[*Gender Reveal* theme music plays]

**Molly:** 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, Molly Woodstock.

Friends - Happy Pride!

[Harp sounds]

The sheer power of this gayest and transest of months has compelled Gender Reveal back into existence. In fact, we’re coming back just a little bit early because we are currently being featured on Spotify alongside a number of queer podcast stalwarts like Queery, Food for Thot, whatever Jonathan Van Ness’ show is called, and I thought we’d celebrate being on the Spotify homepage with a new episode.

So, to our old friends, thank you so much for sticking with us through the break, thank you to all of our new friends and new Patreon buddies who joined us in the last few months, and thank you to everyone who’s reviewed the show on Apple Podcasts. I hadn’t looked at that in a long time, and I checked it the other day, and we have more than 250 5-star ratings, and so many sweet reviews about how the show changed your life, and it just means the world to me to see that. So thank you so much for all your support in its various forms.

This week on the show, we’re going to answer a big stack of gender questions with friend of the show Zee Griffler, but before we do that, some big exciting news since the last time we spoke: there is now a Gender Reveal newsletter. It goes out most Mondays, and it’s available for pay what you can on Patreon. I share sneak peeks of upcoming interviews, I talk way more about my personal life than I ever do on the show, and you can expect so many photos of my cats. So if you’re interested in that, head to patreon.com/gender, donate any amount, and our future newsletters will show up in your inbox, and you also get access to all past newsletters. I have a lot of exciting news about upcoming episodes, and upcoming developments for Gender Reveal that I’m excited to share, and I will share it in the newsletter first.

OK, there has been a truly outrageous amount of trans-related news since we’ve been on hiatus, so let’s get right to a segment that we call This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender theme music plays]

**Molly:** This Week in Gender, I wanna talk about the World Health Organization, which we well henceforth call the WHO. The WHO is a specialized agency of the United Nations. It is focused on global public health, and it publishes a manual called the International Classification of Diseases, or ICD, which you can think of as a standard diagnostic tool for the whole world, similar to the DSM, which you might have heard of, but covering a broader range of conditions. So until recently, “Gender Identity Disorder” was listed in the ICD as a mental disorder. But, on May 25th of this year, the WHO approved a resolution that would remove Gender Identity Disorder from the ICD, and in its place would add something called Gender Incongruence, which is defined as a “marked and persistent incongruence between an individual’s experienced gender and the assigned sex.”

A really important thing to know is that while Gender Identity Disorder was listed as a mental illness, Gender Incongruence appears in the Sexual Health section, not among the mental disorders. So, why is this important? Well, governments around the world have used the ICD’s Gender Identity Disorder listing as the basis for their discriminatory and transphobic policies. For example, 33 European countries require a diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder in order for a resident to legally change their name or gender. So, by de-pathologizing transness, the ICD can now hopefully be used to push these governments around the world to

1. Stop considering trans identity a mental illness, which is huge, and

2. Let residents self-determine their gender.

So instead of needing a doctor’s note or surgeries or sterilization or hormones or other invasive “treatments,” folks would just be allowed to legally transition when they felt it was appropriate for them. I just want to note that none of this would have happened without tireless and relentless activism and lobbying by trans people and trans rights groups all across the world. I’m deeply, deeply grateful for all of the work that was done to get us to this point. We all owe these people a debt.

This has been This Week in Gender.

[*This Week in Gender* theme music plays]

[*Gender Reveal* theme music plays]

**Molly:** BFF of the show Zee Griffler is a film documentarian and editor, a ringtone activist, and an advocate for asexual visibility in education. They’re also the editor of the Open Sanctuary project. Find them at zgriffler.com, or on our website, genderpodcast.com, or, honestly, on the Gender Reveal Instagram account.

**Molly:** Welcome back to the shooow!

**Zee**: ‘rayyy! Papapapayyy!

**Molly**: [giggle] Would you like to start our marathon session by reading the first question?

**Zee**: I would love to.

[Ding]

**Zee**: What is the deal with cis female lesbians using he/him pronouns? As a non-binary person, I 100% understand that you don’t have to identify as a woman to identify as a lesbian, and that historically, butch identities haven’t always been distinct from trans identities. But as a trans person, it’s kind of painful to hear cis folks claim other pronouns in some settings without wanting anything to do with trans identity.

Parenthetically, I feel similarly about cis gay men calling themselves *she* or *girl*, especially white men. But gay male misogyny is a separate topic.

That was from Anonymous.

**Molly**: I’m going to attempt not to have a spicy take. I understand how you feel, like, I totally get where this person is coming from. I’m not going to touch the parenthetical, because they’re right, gay male misogyny is a separate topic. So just speaking about lesbians who identify as women but use he/him pronouns. We just don’t get to decide how anyone else does gender or how anyone else does pronouns, even if it makes us uncomfortable, even if it makes us annoyed. Especially... lesbian identity, and especially butch lesbian identity is at this really tense time where two people who might feel really, really, really similarly, one of them is identifying as a lesbian, maybe a butch lesbian, maybe a he/him lesbian, but definitely a woman; and someone else might identify as non-binary, or as a trans man. And their experiences might not be that different, but just the culture that they’re in, and the words they choose to use can be really different. An identity that someone has might be annoying to you, and it doesn’t mean that they’re not that identity, it just means that you get to be annoyed [laughs], privately in your own home, without voicing it or invalidating their identity.

And I also think that butch lesbian elders like Leslie Feinberg can teach us more about butch lesbianism, and masculinity, and the ways that has been historically portrayed with people who consider themselves women but might not use she/her pronouns.

**Zee**: That was really good.

**Molly**: Thank you!

**Zee:** The only thing I would maybe add to this is: because the poster said, like, what’s the deal with lesbians using he/him pronouns. Beyond everything you said and especially, people can use whatever pronouns they want, and that’s just how it’s gonna be. In *them,* Rachel Anspach did an article about historical practice of cis gay people using different pronouns, and historical roots is typically believed to be as a way of protecting people from homophobia and violence, so that they can talk in public about themselves and their partners without being killed. So there is, like, a real reason for these roots, and it’s not just, like, because Drag Race exists. Pronouns aren’t a gender, they are what makes you feel comfortable, and, you know, even though pronouns often point to someone’s gender identity, it’s not always 100% the case, and we should always… you know, it’s not really asking that much to respect someone’s pronouns, regardless of if they’re cis or trans. The end.

**Molly**: Totally. We just have to let people get to do whatever they want, because then we get to do whatever we want in terms of the language that we use to describe ourselves.

We are moving into the boobs section of our episode [laughs]

**Zee**: Nice!

[Ding]

**Molly**: I’ve made some big changes to my gender presentation in the past several months, including starting to bind. It was a pretty mind-blowing experience the first time I tried a binder, and I’ve continued to feel really good and comfortable emotionally when I bind. I identify as a cis woman, but after seeing other cis women on social media who have gender dysphoria around their chest, and in some cases have gotten top surgery, I have been thinking a lot about the concept of being cis yet having dysphoria. In episode 41, you talked about being trans without gender dysphoria, but what about being cis *with* gender dysphoria? Is that even a thing, or does that suggest that I’m not cis after all?

That’s Arielle, she/her pronouns.

**Zee**: Well… I don’t think that you can be cis and have gender dysphoria. Specifically because gender dysphoria as a defined term means that you’re not comfortable with your assigned gender. While you can have and desire top surgery for many reasons, if it’s because you have gender dysphoria, I would be really questioning whether you are a cis person.

**Molly**: Right. As we talked about before in the episode you mentioned, dysphoria is just a state of unease or generalized dissatisfaction, so you can have unease or dissatisfaction about the size of your breasts without it being tied to your gender. If it’s just tied to anything—they’re inconvenient, they make shirts not fit, it doesn’t feel like they’re proportional to the rest of your body, you don't like the way people look at them—you can have discomfort with them without having specific gender-based dysphoria. And so these other cis women that you’re talking about, they may have dysphoria, or they may have uncomfortable feelings around their chest, but if they have *gender dysphoria*, that implies that they have a general discomfort with their gender, in which case, like you said, I would suggest that they are not in fact cis women. But that’s something for you to explore. As we just said, everyone gets to decide what labels they use for them, so if you want to say you’re a cis woman with top surgery and dysphoria, like, you get to do whatever you want. I would encourage, if you’re open to it, exploring a little bit more of those feelings.

**Zee**: Time for breast question number two.

**Molly**: I’m ready.

[Ding]

**Zee**: I have 38C-ish breasts and barely wear bralettes because of lung restriction and diaphragm issues, but I’m really interested in a binder. I’ve measured and found my size, but I’m super nervous. Should I just try a size up? Are there other safe options?

That’s from Liz, who uses they pronouns.

**Molly**: So, when I first saw this question, I thought, oh no, I’m extremely unqualified to answer this question. And I was looking at it again today, and I was like well, that’s almost my exact bra size, and I also have a binder but am super nervous about it, so I guess I am sort of qualified to talk about it. So, my experience is that I got a binder, I was super excited about it, and then the physical feeling of wearing it made me both very, very comfortable and very, very uncomfortable, because, as other people have alluded to, you can be emotionally comfortable while being physically uncomfortable. And I also found, like, it was sort of the same feeling as a weighted blanket, which was very comforting for my anxiety, but also made it difficult to breathe, which was very bad for my anxiety. So I generally don’t bind, because the fear of permanently damaging my own ribs and body, and being unable to breathe outweighs—for me personally—the gender euphoria feelings that it may entail. And I have other friends who feel the same way, and I have friends who feel the exact opposite way and bind a lot.

Regarding binding, there’s a lot of really basic rules that I would think you're probably familiar with if you’ve been thinking about this, but if you do try a binder, I would really suggest easing into it, just trying it for maybe 20 minutes at a time, or 30 minutes at a time, then an hour, then two hours; taking a lot of breaks; only wearing it when you feel like you need to; never going for more than eight hours; always taking it off when you sleep; always binding with an official binder and not, like, duct tape or an ACE bandage; and if it hurts, or if you’re having a really hard time, you need to stop. My personal opinion is that is it not worth permanently damaging your body and possibly risking the opportunity to have surgeries later, if that’s something you specifically might want, or just risking the possibility of health in order to bind. We can figure out other ways for you to feel comfortable in your body without permanently damaging yourself in that way, is all I’m saying.

Because I have the same size, roughly, breasts as you do, I would suggest that if you try it, and you’re really freaked out, you might just try a sports bra, like, a high compression sports bra. And make sure that’s not one that’s hurting your ribs too much either, that can cause the same problem. Like with other binding, you don't want to wear it more than eight hours, or while you sleep. But if you do try a binder, and it’s really really freaking you out, I think that a high compression sports bra can work for C cups.

**Zee**: Yeah… I don’t have breasts, so I’m not a great person to ask. That could change in the future.

**Molly**: Yeah, but then you probably won’t be binding them, but you could… what’s gender?

**Zee**: What IS gender? I guess I would just offer… because they asked whether they should try a size up, that if they’re really engaged in this idea and they wanna try it out, I would specifically just email, like, a reputable binder company and ask them questions.

**Molly**: Yes. I’m glad you caught that, I forgot to mention that part. There are so many resources from people who actually do bind all the time—which is not me or you—that you can find online. You can also join our Slack community; there is a whole channel on medical and health with people who have experience with this and could give you advice. And speaking of which, that’s something I wanted to say to that next person too, that they are welcome to join us on the Gender Reveal Slack and get their questions answered. Here’s the question:

[Ding]

**Molly**: Hello, I identify as trans masculine non-binary, and I have been trying to figure out which medical transition options are for me. Of course not all trans people want or need to pursue medical transition, and I know that, but I find myself often wondering if I would be more comfortable if I was on testosterone. I know I can’t pick and choose the effects of HRT, so do you have any advice for someone who is trying to weigh pros and cons of hormones? For example, my high voice makes me pretty uncomfortable, and I would be super into all the body shape changes that T brings, but I am so unsure about facial hair. How do I know if this is right for me?

**Zee**: Well, this is something that I know for me personally, it’s something I’ve thought about many times for the past many years, and I know that HRT is super scary, specifically for me specifically for the reasons that you laid out, that you don’t get to choose what happens. I personally know a number of non-binary folks who have went on HRT of various kinds, and they decided that the unwanted effects were a lesser evil weighed against the benefits of the things they did want. I know some people who just went off HRT, because they decided that it really wasn't working for them for a number of reasons. In my personal experience, I have been working with a trans-competent physician to try to sort out what kind of configuration would make me happy and would potentially avoid stuff that wouldn’t make me happy, but it’s very different trying to remove testosterone from your body versus adding it.

Just reading your question, if all of the effects of testosterone would make you happy except facial hair, there is obviously the very unfun and pointy but effective option of laser. But it’s just a hard thing to figure out, and it takes a lot of thinking and asking questions and, like Molly mentioned, talking to a community of people who might have had similar feelings and seeing what worked for them and what didn't work for them.

**Molly**: Yes. In my notes for this question, I wrote: Hahahahahahahahaha. Because I have a very similar experience, again. I relate to a lot of these questions this time. This is something that I have thought about a lot, specifically because there are certain effects of T that I’m interested in, but I think that some of the hair effects, specifically, as this person mentioned, would make me so much more dysphoric than I already am, and that could be wrong, but it feels correct to me. And when I’ve brought this up to people, they’ve told me, like you said, oh well, you could just get it lasered, and I’m like, yes, but the prospect of going on T and then getting electrolysis and paying for all that and going through all of that physically is so much more overwhelming than not doing anything [laugh].

I don’t know, it’s really difficult, as you said, to sort of find what’s right for you without talking to a healthcare provider, so, as you said, I would just try to find someone who can work with you. There are certain medications that, when taken in combination with T, can lessen some of the hair effects, specifically. So many more people have experience with that that I don’t have, so, again, talk to your doctor, or go on the Gender Reveal Slack, or go on any other trans resource you can find online, and there are people who have first-hand gone through this that can give you all of their different experiences.

**Zee**: There’s so many people who wonder about this all the time, so ask people, it’s fun [chuckles].

[Ding]

**Zee**: Dear Gender Reveal. An enby here. I normally work from home, but recently picked up a part-time job at a business owned and operated by a gay couple. I specifically sought out this place because I wanted to work with people who I thought would have a better understanding of not conforming to gender norms. But I haven’t been very comfortable about being super open about my gender. I’ve mentioned it to both bosses and it was sort of passed over, not in a ‘oh yeah, we’re totally privy of that enby life, we got you’ way, more of a ‘I don’t know how to approach that conversation, so I’m going to keep quiet’ kind of way. I haven’t been silent about it, just not vigilant or annoying with it. They misgender me all the time, but that’s like normal life. I’d like to leave a book or pamphlet in the break room that will help explain this sitch to my co-workers. I can tell my bosses have done a lot of work to help their community. My co-workers seem like genuinely good folks. I don’t expect to get them fully educated on this, I just want to invite them to learn about non-binary gender identities and have a deeper understanding of me and people like me. I’d also love to have more knowledge so I could better speak for myself in the future. Any recommendations?

**Molly**: So, that’s a real long question, and my real short answer is that I would put a copy of A Quick and Easy Guide to They/Them Pronouns and a copy of their sister book, written by different people, A Quick and Easy Guide to Queer and Trans Identities, and see if that works. What about you?

**Zee**: Yeah, that was my recommendation. I also learned from the Gender Reveal Slack that there is this free resource that PFLAG puts out called Our Trans Loved Ones that is completely free. It seems good, it’s also just extremely long, but that’s something you could print out and leave on a coffee table if you wanted.

**Molly**: Totally, yeah. There’s a bunch of books that are really good, but I was trying to think of the smallest resources, and that’s what I thought of. Also, this person isn’t a regular listener, so will they even hear the answer? [laugh] Who knows?

**Zee**: Mysteries abound! Or zines. Good zines, gender zines.

**Molly**: Gender zines. Make your own gender zine!

[Ding]

**Molly**: People always, always ask me about my name. Is it short for something? Is that your real name? I really don’t want people to know or think of me with any other name. How do I answer this? Do I have to lie? Thanks.

**Zee**: I mean, I think all you have to do is just say, “This is my name. Thanks.” You don’t owe anybody your name, your “legal name” or “birth name,” it just doesn’t matter.

**Molly**: Totally. I would say, like, “Is that your real name?” – “Yes.” If someone asked “Is that your legal name?,” I think that’s the point where you get to call them out and say, “Why do you need to know my legal name? Are you doing some legal paperwork for me? If not, fuck off.”

**Zee**: Beautiful answer.

**Molly**: For all intents and purposes, it’s your real name. Just say yes. I don’t even think it’s lying. I think you just get to say “This is my name.”

[Ding]

**Zee**: So, I’ve recently realized that I am non-binary. I don’t understand whether non-binary is an umbrella term, which includes transgender people as well, or is it the other way around. I am just confused, and I don’t know where I stand.

Aditi Garg, she/her pronouns.

**Molly**: Trans is an umbrella term that non-binary falls under. You can learn more about that in the Gender 101 episode, our very first episode of our podcast.

**Zee**: Nice!

**Molly**: You wanna say anything else?

**Zee:** You know, if you’re confused, just think about it this way: non-binary folks fall under the trans umbrella, trans people do not fall under the non-binary umbrella, because binary trans people are not non-binary.

[Ding]

**Molly**: Last question, by the same person was:

I really wanna hear your thoughts and research on folx, spelled f-o-l-x. I know it’s supposed to be an inclusive word, like women spelled w-o-m-x-n, but folks as a word itself isn’t gendered, so basically the question is why use f-o-l-x, when we could use f-o-l-k-s, and it’s already gender-neutral.

Zee, do you know?

**Zee**: Yes.

**Molly**: Me too. You go.

**Zee**: So you know how the word dudes is supposed to be gender-neutral, but it’s not?

**Molly**: Yes.

**Zee**: Folx as a phrase was specifically created to point out the person using this phrase is specifically including people from marginalized communities. So it’s like saying everybody, yes, very much including these people, rather than having to guess whether somebody is including them or not including them in their thoughts.

**Molly**: Yes, exactly. And I would also say that if f-o-l-x is a thing that feels good to you, you’re welcome to use it; if it feels bad, or weird, or unnecessary to you, you don’t need to use it. There’s no right answer here, you don’t need to police what anyone else is using, you get to use whatever you want.

I’m in a Slack where they’re like, everyone needs to use f-o-l-x to be inclusive, and I’m like, no [laugh], you can use either one there, pretty interchangeable. I was always using the l-k-s, and I realized that it was one less letter to type if I said x, and now I say x sometimes, but, if I’m talking about a population of mostly like, cis straight people, I actually don’t use the x, because that’s not what I’m trying to say. So I guess that’s the only thing. If you’re going to use f-o-l-x, make sure that you actually are including marginalized folx, and not just typing a thing, because there’s no point in signaling inclusivity and activism if you’re not actually being inclusive or active.

**Zee**: Or use, you know, our very inclusive phrase dudex.

**Molly**: Dudex. Yeah! So, we have decided single-handedly … double-handedly, because there’s two of us, that the gender-neutral term for dude or duda is *dudex,* and no one uses it except for me and you, but now maybe one other person will. [laugh]

**Zee**: That’s gonna be really great, to see that Google trend.

**Molly**: So, I’m going to put some links in the show notes about he/him lesbians, binding, and I have a link about f-o-l-x. Zee, did you have anything else you wanted to add in there?

**Zee**: Keep thinking about gender! It’s never gonna end [Molly laughs], but maybe you’ll help somebody someday, because of your thinking about gender too much.

**Molly**: [Laughs] How would that help someone?

**Zee**: Is it just me? [laugh]

[*Gender Reveal* theme music plays]

**Molly**: That’s gonna do it for this week’s show.

If you learned something from the show, or you have a friend who might benefit from listening to this episode, please, please share the episode with folx in your community. It really is the most helpful thing you can do to help support the show. If you have gender questions that you’d like us to answer on a future episode, you can submit those questions via the anonymous Google form in the show notes. Or you can reach us by email, Twitter and Instagram, but if you’re asking us a gender question, I’ll probably just tell you to fill out the Google form in the show notes. You can also find us at genderpodcast.com, where you’ll also find transcripts for most episodes of the show.

If this show, Gender Reveal, is valuable to you, if trans art and trans media is valuable to you, if trans visibility and gender advice is valuable to you, please consider supporting the show on Patreon, Cash App, or Paypal if that’s financially reasonable for you, especially if you’re a cis person. You’re not only supporting me, but you’re funding our grant program, which is currently in the process of paying out $1200 to trans people who are black, indigenous and/or people of color. And that is all thanks to our Patreon donors, so thank you so, so much.

If you’re looking for a cute community of queer and trans folx trying to figure out what the heck gender is, please feel free to join us on Slack. A link to our Slack group is in the show notes as well. You can also find the show, and me, on Twitter and Instagram.

This episode was produced and edited by me, Molly Woodstock. Our logo is by the talented Michelle Leigh, our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Additional music this week by Blue Dot Sessions.

It’s Pride Month, so don’t forget to be gay and do crimes, don’t forget to hydrate and take your meds, don’t forget to give trans people money, don’t forget to center disabled folx and trans feminine folx and sex workers and indigenous folx and folx of color and black folx in your queer activism, and we will be back real soon with more feelings about gender. Throw a brick at a cop.

[*Gender Reveal* theme song ends]