of really good merch in the store right now through the end of the month, so take a look at all of our new designs before they’re gone at bit.ly/gendermerch.

This episode was produced and edited by Ozzy Llinas Goodman and by me, Tuck Woodstock. Special thanks this week to Rynn for producing our This Week in Gender segment; you can find her podcast Zoned Out in all the podcast places. 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. Throw a brick at a cop.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

**Tuck:** I was just talking to Imogen Binnie last week, and she**—**

**Fran:** Casual, casual, talking to Imogen Binnie last week. Okay, cool. Flex, flex!

**Tuck:** [Laughs] But she says in the episode, she’s like, “I never actually tried to do screenwriting because I didn’t think it was even possible for me; someone just reached out and asked me,” and I know also Tommy [Pico], someone basically just reached out and asked him and I’m like, “Excuse me, when will someone just out of nowhere, with no effort on my part—”

**Fran:** Yeah! No effort! [Both laugh]

**Tuck:** “—Ask me directly.”

**Fran:** I want to be clear, I don’t want to make any effort!

**Tuck:** Exactly! Exactly! I want to do no work.

**Fran:** Just to be clear, all I want to do is talk about it on podcasts, and I want someone to come to me and tell me that they can make my dreams come true.

**Tuck:** Literally yes!