[Gender Revealtheme song begins]

**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, Molly Woodstock.

[Gender Reveal theme song ends]

**Tuck:** Hey everyone, hope you’re all hanging in there. This week on the show, I speak with Paige Kreisman, a Democrat Socialist running for the Oregon House of Representatives - and yes I did accidentally schedule two Democratic Socialists back-to-back, my bad, but if you are mad about hearing about prison abolition or trans healthcare two weeks in a row, this honestly probably isn’t the ideal podcast for you anyway. I mean stay, and listen. I’m just saying.

Anyway, Paige and I talk about trans folks’ complicated relationships to the military, trans healthcare in “progressive” states,

[excerpt from interview plays]

***Paige:*** *Just a consultation is two years right now, and then to actually get scheduled after that is between one and three more years.*

[excerpt from interview ends]

**Tuck:** and why Paige decided to run for office.

[excerpt from interview plays]

***Paige:*** *I know I’m never going to have the opportunity to have a big house with a white picket fence, and a family and kids and a dog or whatever it is that cis people want in life, so my choices then are to fight back or to die, essentially.*

[excerpt from interview ends]

**Tuck:** But first, thank you so much to everyone who has joined us on Patreon in the last week, including but not limited to: Jojo, David, Addie, Suja, Scout, Yolanda, Niamh and Tal. Your support is what allows me to spend the bulk of my week on this podcast and its surrounding projects like merch, transcripts, grants, newsletters, etcetera, forever. So if you would like to help support the show, you can do so at [patreon.com/gender](https://www.patreon.com/gender). That will earn you access to our weekly newsletter, as well as stickers, pins, other goodies, and my undying gratitude. Or you can make a one-time donation at [paypal.me/mollywoodstock](https://www.paypal.me/mollywoodstock).

In merch news, our “Nature is Queer, and I am Nature” merch is a smash hit right now. I’m so excited how much you love this queer cardinal design, so I am putting up a one month run of adult t-shirts at the low, low price of $19.69 (nice), and all proceeds are split between Eli – the artist – and two of Eli’s Black and Pink pen pals, who are both incarcerated trans women. That’s all at [bit.ly/gendermerch](https://teespring.com/stores/gender-reveal), and we also have new “Femmes can be Thems” hoodies, which I added because it turns out the crewnecks only go to 2XL, which I should have caught, so now we have hoodies that go up to 5XL. If you would like any other design in a hoodie let me know, and I’ll toss it in the store. That is all at [bit.ly/gendermerch](https://teespring.com/stores/gender-reveal), and with that it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gendertheme plays]

**Tuck:** This week in gender we are talking about something completely ridiculous. Do we need to be talking about it? No. But here we are, talking about Giggle.

[Gentle guitar and piano music plays in background]

**Tuck:** What is Giggle? It’s a new app that is “connecting girls for a purpose”. The website says “Giggle: The collective noun for a group of girls. Giggle safely and securely connects you with girls who share similar interests”. Now at this point you may be thinking “wow, this sounds like an app for girls”, which makes sense, but let’s keep scrolling around to where they give you examples of how you would use Giggle. So one example says “looking for a roommate, or on the hunt for a rental property? Feel safe knowing that you choose the girl you want to connect with. Love travelling, and want to stay somewhere safe with a girl? Use Giggle”.

[laughs] Fuck. OK, this example is if you would use the app to make some kind of post, there’s a screenshot, and it’s under the category “Disabled”, and it says “Description: I am 18 and have been wheelchair-bound for a few years now. Looking to connect with other girls who are in the same predicament, and help each other out or just chat”. “Wheelchair-bound”, as far as I know, is not an actual thing that wheelchair users say, because it is ableist as hell, and maybe if you are writing copy that is supposed to entice disabled folks to use your app, you shouldn’t use *super fucking ableist language*.

But let’s keep going to the real winner here, which says “feeling alone or blue? Stuck in a toxic relationship? Maybe kids giving you grief? Find or provide support to real girls about real issues.” But then there’s another sample profile, this category is under “Abuse”, and it says “this person is 25” and says they’re looking for a person who is between 18 and 30, and I want to point out the slider – the lowest it goes is 18, so not only can you be an adult women and use this app, you actually *have* to be an adult woman to use this app. Anyway, the description says “I’m in a physically abusive relationship and I have no idea how to come out of it. Looking for girls’ support and help”.

What is happening on this app? Like this is a social networking app, for adult women who call themselves “girls” exclusively, talking about how to get out of an abusive relationship, but then also looking for travel buddies, this is what this app is, but this isn’t why we’re talking about this app. We’re talking about this app [laughs] because - scroll scroll scroll – [laughs] this part of the website says “Giggle: Where you are protected by gender verification technology. Feel secure knowing our biometric software only allows girls inside”.

[Abrupt record scratch sound]

**Tuck:** Hey so uh, what? What? Excuse me, let’s head on over to the FAQ section of the website where the very first FAQ is “are trans girls welcome on Giggle?”

[Gentle guitar and piano music resumes in background]

The answer is “of course! Giggle is for all girls. Due to the gender verification software that Giggle uses, trans girls will experience trouble being verified. It’s simply a matter of two technologies not working together”. OK sorry, back up. What gender verification software? Well – scroll scroll scroll – “biometric gender verification software ensures that those within the platform are verified as girls. This involves a 3D selfie that performs a quick study of the person’s *bone structure* [emphasis Molly’s] to determine the female gender. It’s science! Just like archaeologists do with mummies”. That’s literally a quote. Continuing the quote, “unfortunately it doesn’t verify trans girls but we can help you at Giggle HQ”.

Y’all I know you think you’re being inclusive, because you’re giving trans girls a shout-out and an alternate way to get verified, but what would actually be inclusive would be to not hinge your entire app on some sort of bio-essentialist phrenology. There’s no app that can scan your face and predict your gender with anything close to 100% accuracy, because that’s not how gender works, and in fact trans and intersex girls aside, it will shock you to learn that not all cis girls have the same face.

But let’s conclude with two more passages from the FAQ. One, “Question: Can boys use Giggle? Giggle is for girls only. Why is Giggle for girls only? Answer: We’re not anti-men, we simply believe that girls deserve their special online space where they can safely form groups of other like-minded girls, and be free from any other nastiness that can sometimes be found on other popular platforms. It’s also nice to just hang out with the girls, wouldn’t you agree?”

So, why is Giggle for girls only, we’re not anti-men. It is troubling to me personally when “girls” and “men” are the two genders. It is troubling to me when non-binary genders are erased entirely, but uh, joke’s on you Sal because your facial scanning technology cannot keep my trans ass off your platform. This has been This Week in Gender. See you on Giggle!

[This Week in Gendertheme plays]

[Gentle electronic music plays in background of interview introduction]

**Tuck:** Paige Kreisman is a Democratic Socialist running for the Oregon House of Representatives in the 2020 Democratic Primary. She is endorsed by the Portland Democratic Socialists of America, and is running an 100% people-powered campaign, with no corporate money accepted. Paige is a disabled veteran and the first trans women to run for the state legislature in Oregon’s history.

[Gentle electronic music stops]

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

**Paige:** A woman.

**Tuck:** Perfect. You moved to Portland really deliberately for what I would classify as trans reasons, and I was wondering if you could walk us through your life from where you grew up to how you ended up here in Portland.

**Paige:** Sure. I was born in rural North Carolina in a place called Gaston County. It’s kind of a tobacco farming community that doesn’t really do any farming anymore, so their main export is bigotry these days. [Molly laughs]

Yeah, so it’s not a very good place to grow up for a young trans woman, and I was in a really abusive household. My parents were horrible people. I was raised by a single mother mostly and then a stepfather for a few years, but they were both white nationalists and very openly racist, and xenophobic, and homophobic, and transphobic. So I knew from a really young age that I wasn’t welcome in my family, or my home, or in my town, or in my state, and I needed to plan how to escape, because I knew I was trans really young, like 3 years old or whatever the cliché is, that’s me, I’m the cliché trans story. But yes, I knew from a really young age I needed to get out of there, and I planned my escape, and that – that involved joining the army, because pretty much the only way poor people ever get out of rural North Carolina is joining the military. So that’s what I did, I enlisted in the army at 17, and I enlisted as an infantryman. I later became the first woman to serve as an indirect fire infantryman in the US Army, which is a combat job previously open only to men.

While I was in the army I went to a lot of different places but I was primarily stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado, and I deployed to the Middle East once, and I was in a couple of countries in the Middle East, mostly Qatar and Kuwait. Around that time was when Obama lifted the ban on trans military service, so I was able to come out, and get medical treatment for gender-affirming healthcare, while I was in the military. But that didn’t last very long because Trump was elected in 2016 while I was still in the military, and that changed things overnight. Before Trump was even inaugurated, everything changed very drastically. Big portraits of Trump went up on office walls, behind chairs, you know big, like Hitler-esque portraits behind every office, where there wasn’t any portraits of Obama there before, and then people started losing their jobs, so NCOs would get pulled out of their platoons and put behind desks, mostly NCOs and soldiers who weren’t cishet white men, and that’s what they did to me as well.

I was an indirect fire and control non-commissioned officer in the army, which basically meant that I did all the math and calculations to get mortar rounds on target for 120mm mortar platoon, and they pulled me out of that, and put me behind a desk in the Human Resources shop, which is where they put all the queer people. So they threw me in Human Resources, and then, over the next couple, maybe 6-8 months, there was kind of an escalating campaign of harassment and violence directed at me, culminating in, when Trump tweeted that trans people would no longer be allowed to serve in the military, under any capacity was his words, and then that was pretty much the end of it for me, which was fine, you know, if the US doesn’t want their imperialism to be intersectional then I’m not gonna argue with them, [Molly laughs] that’s fine, but it did end my career, and I did get forced out of the military because of that. In a really violent way too. It was very much not a safe transition for me out of the military, I got a lot of death and rape threats from people in my unit, a lot of sexual harassment. It was a very abrupt transition. So I found myself as a civilian very abruptly. Didn’t really have any money, because part of the Obama administration’s policy on trans people in the military was that we weren’t allowed to live in the barracks, at least in his first policy, they went through about five different policies in six months, but the first one we weren’t allowed to live in the barracks, but we also didn’t get any money for housing,

**Tuck:** [interjects]what?

**Paige:** which meant that I had to live off post, and essentially I was homeless while I was in the army for a brief period, and I went broke paying for housing afterwards, when I did find housing. So when I got out of the army I was broke and I had a $1,000 Saab 900 S from 1994, which was a great car by the way, and I loaded everything I owned into it, which wasn’t much, and I needed to go somewhere where I could go to college, because the best way for someone with no marketable job skills fresh out of the military to not be houseless is to use your GI bill, because a GI bill pays you a housing allowance, and there is only 4 or 5 schools in the country that were still accepting admissions for new students at that time, and Oregon State University was one of them, in Corvallis, Oregon, and the internet said Oregon was nice, so I loaded everything up in my Saab 900 and I drove out here, and I applied for Oregon State in the parking lot of a McDonald’s, and by the time I got out here I was here for less than a week I think, when I got accepted. Which was good, because I probably couldn’t afford to drive across the country again, to some other school.

So I got into Oregon State, and I was able to use my GI bill, and I went to Oregon State for a few years and I began organizing with different progressive causes here in Oregon, with the Corvallis Democratic Socialists of America, I served as co-chair of that DSA chapter for a while, and then I moved to Portland after leaving Oregon State University, because Portland is a really great place, it’s one of the few places – especially for trans people, it’s one of the few places in the country where trans people are relatively accepted and safe and welcomed, and it’s definitely the best place I’ve ever lived, and I’m really grateful for my community here in Portland, for providing me a home, that I never had before in my life until coming here, and now I’m running for the Oregon House of Representatives, in District 42.

**Tuck:** Let’s back up all the way to when we were talking about you using the military to escape the abusive home you were in. So, what do you think we as a society could do to create opportunities for kids who are in abusive homes but don’t want to use the military as the vehicle for escape.

**Paige:** I think it’s incredibly important that we build alternative gateways for disadvantaged young people to get out of poverty and abusive home situations, that aren’t the military. Because that’s how the military recruits, is it preys on marginalized and disadvantaged young people. You know trans people serve in the military at twice the rate of cis people, and that’s not because we’re super patriotic, [Molly laughs] not at all. It’s incredibly problematic on a couple of levels, because one, we’re not supporting the young people in our own communities, as a state, that are the most at risk, and two, we’re then taking those young people, and turning young people like myself when I was 17 into a middle bully, because I was forced in the military by cisheteropatriarchy and poverty, but then I became part of a whole other power structure of imperialism and then I just went on to victimize other people, on the other side of the world, and that just perpetuates these power structures. It really shows that we can’t dismantle one of these power structures without dismantling all of them.

You can’t dismantle cisheteropatriarchy without also dismantling imperialism, and we can do that by providing these alternative pathways, like college for all, like Medicare for all, so people aren’t – I can’t tell you how many people I met in the army who joined because they had student loan debt that the army promised to pay off, or because they had a wife with cancer who couldn’t get health insurance pre-Affordable Care Act because of a pre-existing condition. So those are really common narratives, and we address that by meeting the needs of working people in our communities, right here at home, by placing people above corporate profit.

**Tuck:** Many queer and trans people are extremely anti-military. I understand that you joined the military because you, like many many many many trans people, didn’t really have other paths towards healthcare, housing – not that they actually gave you housing – employment, education, and that’s the reality for so many queer and trans people, but as a community of queer and trans people, we tend to treat the military with a lot of disdain. So I’m curious what your experience has been when you’re in trans community and folks find out that you served in the military.

**Paige:** Well I think that’s appropriate, to treat the military with disdain, for trans people. I think that those two positions are not mutually exclusive, that we can recognize that trans people serving in the military is usually as a result of the material conditions that they face in their lives, while also recognizing that the military, the US military, is one of the most evil institutions on the face of the Earth, and needs to be dismantled, and that’s important for trans people as well, because the US military is key in propping up far-right wing governments across the world, and right wing dictatorships across the world, that are horribly abusive to trans people and don’t uphold the basic human rights of trans people. So I think both of those positions do go hand in hand, and I definitely don’t get angry or upset with other trans people when they have some visceral reaction or distrust for me because I served in the military, I think that is justified and it’s my responsibility to do the work to earn that trust from trans people.

**Tuck:** Yeah, that’s a great answer. So, as a country our media has focused a lot on trans people’s right to serve in the military, as opposed to any other trans issue, like again healthcare, housing, employment, education, other basic human rights. So, do you think it’s appropriate for the media to be focusing so much on trans military service, and if not why do you think that is what they are choosing to focus on?

**Paige:** I think it’s unsurprising, but it’s definitely not appropriate, because trans people not being able to serve in the military is by far not the most important issue trans people face, but it is the one that gets the most attention, and I think the reason for that is because trans people are so voiceless, and our political discourse that we have no control over what issues gets platformed. It’s cis people that choose what trans voices to uplift, it’s cis people that choose what trans stories to uplift, and cis people will always choose the trans narratives that threaten them the least, and threaten the status quo the least, and trans narratives that don’t threaten US imperialism, like trans narratives that blend nationalism with some liberal version of trans equality, are the least threatening trans narratives to a lot of cis people, and when cis people have power to give platform to trans narratives, that’s what they’re going to do, and the way we get around that is by giving voices to trans people that are chosen by other trans people, that are uplifted by our own community, to allow trans people to select our own representation.

**Tuck:** If you had control over what stories the media was telling – assuming they were telling them competently – I’m curious what stories you would like them to cover, as far as trans issues are concerned, and I do recognize that issues are intersectional and there’s not like “these are the trans issues, and these are the non-trans issues”, but what would you like to see covered?”

**Paige:** I wish the mainstream political discourse would focus on the material issues that impact trans people such as the prison industrial complex. The 2015 trans national survey – the largest sample size survey of trans people ever conducted in this country – found that 33% of trans women have been in prison at some time in our lifetimes, and half of all trans women of color have been in prison in our lifetimes. That’s huge, huge numbers, that I hope would be shocking to cis people, but it never gets talked about, how the prison industrial complex is incredibly brutal to the trans community, because when we go to prison, you know, trans women go to men’s prisons. That precludes us from access to the same rights that cis people enjoy, like immunity from cruel and unusual punishment, because when we go to men’s jails and prisons, we get raped, and we face long periods in solitary confinement, and it precludes us from the right to punishment without a trial, because we just need to be arrested to face a punishment far worse than any cis people face, by just going into a men’s jail without even being charged with anything. So housing women in women’s jails is at least a damage reduction type of policy we can pursue, on a path to a decarceral prison abolition type of movement.

Also in addition to that, healthcare. So healthcare is huge right now, especially with regards to trans youth bodily autonomy, and the bodily autonomy of trans children. So on Monday the South Dakota legislature is going to vote on a bill - and it’s not unique, there’s a lot of these bills in multiple states across the country – but South Dakota is voting on one on Monday in the State House, to criminalize trans healthcare for trans children under the age of 18. It will make it a felony for a doctor to provide hormone treatments to someone under the age of 18. I mean this is really, really horrible, cruel stuff, that will kill trans children, I mean trans people will die because of this. I didn’t have access to these types of healthcare when I was a child and I – I don’t know how I survived my childhood, like in retrospect, I’m surprised that I’m alive today because of it. I very much know that trans children are going to die if this bill goes into law in South Dakota, and that’s a huge battlefield right now for trans rights, and it’s a battlefield for bodily autonomy, ‘cos that’s what it’s really about.

It’s very much a continuation of the right wing crusade against bodily autonomy from abortion rights. It segues very well into the attacks on bodily autonomy for trans people, but cis feminist organizations have been dragging their feet with supporting us in this fight and this struggle for our own bodily autonomy. That’s really disappointing for me, but also, once again, not surprising, when you look at how 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations that support abortion rights issues get their funding and how they operate, but that’s a big issue.

And then, education of course too, because poverty issues impact trans people disproportionately. Housing issues as well. 3 out of 10 trans people have been houseless in our lifetimes, which is a much higher rate than cis people face. So, housing guaranteed as a basic human right will go a long way to dismantling cisheteropatriarchy, and the overall theme of all these issues is to address the material conditions of trans people’s oppression, not just saying our pronouns, and [Molly laughs] letting us use the correct restroom,

**Tuck:** [interjects]yes!

**Paige:** or putting pronouns in your email signature, that’s all good, but that’s like the bare minimum of not being a bigot,

**Tuck:** [interjects] yep

**Paige:** you don’t get a pat on the head from me for saying the right pronouns for a trans person, ‘cos trans people say the right pronouns for cis people too, [laughs] you know, no-one’s giving us cookies for that. We don’t need allies, we need accomplices, and we don’t need allies, we need comrades, we need people who are going to be in the material struggle with us, and with solidarity.

**Tuck:** Amazing answers, thank you so much.

I want to ask you about healthcare, because there are obviously places where there is appalling anti-trans legislation being passed, that will clearly cause overt harm to trans people, but I would argue that even in Oregon, which is seen as having some of the most progressive healthcare policies towards trans people in the US, I still experience transphobia in the majority of my interactions with medical professionals. My partner, my roommates, my friends, all experience transphobia in their interactions with medical professionals. So I’m wondering if you have ideas for how, even in progressive places like Oregon where you’re running, we can improve healthcare systems for trans people.

**Paige:** Yeah, absolutely I do, and I agree with you as well, every time I go to the doctor I almost always experience some kind of transphobia, and I’m on OHP, which is Medicaid here in Oregon, and it’s incredibly frustrating to access gender-affirming care on OHP here in Oregon, and we haven’t had OHP access to gender-affirming healthcare for that long, and our state legislature touted it as a really great, progressive victory, that we’re gonna give trans people healthcare, but the access to healthcare is the problem. There’s a big shortage of doctors that can prescribe hormone therapy outside of Portland, so I know a lot of people that travel to Portland from great distances, from rural parts of the state, just to get a prescription for hormones, and that’s just the base, entry level type of care for gender-affirming healthcare.

Surgeries are very much out of reach for most people on OHP because there’s only one or two surgeons in the state, depending on what type of surgery you need, that actually provides gender-affirming surgeries for trans people on OHP. For example, for transfeminine vaginoplasty the waitlist - just a consultation - is two years right now, just for a consultation, and then to actually get scheduled after that is between one and three more years. That’s a long time to wait, but it’s even worse when you factor in that not very many people can stay on the same healthcare plan for five years, and if you drop off OHP, and maybe get back on it later or not, then you have to start that process all over again. It’s also deeply embedded in gatekeeping, there’s so much gatekeeping. You of course need to get letters, you need to get cis people to give you permission to go have bodily autonomy. So you need to go get some therapist to sign off on you having gender dysphoria, and then give you letters and a permission slip to go and get surgery, and that can be incredibly difficult, because there’s a long wait period to get those letters.

So, some ways we can address this are one, allowing trans people to go out of state for surgeries if the wait list is over a certain length, which is in line with other life-saving healthcare procedures that the state provides through Medicaid, because if you needed a kidney transplant or something of the sort, and the wait list was four years, the state of Oregon would allow you to go out of state to get that surgery. So we should do the same thing for trans people. Also, expanding the amount of providers that can give prescriptions for hormone therapy, especially in rural areas. That’s a really big deal, and I know Planned Parenthood is working hard on that right now, and I look forward to working with them once elected. They’re doing great stuff in the state to try and advance trans rights, which is really good to see.

**Tuck:** Absolutely. Another, I know, main issue of your campaign, as well as an issue that you just talked about in one of your previous answers, is housing, and I would love to give you the opportunity to talk more about not only why housing is important – which should hopefully be obvious to everyone – but what specifically you’d like to work on, when elected, to make housing more accessible to trans folks and other low income individuals.

**Paige:** Yeah, so we have a housing crisis here in the state of Oregon that’s really getting out of control. It’s often framed by the centrist corporate Democrats as a supply issue, that we need more money to throw into new construction, to build affordable housing. Or as a zoning issue, in that we just saw House Bill 2001 last session get passed, which eliminated single-family zoning in the state of Oregon, which was funnily enough supported by myself, and by environmental groups and progressive housing advocates, but also supported by the development lobby, for two very different reasons, and it really demonstrates the approach to housing that differs between the right wing and the left wing of the Democratic Party in Oregon, in that the right wing of the party, their primary interest is profit for the development industry, because the development lobby provides a tremendous amount of money, thousands of dollars a year to every state legislator.

My opponent has already received over $4,000 this year from the landlord, development and realtor lobby. So they are deeply, deeply in the pockets of the people with the vested interests and the profits of new construction, and House Bill 2001 eliminating single-family zoning opens up the opportunity for single-family houses to be bought, and demolished, and then have a duplex or a fourplex or maybe even a high-rise apartment if city and local zoning allows it, to be built on top of that for increased profits, which would be a good thing from a housing perspective, except that when the development lobby does that, they build luxury condos, and they don’t sell them to people who are going to live in them, they sell them to people who are buying them as investor properties. So, while House Bill 2001 was a great start, it was just a start, so while the development lobby and the right wing of the party is wiping their hands of this and patting themselves on the back saying they did a good job, they addressed the housing crisis, we’ve still got a fight, and the progressive left has still got to fight, because housing is a human right, and it should be treated as such.

So we’re fighting for real meaningful rent control, ‘cos Oregon has statewide “rent control” - I’m doing air quotes around rent control – it’s really more of like a stabilization. It caps rents at 7% + CPI, which for this year would be 10.3% annual rent increases, and I don’t know anyone who can afford a 10.3% rent increase every year. I definitely can’t. So real meaningful rent control is what we’re calling for – rent that’s tied to the average increase in worker wages, because if our paycheques aren’t going up then neither should our landlords’, as well as giving tenants access to a public civil attorney in eviction court, because when tenants get evicted, and they go to court, their landlords have a whole team of lawyers, but we don’t.

**Tuck:** So I’ve clearly been diving into the nitty-gritty of your campaign policies, but I want to back up and talk about the fact that you are running for the Oregon House of Representatives and, as a trans person, I would be so, so, *so*, fearful to put myself in a position where I was that much of a public figure and was open to that much scrutiny and attack, and I’m just wondering if you did any sort of personal risk/reward comparison to decide to run, or if you were just like “I’m running, this is what I’m gonna do, I don’t want to think about it too much”, in that way.

**Paige:** I suppose it was more the latter, but I think I did that risk calculation a long time ago, before I ran publically. A long time ago I decided that, that I never really had the chance to live life, like a lot of cis people do, just from birth, from where I was born, from what I was born into, I know I’m never going to have the opportunity to have a big house with a white picket fence, and a family, and kids and a dog or whatever it is that cis people want in life, that was never an option for me. So my choices then are to fight back or to die, essentially, and from a really young age I made the decision that I was going to fight back, and I was going to keep fighting, and keep fighting until we win, whatever that means, or until I can’t fight anymore.

So I’m still fighting and it definitely puts me in a position that is a little bit vulnerable. I get a lot of death threats. I’ve got a whole fan club of Nazis, actually I’m really proud of this – I have my own dedicated hate forum thread on ar15.com’s forums, just dedicated to death threats for me. When you’re getting death threats from Nazis, I think that’s a good sign that what you’re doing is probably something pretty good. So I let that be an encouragement for me, that this is something incredibly important, that this is something that needs to be done, trans people need representation, because we’ve seen the material impacts when we don’t have it. There’s over 7,300 state legislators in this country, and only 4 are trans people. We don’t have any representation in Congress, we don’t have any governors, we are chronically under-represented in our government and it’s not going to change until we get in there and we fight and we win, and no-one’s rolling out the red carpet for us, you know, I wasn’t invited to Emerge Oregon or The Victory Fund or any of these other liberal pipeline programs that just crank out like centrist candidates.

They’re not welcoming trans people, you know, Tina Kotek isn’t inviting me over for lunch to tell me about how I can get a bunch of landlord PAC money. She’s the Speaker of the House in Oregon. But the Governor of Oregon, Kate Brown, is donating money to my opponent, she just donated $2,000 to my opponent last week, so the establishment is definitely going to put up a fight, but we have to overcome that, and we’re going to overcome that with people power and building a progressive movement that’s broad and diverse, to win, and that’s how we’re going to really improve this country and how we’re going to win the direct material needs that trans people require in this country.

**Tuck:** Absolutely. So obviously many of our politicians have been very disappointing. Are there people who you do see as role models, or as inspiration, or as peers?

**Paige:** Yeah, absolutely. I’ve had an incredible amount of support from people, who are already elected officials too, people who are really sticking their neck out, because Oregon is really a one-party state. The Democratic Party of Oregon is dominated by corporate money, no one runs against each other, primarying somebody in Oregon is a huge deal, and working for someone who is primarying someone is a career-ender, especially, you know, if you don’t win. If we don’t win, everyone who works on my campaign is not going to be able to work on Democratic campaigns in Oregon again. So my campaign staff is really putting themselves out there, also elected officials who have endorsed me. These are people who are not getting any political gain from supporting me, they’ve been supporting me from day one, almost, and they’re doing it just because it’s the right thing to do, because they believe in our message and they believe in our movement. That’s incredibly inspiring and motivating for me.

**Tuck:** So, you are running for this specific section of Portland, in Oregon, and I’m curious how our listeners - from all across the world – can get involved in your campaign, even if they can’t vote for you.

**Paige:** Yeah, the biggest thing you could do to help would be to make a small donation to our campaign. So we’re 100% people-powered, we don’t take any corporate money, we’re just powered by everyday working class people, and we’re up against a lot of corporate money, so even a small amount of money, even a donation of $10 really goes a long way and really helps. If you’d like to donate, and you can do so at [paige2020.com](https://www.paige2020.com/), and that money will absolutely go a long way to winning this very, very close race we’re in, because we think this is going to come down to less than 5 points either way, so we could really use all the help we can get.

**Tuck:** In addition to housing, are there other core issues of your campaign that we should know about?

**Paige:** Yeah, so climate is a big issue for all of us, because if we don’t have a planet to live on then no other issue matters, and right now in Oregon the centrist Democrats are peddling a watered-down Cap and Trade Bill that’s getting weaker and weaker by the day. It’s a market-based solution that attempts to pull different levers of the capitalist economy to make it more expensive to pollute, and it’s been proven ineffective in California, where it’s already been implemented. Now what we’re offering is an alternative, the Oregon Green New Deal, and it’s a comprehensive policy package that meets our climate goals while centering justice and equity for workers and frontline communities. It doesn’t make it expensive to pollute, it makes it illegal to pollute, and it raises revenue from ethical sources, and it invests that revenue back into our communities. It provides jobs, retraining, and education funding for workers impacted by industry shifts. It creates union jobs with good benefits and real living wages, and public transportation that’s publicly owned and democratically controlled, and it’s fareless. It’s the transformative type of policy that we need to address this climate crisis, that is only going to keep getting worse until we take it head on.

**Tuck:** Going back a bit to trans folks running for various positions in government, and how there are so few of us and how there needs to be more of us, what advice do you have for other trans folks who are considering a run for any political office in the United States.

**Paige:** Yeah, I think you absolutely should run if you’re considering it, but also it’s going to be very difficult, and we need you to win too, so go about it in a way that’s realistic and tactical, because we need trans people on our school boards, we need trans people on our state legislatures, on our city councils. We need that far more than we need trans people running for the US Senate off of their Twitch profile and having 500 followers on Twitter, and getting 50 votes. It’s much harder to do it from the ground up, but that’s the only way we’re going to do it, there’s no shortcuts. We need to win the progressive representation we deserve, the hard way, from the bottom up, and that takes work, you’ve got to build up coalitions, get involved with your local advocacy groups, get involved with your local activist groups, whether it’s like Sunrise Movement, or Democratic Socialists of America, or just the Democratic Party, if you’re in a place where that’s a supportive environment for you. Just get out there and get to work, ‘cos we have a lot of work to do, and I hope you will do it if you’re considering it, because it’s really important and things are going to get better, things are going to get better in politics for trans people, we’re gonna win more races and it’s gonna become less stigmatized and more of an open and welcoming environment for trans people to have a voice in our politics.

**Tuck:** Speaking of the Democratic Socialists of America, I have heard a joke on twitter.com about how so, so many trans women are socialists, and trans people are socialists. Do you think that’s accurate, and if so why do you think it is that so many trans people gravitate towards either democratic socialism, or socialism, or communism?

**Paige:** Yeah, I think it’s accurate. I don’t have any studies, I don’t think anyone’s doing any studies or surveys on how many trans people are socialists, but I think most trans people are aware that our community tends to be for the left, and I think it’s obvious why, you know, everybody else wants to kill us. Socialism meets our material needs and is dedicated to dismantling the systems of oppression we suffer from, not just capitalism but also cisheteropatriarchy, and white supremacy, and colonialism, and imperialism. Socialists aren’t perfect, you know, there’s a lot of like woke socialist dudebros who, as we’re seeing today with this Joe Rogan nonsense, aren’t actually that supportive of trans people, or actually don’t really care that much about trans people, but it’s the boat we got, and we’re gonna have to sail it to our destination, which is a better world, and we’re gonna get there by putting in the work, and building the world that we want to live in, and right now the only place we can do that is on the left, and that’s why a lot of trans people gravitate towards democratic socialism, I think.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I was actually about to ask that. For context, today Bernie Sanders was essentially endorsed by Joe Rogan, and there’s a debate amongst trans people specifically about whether this is a good or bad thing. Do you have any other thoughts on that? I liked your take that it is the boat that we have. I was just curious if you had other thoughts or not.

**Paige:** Yeah, I don’t think it’s a bad thing that Joe Rogan is endorsing Bernie. I think it’s actually a good sign that one of the most prominent bigots in the country is changing, and is coming to the progressive movement. I think we should welcome people like that, but only after they’ve put in the work to undo the harm that they’ve caused to the communities they’ve hurt, and Joe Rogan definitely has not done that. So while I’m glad he’s endorsed Bernie, it was very disappointing to see Bernie embrace him in that way. I’m confident that we’re going to overcome that. I really look forward to seeing Joe Rogan use his platform in the future to repair some of the damage that he’s caused to our community as well as other marginalized communities, and I think we’re going to get there through work, and through dialogue, and through discussion, but that discussion should also be centered on the material harms that Rogan has done, and not centered on winning an election at all costs, and throwing trans people under the bus to do that, which is some of the disappointing rhetoric I’ve seen around that.

**Tuck:** This is the part of the show where I turn the reins over to you, and say that I’m sure there’s something we haven’t talked about yet that you want to make sure we talk about, and this is your time to talk about whatever you want.

**Paige:** Yeah, so maybe I’d like to talk a little bit more about our race and why it’s so important, and you know, it’s a local race, but it’s a really critical race, right here, regionally as well. So, here in the Pacific Northwest we’re all blue states here, Washington, Oregon, and California as well, too. We’re blue states that are dominated by the right wing of the party, and there’s so much corporate money spent in Oregon, we’re one of only five states that allows unlimited corporate campaign contributions, and as a result we have the most corporate spending in our elections, per capita, of any state in the country. Our opponent, for context, has raised $130,000 with less than 10% coming from small individual donors. So you could run for US Senate in a state like Delaware or Wyoming with that kind of money, and run a successful campaign. So it really goes to show that here in Oregon, we don’t truly have a democracy that works for working people, we have a corporate oligarchy, and when we win, it’s going to send a huge message, not just here in Oregon, but in every other state, that people power beats corporate money, that we own our democracy, not corporations but everyday working class people own our democracy, and that’s the message we’re gonna send when we win, and we plan on winning.

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

**Paige:** Oh wow, I should’ve listened to your podcast, I would’ve known to be prepared for this, I’m sorry.

**Tuck:** [laughs] No-one is ever prepared for it, so, it’s fine.

**Paige:** In an ideal world, gender isn’t something that should ever be assigned, or forced on someone else. Gender should be a minor part of our lives that is accepted and is able to be enjoyed by everyone, not just cis people, because cis people love to enjoy their genders, whether they know it or not [Molly laughs]. But it should be a way that everyone can live, as themselves, and it should be a minor part of our lives, but we’re gonna get there by addressing the material oppressions that prevent trans people from doing that, and we can get there, but we’ve got to build it, and we’re gonna build it together.

[*Gender Reveal* theme song begins, then continues to play in background]

**Tuck:** That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. If you learned something, feel inspired, or just had a good time, please support Paige’s campaign at [paige2020.com](https://www.paige2020.com/), and send the podcast episode link to a friend, or many friends. You can find our podcast on Twitter and Instagram at @gendereveal and also at [genderpodcast.com](https://www.genderpodcast.com/). You can also find Paige on Twitter and Instagram.

If you would like to support our show, which I would deeply appreciate because it’s my job now, you can do so at [patreon.com/gender](https://www.patreon.com/gender) or [paypal.me/mollywoodstock](https://www.paypal.me/mollywoodstock). You can also buy trans t-shirts, stickers, sweatshirts, mugs etc. at [bit.ly/gendermerch](https://teespring.com/stores/gender-reveal), where all proceeds go to trans artists and organizations. If you’d like to hang out with other folks who love to talk about gender, you can do so at [bit.ly/genderslack2](https://gendereveal.slack.com/join/shared_invite/enQtNTE5MzgwNjMwNjQwLWM4YzhlMjk3OGQwN2VjMjk1MmM1OWE1NjlhYzM1NTVhYmNlZTI0YjE3NDQ0YjY3ODQ3M2M3NDYxMjk0NmVjZjQ), that is “genderslack” and the number 2. All of these links, as well as all sorts of other links, are available in our show notes.

This week’s episode was produced and edited by me, Molly Woodstock. Our logo is by the talented Ira M. Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Additional music this week by Blue Dot Sessions. We’ll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

[theme song ends]

**Tuck:** [singsong voice] Next week on the show, Gender 501 from the live show, get excited.