[Gender Reveal theme music plays]

**Tuck Woodstock:** 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.

[instrumental]

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

**Tuck:** Hey, everyone. Thank you so much for your patience during our unintentional hiatus for me to work on the mutual aid fund and make a podcast life kit and put my life back together. I am really excited to be back to wrap up season five with a few more episodes as we make our way to Pride Month, the only month that anyone thinks about trans people. Speaking of which, I am available to come on your show. I'm available to be interviewed for your article. Please talk to me. For Pride Month. The month people talk to me. Anyway, this week on the show I'm really excited to share my chat with Vico Ortiz, who you may recognize as an actor from Vida and American Horror Story and the YouTube series These Thems. Vico and I talk about auditioning for roles as a gender-fluid person, re-exploring femininity through drag, and learning more about gender-inclusive Spanish, which is always a favorite topic of mine.

[cut to clip from interview]

***Vico Ortiz:*** *...it's gonna get messy, obviously it is messy. But also it makes us more conscious about who we're talking to, and how we're referring to people. It's radicalizing language, it's - it's changing the way we see things.*

[back to intro-Tuck]

**Tuck:** But before we get to that a huge, huge, *huuuuge* thank you to everyone who has joined us on Patreon in the last month, or the last two or three years, and to everyone who has contributed to our trans mutual aid fund, which continues to be a huge success, we have been able to disperse $100,000 through the trans mutual aid fund to more than 400 people across six continents. Thank you so deeply to every single person who's contributed to that. Applications for the fund are closed now. But we still have a couple of hundred people who haven't been helped yet, so we are still accepting donations. So if you would like to help support the trans mutual aid fund, you can make a donation at [paypal.me/MollyWoodstock](https://paypal.me/MollyWoodstock) or [cash.app/MollyWoodstock](https://cash.app/MollyWoodstock). And I will forward that money on to someone who needs it for food or housing or medication or other really, really basic needs.

The average amount we've sent out is roughly $225 per person, and that can really change someone's life, so thank you so much for considering supporting the trans mutual aid fund, I - I really, really appreciate all of your generosity. And speaking of generosity, wow, there are still people signing up for Patreon, during this pandemic, thank you so so *so* much, as you know, the Patreon is basically my only source of income right now because all my other jobs dried up with the pandemic. So every single person who shows up for us on Patreon, thank you *so* much. If you donate at $5 a month or more, I will be sending you your rewards in the mail. Anyway, you can sign up for the patreon at [Patreon.com/gender](https://www.patreon.com/gender) and even just $1 gets you access to our weekly newsletter. Also, our merch store is back in action in a limited capacity at [bit.ly/gendermerch](https://bit.ly/gendermerch). By popular demand we have reposted the "surf, don't terf" tank tops and shirts, the "support trans media" tank tops and shirts, and I also threw the "at least it's spring in hell" stickers back in because I've just found myself saying that a lot. So, you know, it's spring in hell. We also have a new design by cartoonist Annie Mock. Those sales benefit the TGI Justice Project. Everything in the store is under $20 before shipping, so go check it out. It's at [bit.ly/gendermerch](https://bit.ly/g).

And with that, it's time for This Week In Gender.

[This Week In Gender intro theme music]

[Instrumental music plays]

**Tuck:** This Week In Gender we're talking about Amy Stevens. We've talked about her on the show before, so you may recognize her name. She worked at a funeral home in Michigan and in 2013, after working there for six years, she told her boss that she was going to be transitioning and would be presenting as a woman at work and her boss fired her two weeks later. But because she lived in one of the 28 US states that has no employment anti-discrimination protections for transgender people, there wasn't much to be done about it. But she did take her case to the court, arguing that anti-trans-discrimination falls under sex discrimination or gender discrimination. And that case went from a lower court to a higher court and in October of 2019, Amy's case was heard in front of the Supreme Court. And the way that the Supreme Court works, you can hear a case in the fall and the result isn't announced until the spring or the summer.

And so that result is going to come out sometime between now and June. We don't really know what the result will be. But whatever it is, it will have huge impacts for trans people across the United States, because if they rule in Amy's favor, it means that there are de facto anti-discrimination protections for trans people in all 50 states instead of just 22. And if not, it could be really, really, really devastating. And so it's already been really, really hard to wait for that verdict, and really scary to hear what it might be. But when Amy lost her job, she lost her health insurance. And she had a kidney condition. And a few days ago, dialysis stopped working and Amy passed away on Tuesday.

This is really important to me, that we honor people like Amy because we know what a sacrifice it is to be a public-facing trans person in this kind of situation, to have to go in front of courts, go in front of journalists, and try to convince them that, like, your identity is worthy of respect and dignity. Having your face in front of millions of people, for being trans, is so hard and so scary. And it's such a huge burden. She was the first openly trans person whose case was in front of the Supreme Court ever. And these things are generational, and she was fighting a battle not for herself to get her job back. But for all of us to be able to work without fear of being fired for being trans. And you know, she is not the only one. There are all sorts of incredible trans people, trans women, trans people of color who have been doing this work for us for a long time. But I really just want to honor Amy and everyone else who has really sacrificed themselves in a way for all of our benefit. So I just wanted to take a moment to think about Amy and all the people like her.

And this has been This Week In Gender.

[This Week In Gender theme music plays]

[Intro music plays]

**Tuck:** Vico Ortiz is a charismatic gender fluid Latinx actor hailing from the gorgeous island of Puerto Rico. Their focus has been on creating visibility for Latinx queers on stage, film, and TV. Recently, you may have seen them on Vida, Jane the Virgin, American Horror Story, These Thems, Everything's Gonna Be Okay, Indebted, Misdirection, and Vámonos. Coming soon, you'll see them on a new Amazon Prime TV series.

[Music ends]

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

**Vico:** My name is Vico Ortiz and I identify as a gender-fluid non-binary Latinx queerdo. And my pronouns are they, him, and she.

**Tuck:** We have had a lot of people on this show who identify as non-binary or genderqueer. But we actually haven't talked to too many people who use the word gender-fluid, and I'm wondering if you could talk about what about that term specifically resonates with you?

**Vico:** I think the fluid part like the flow of it, like my gender isn't stagnant, like every day feels different. Even throughout the day, it feels different and it varies, it - it flows one way this way and it flows the other way. And it almost feels like a waterbed. Like it's just like constantly like [makes rapid watery noises akin to "blddledeblldl"]. And if you move a little bit on one end, it's gonna get like really rocky, but like in a fun way. And then like if you kinda like stop moving, it still kinda is moving. So it kinda - I guess like that's what I would describe it as - a waterbed. So yeah, that's what I like about it. And I also use non-binary because I don't, I don't fit in the binary like I don't I'm, I'm just flowing through all of it. I'm flowing through all the binaries. And it's like, one day is this way, one day is the other.

**Tuck:** So in terms of pronouns, you said they, he, and she. Do you have a preference?

**Vico:** I like for people to use all of them and mix them up. Even in a sentence that's, like, perfectly fine.

**Tuck:** Great. You're also a Spanish speaker. So what are your pronouns in Spanish?

*[editor's note: Spanish has two grammatical genders: masculine usually with -o suffixes and feminine usually with -a endings; -e is sometimes used as a gender-neutral ending]*

**Vico:** Same. I use elle, él, and ella [elle is a gender-neutral pronoun, él is masculine, and ella is feminine; analogous to they, he, and she]. For Spanish, I normally go more back and forth between él and ella. And I use -e when I describe myself like, is if I'm like tired or whatever I use cansade or cansado [these words mean "tired", in two genders], I try to like push for using the neutral -e or using the -o. I'm more pushy on that, on those two, because I want to like radicalize myself as well with the language, and get people in my family to get used to the fact that like, it's not just she/her. So in that regard, I'm a bit more like, okay, let's let's just use él and elle instead of like just ella, because they tend to quickly be like, I'm just gonna just use she cuz you like you using she we're just gonna use she and I'm like, "I also like the other two." So let's, you know, remind that.

**Tuck:** I have been really interested in practicing and using the -e endings as a non-binary person who speaks to and about a lot of other non-binary people. And also, I have heard folks who are concerned that if you are a new Spanish speaker, it is like disrespectful to speak to native Spanish speakers with inclusive Spanish. And so I'm just curious what your opinion is on new Spanish speakers using the -e endings.

**Vico:** I feel like it would be better because that way you're not - it's like a blank canvas, you know, you have no previous usage of the other two, like - in my end, I am still having to think about it when I'm speaking. Like in English, because I came out when I was here, and I learned all these new things while I'm here, I'm very quick to like, you know, use they/them if a friend changes pronouns, like I'm on it, obviously, I've surrounded by queers all the time that speak English. Now, when I went back home, I went back home in December - November, December, January, but like it was like a month and a half total. I specifically went *to* queer spaces, because it also was my first time being back home for more than just a week. But I was like, I gotta be there, I gotta like meet with the community there, I got to like learn, I know that there is inclusive language, and I have to learn it - well, learn it and also like practice it, because I'm like, I know it exists. I know, there's -e bracket that's been used, but I wasn't using it all the time, or wasn't hearing it all the time, because I'm in LA. For someone who's new, it's a black canvas - I mean, a white canvas, like, you could just put whatever you want with it. So it's better that way.

Because then if you're older, you're going to have a hard time like my parents, because the the first thing that came out was the x. They're associating inclusive language using just the x. And that's very harsh when you speak Spanish. But with the e. It's almost like speaking like a interesting mixture of like Spanish with Italian. But it's a lot softer. And it's not as abrasive as an x in every single thing that you say, when I came home and I was like, okay, so I know that you're hearing the x all the time, and my dad who's a voiceover actor was like, when you figure out how to use inclusive language, let me know. But like right now, it's just like, it's a mess. It's a mess. And obviously, I get it, it's very much in the beta state, like it's not perfect. And Spanish is such a gendered language, but it's about breaking the rules. And, you know, it's gonna get messy, obviously, it is messy. But also, it makes us more conscious about who we're talking to, and how we're referring to people. It's radicalizing language. It's, it's changing the way we see things. I personally love it. Obviously, because, I'm just like, here to fuck shit up. And I'm here for it. I definitely know I mess up. But I recognize it. And it's fun. It's a new discovery. It's like "Okay, so let's try it. Let's - let's have it." And I've heard it. I've been to many events when I was back home. And I was hearing people using not just the e sound, the - the -e ending, but using all of them. Like saying - instead of saying bienvenides, they were saying bienvenidas, bienvenidos, bienvenides, they were using all. Because I think one of the worries as well is that, oh, well we're adding this inclusive -e but then we're forgetting the -a which is the feminine. And some people are like, well, now we're like taking away another minority, which is women, not minority, but like, the point is, like, some people were like, well, now we're adding this new thing. And we're forgetting about the other thing, and it's like, no, it's about, like fucking all of the language. Like just really saying like, fuck with it, like down with the patriarchy.

I mean, in Spanish, it used to be like, a bad thing to say feminine jobs. Like doctora [female doctor] was not a thing. A jueza [female judge] was not a thing, like, female judge, female doctor, like that was not a thing. And then it's not until like the 50s, or something like that, that they were like, accepting it as a thing now. So it's very much as being like, it could be a doctora, it could be a doctore, it could be a doctor, it could be like, whatever, you know, and just really playing with adjectives and verbs and just kind of just being like, this needs to change. You know, I'm sure there'll be like a more structured way that will make the Royal Spanish Academy happy. But also the Royal Spanish Academy I'm sure is ruled by, you know, white Spanish men, sooo \*laughs nervously\*. It's going to be a bit for when we get there, but I'm excited for this new generation. That's like being like "Let's just like be done with it."

**Tuck:** So you're an actor, and you've worked on so many different projects. Vida, Jane the Virgin, American Horror Story, These Thems, which we'll talk about more later, I have not seen you in all of those roles. So I don't know what characters you're playing. And I'm curious as a non-binary person, how you choose what roles to audition for, and whether you're looking for non-binary roles, specifically, whether you're auditioning for all genders, how that goes.

**Vico:** So I have been with my agent for four, something, years, and I've been on a journey with him. He's also - he's also been on a journey with me, because he's learned so much as well. And so has my manager, it's been a fun process for all of us. When I first signed with my agent, I was only going out for cisgendered female roles. And I was always going out for like androgynous also, when I signed with him was just when things started shifting in the industry, verbiage wise, I always go out for stuff that's queer, whether it's like a lesbian, mostly butch. Rarely did I go out for stuff that wasn't queer-specific, I have booked stuff that wasn't specifically queer. And I'm just like, "well, you're making it queer by, like, hiring me." \*laughter\* Which is fun. But after the year of being with him, language started to change and the breakdowns, casting breakdowns they were being like, we want uh, you know, genderqueer, non-binary, trans men, trans woman, and he started sending you out for like, you know, genderqueer roles, androgynous like trans men, and then he's gonna be for a trans woman.

And I have to call him and be like, okay, okay, okay, okay. I can - I can do, you know, queer stuff, but the trans woman part I can't do. And I'm gender fluid. But that's not my place. Once everything is like, equal in the entertainment industry, then like, yes, I'm an actor, I would love to play all the roles, but right now what we want is authenticity. And that's not okay for me to do. And he was like, okay, got it, got it, got it. And we kept moving around. And then more recently, in the past, like year and a half or so, I sent an email to both him and my manager. And I was like, "Okay, I want you guys to know, you know, whenever I go out for anything, even if it's for a role that's meant for a cis woman, I give it my own twist. And I also am down to go out for roles that are meant for men." And then from then on, my agent started sending me out for - for whatever, you know, like I was going out for roles that were meant for men, roles that were meant for women, rules were meant for non-binary folk, like the American Horror Story role, technically was meant for a cis guy. And I was like, "Oh, shit, you know, this is so cool."

American Horror Story, you know, the show is pretty queer. Ryan Murphy, all that good stuff. So - but the set itself, like the - the people that run the set are, majority, white cishet men. But it was really interesting to go in it, and then like, while I'm like, you know, getting ready and stuff, one of the PAs came over and was like, hey, um, we were just checking to see like, what are your pronouns? And I was like, "Oh, my God, it's like a first on this type of set? This is amazing." Because normally, when I book something, the most recent stuff that I booked has been either queer, femme, POC. And everyone is like, on it. Like, I know everyone's pronouns, I'm not the only one being asked, which is really awesome. Or I did a short film a few months ago, before all this happened, and I was definitely the only queer person in there. And I mean, like, 99% was like all men, and no one, the - the safety meeting, I got there a little bit later, so I wasn't able to, like introduce myself and say my pronouns to kind of just, like, get it over with. And the role that I had booked was technically like a futuristic, gender-fluid, non-binary character, but then all the guys were just like, she, her, she, her, she, her through the whole, like, set time.

I kept dropping like hints because that's another thing is like, how do I educate without also being like, policing about it, especially when I'm working and I just kept like, making little hints and like, fun little jokes about being this little, like genderqueer fairy is like having a little snack or just like, oh, how does like someone queer -. And I, just like, was making little things to like, Hint, hint. And then throughout, like, lunchtime, I could see, the guys like, instead of just saying she/her they were using my name, because they were just unclear, they were just like, "Okay, well, I - uh - okay. But at least if I say the name, it's gonna be fine." So it was really funny to navigate through that, the roles that you mentioned. So even with Vida when I booked it, it was she/her pronouns, "Tasha," and then for this season, Tanya Saracho changed my pronouns for the role. There's a line on the series where like, Mishel Prada is saying, "oh, Tasha uses they/them now." And I'm like, this is - I fucking love Tanya Saracho is just like, "Oh, yeah, let's just - why shouldn't we? Make the character have they/them pronouns?" You know, and I, I love that I love that there are showrunners and producers and writers that are just like, let's do it.

Moreso now than ever, like people, like when they book me they're like, we can just make the character non-binary like why - why should we? And I'm like, exactly. Like you don't have to change the whole script to, you know, you don't have to make a big deal about it. We're still people, we're, we're just as human as you and I.

**Tuck:** So I want to talk about These Thems, which is a web series that you co-starred in. And this is a program that has other trans characters of color, as well as a trans director. And so I'm curious, had you worked with a trans director before or that many other trans people and what was that experience like?

**Vico:** This was probably one of the, like, queerest sets that I've ever been in, not just with, like actor wise, but like everyone on set, like everyone, and a beautiful array of expressions and identities. And it was so amazing. I've, like, I've worked with trans people and non-binary folk, but here and there, and mainly in theater. And this was like, the first where I was like, "Oh, my God, everyone here is a different color of queer and I frickin love it." And it felt so freeing. It felt so safe, it felt joyous. It felt like a celebration. And it was amazing. I've done gender-fluid characters prior and non-binary characters prior. But this was like, I got to be like, not the only one, you know. So that was really cool. Like, I was like, "Oh, I'm not just the only queer, like 'token queer for this scene'. It's like, everyone here is queer." And it was amazing.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Can you tell listeners a little bit more about what that show is? And what you see the mission of the show to be because I'm actually curious what you feel like the intended audience is.

**Vico:** So These Thems is - it follows the story of Gretchen, who has just recently come out and Vero who's the character that I play. They were a dog walker, and then they realize you know what, I just want to train the straights \*laughter\* into the queer community and then uses Gretchen as a student, and takes her under their wing and shows Gretchen the queer world. There's a thing with Kevin and Asher. Asher is my - Vero's friend, played by Shaan Dasani, who is just a godsend, and Asher's character is trans, but he's not come out at work yet. And the mission of the - well, the intended audience for the show is everybody. There isn't any evil characters in the show. There are moments that are - like, can be very intense, but the intention for Gretchen was to not make any evil characters, even though there's some tension and some moments of learning. No one is bad. We're all human. And it isn't for everybody. I mean, my parents have seen it, they've learned a lot through it.

Obviously, it's made by queers for queers, and it's a celebration of our community. But anyone that sees this show can learn so much, including - I mean, I learned so much by being in it. And it opened my world in ways that I mean, like, I'm just so grateful for, and it has also pushed me to be more proactive about creating community and reaching out and, and making safe spaces for everybody. So yeah, the mission for the show, I'd say is to unify and to create community. The good thing about it being on YouTube right now is that people from all over the world are seeing it. And I did the Spanish subtitles for it. And then that created this like, fun effect of like, other fans from all over being like, "Oh, I want to do subtitles in French," "oh, I want to do subtitles in Dutch," because people want to see radicalized language, you know, they want to see it in their own language because it is happening. It's - I'm getting goosebumps. It's freaking beautiful. So yeah, I mean, I think the mission of the show by creating community is actually creating community and people from all over. I mean, we used to, when every episode would drop on Thursday, we would all be there at 5pm LA time and people from all over, like UK, Ireland, like from all over the place, were tuning in at like 1am in the morning, or like, you know, whatever time, and we were all chatting together, and like interacting and watching the episode and it was just so beautiful. It's just been an ongoing like, love fest.

**Tuck:** That's so wonderful. Yeah, you said that you learned a lot from that show. What do you feel like you've learned by making These Thems?

**Vico:** Oh, I knew that I - the queer community was vast and had many colors. But it wasn't until I was working in it, and I saw more than just my friends in LA like I went to New York and I saw and met, and interacted, and connected with these other variety of colors and I was like, Oh my gosh, there is just more than just ABC there's like all these letters and it's freakin incredible. And I still come - I mean, I'm born and raised in Puerto Rico. I am constantly having to question myself and like "Okay, do I know this because society has told me to know this this way or do I know this because I've learned it new" or you know, I'm constantly questioning what are the rules that I have for myself? And by being there, I was like, "Oh my gosh, like, yeah, of course, like, of course you can be a trans man and not have top surgery, of course, you can be a trans man -" like, I - there were so many things that I was like, "Yeah, yeah, trans man, totally", but I still had the the society vision of like, oh, for you to be a trans man, you have to look exactly what a man looks like. And it's like, what does "a man" look like? Like, what does that even mean?

You know, it was amazing is a lot of like, learning experience of like, "Oh, yeah, like, just because you come out as trans doesn't mean you have to exactly fit what society thinks a trans person should look like." Or "you need to pass for it to be -" like, no, it doesn't freakin matter. You can be whoever you want to be. Also, same thing with non-binary there's this like stigma that if you're non-binary, you have to be androgynous. No, you don't have to be androgynous you can be non-binary and look like whatever you want to frickin look. And also, you don't have to dress a certain way to be non-binary. Dress however the fuck you want to dress. So there was a lot of like, really being like, "No, fuck what society has been telling me. Like, let's just massage my brain and like, absorb all of this." And - and it's been really awesome.

**Tuck:** Yeah, that's wonderful. So you wrote the Spanish subtitles for the show? Did you face any challenges in translating the show to Spanish?

**Vico:** In the first couple of episodes? Yes, because I was still very much like getting used to the inclusive language. There was a couple of like terms and stuff that don't necessarily exist in Spanish, or, like jokes that were in English, that makes sense in English, but in Spanish, I was like, "Well, I'm just going to translate this like, as - not literally because it's not gonna make any sense, but it's not going to be as funny. But at least it'll be like, closer to what Gretchen intended." In English people use they/them as a singular pronoun all the time, but they don't notice. In Spanish, there is no such thing yet. And I was like, how do I do this? But then I figured it out. And I was like, okay, cool, because a way to also refer to somebody is using "le" like le gusta ["likes"], instead of saying a ella le gusta ["she likes"], a él le gusta ["he likes"], and just take the elle or ella and just say le gusta, right? I think I wrote something along those lines like I was like, like the - the bickering between the women was "Oh, like in English, it's like impossible to use they/them singularly and in Spanish, I say it like, "it's impossible to describe someone without gendering them." So because it - so it doesn't translate necessarily the same, but it's I mean - to the tee - but it's like the the intention behind it is the same.

And I was like, "really? Like, are you sure" and like the - in the episode, I use keys, to throw them on the floor. And then one of them is like, oh, someone dropped their keys, and I'm like, oh, did \*they\* now and in Spanish, I was like, they said - someone - the same thing. But it's like, "Alguien se le cayeron las llaves" ["Someone dropped the keys"], "se le cayeron" ["someone dropped"], "¡Oh! Se ¿le?" [emphasizing the gender-neutral term] Oh, you can just like use the - you know, le as like - you don't know the person's gender. So you just like used a neutral way to like...you know? So it's - it's not using elle specifically, because that's not something that we have in Spanish, like that's solidified. But we do have ways to describe people without gendering them when we don't know them. So it's kind of like a little reminder of being like, yes, you are able to talk to someone or talk about someone without gendering them.

**Tuck:** Absolutely. Thank you so much for explaining that. I was really, really impressed with the number of puns and jokes you managed to sort of reshape as you're describing right now into Spanish, because I was watching with the Spanish subtitles on. One of them was when in that scene, because there's a whole gender reveal scene. And basically, this woman decides that it would be cool and progressive to have a theyby, which is a word that we use in English, and I think you translate it to like, "bELLE-bé" [combining bebé for baby, and elle for they] in this way that was just like really, really impressive. I was like, wow.

**Vico:** I don't remember as well, but I remember being like, "Well, here we go."

**Tuck:** Yeah, no, a lot of it really worked. And I do appreciate you, instead of literally translating, trying to make these jokes work in a very different language as far as gender is concerned. So yeah, that was really really impressive. At the beginning of Episode Three, I think your character is teaching Gretchen, who's a baby queer in the show, about different queer and trans identities. I'm curious how you approach translating that section specifically, and whether those concepts really translate.

**Vico:** So I actually went on Instagram for that one. And I was like, cuz, not only is this - these terms are, you know, very English terms. In Spanish, we use, also, English terms to describe people, but also I'm Puerto Rican. So there's different ways to describe other things and like different objects have different names for different Spanish speaking countries. So I went on Instagram and I was like, "Okay, I have these terms that are, like, queer. How would you describe them if you speak Spanish?" So I literally just used, like, what people recommended and also found some things, um, that were like okay, so I know that this is very like \*from Spain\* so like maybe I should not use this or this is like too much like Puerto Rican or too much like Mexican, so I was like trying to look for also stuff that like was cohesive to every like Spanish person. So for example, the "listen to my pussy" episode, there's different words to say pussy in Spanish, but I was like, how do I, like, what's one word that I know for sure, no matter who sees this, who is from all over the world, like is gonna read it and be like, "Oh, yeah, I know what that means." Because there's different ways to say pussy in Spanish, and it could vary depending on which country. But yeah, I literally for that one, I resourced to Instagram. I was like, okay, because I also, when I first came out, I came out when I was in LA. So I learned all these terms in LA, I had never been like, I never dated anyone in Puerto Rico, which I look forward for that one day.

**Tuck:** Yeah. The show ends at this beautiful queer dance party that your character throws and watching it made me sad, because it reminded me that there are no queer dance parties for the indefinite future. And there was just this longing for being able to, yeah, go to an event like that, which, you know, it's a very special event. But there are queer parties - there used to be queer parties like that all the time. And now we don't know when we'll have more. So I'm wondering how you're coping with quarantine. But more broadly, like just Pride being canceled and sort of queer gatherings being cancelled indefinitely.

**Vico:** It's rough. I'm such an extrovert. Not only that I like to go out, but I also like - I'm a drag king. So I like hosted events. I've been in close proximity, very close proximity with tons of queers. I'm always like, dancing on them. I've like go-go - I love queer nightlife. It's been rough, I - and it's not gonna happen when all this like, calms down. It's not even gonna, you know, like, this all kind of started at the beginning of the year, but then it increased around like March and now we're in May. I don't see any big events happening until next year, to be honest, for the safety of all. \*deep breath and sigh\* And it's a way that I've been coping has - I still do drag, I've changed the way I do drag now, I pre-shoot my stuff. I have done twitch events and stuff. I've done Instagram Live's. It's nice to have a little bit of, you know, that love, but then it's kind of weird, because it's not live. I mean, it's not live live, you know, like, I see the - I see the chat and I see the people being like, "Oh my god, yes." And I'm also like, they're like, yas, yas, yaaas, like, fire - fire emojis everywhere and like, hearts and stuff. But it's like, there's - it's such a difference. Like it's - it satisfies something, but it's not the full thing. There is some pros, because I've - I've learned some new things, but also the cons of like, seing people - I've never done a show on Zoom, I'm actually going to do something later on Zoom for a bachelorette party as backstreet boy, AJ, but still, you know, like, it's such a different energy when you're - when you're there.

And there's so much love and celebration that happens live and I feel like - I, I feel for the queers that are currently maybe staying with family that are not celebrating them the way that they're being celebrated when they go out. I - I guess in a way fortunately like live by myself, but I know how it can - how it is when you're with family even though you love them, like when they're not with you all the time. And they're getting used to using pronouns or are resistant about it. Like it's exhausting. And already how things are in the world are exhausting. So it's more on that, so it's - \*deep breath\* - absolutely give a big collective hug. I just, I cannot wait to squeeze my friends and smell their necks and then just love me like I love you so much. Like just whisper sweet nothings on their ears. But in the meantime, I'm just Zooming away, Twitching away, and Instagram Live away.

**Tuck:** Yeah. You mentioned being a drag king. Do you want to talk about how you got into that and what you like about it?

**Vico:** I got into it completely by accident. Like two and a half years ago, almost three. A friend of mine Kathlyn Jaffe[?], who runs now Them Fatales. That was like her first show, like producing a show. And she just hit me up and was like, "Hey, have you ever been a drag king" and I'm like, "What? What is that? I've never heard of that. I've heard of drag \*queens\*. But that's it." And she was like, "yeah, just do it. You're - you're an actor you can" and I was like, "Okay, sure." So I like went on this like intense like googling frenzy, but I couldn't really find a whole lot. There was like a few people here and there but like it wasn't a lot. And I was like, well, I've never - I'm just gonna lip sync, you know I'm just gonna do thing. And like what I've seen queens do but even with queen shows, I had only been to like a couple. And I did the show. And I did Ricky Martin, and I sang in Spanish. And I was like, immediately, like, holy whoa, like this is - it really opened something inside of me that I was not - like, I was like, "I'll just do this one time and call it a day - for my friend, you know, it's like a fundraiser, I'm just gonna help her out and then call it a day." And then afterwards, I was like, "Oh, no, this is - this is a whole - this is - I need to do this again, I need to do this more than once, I need to, this is gonna be a thing for me now." And I didn't do another show until like six months after that.

But then after that show, it just - everything just boomed. It was like, doing shows, at least once a month. And then it turned into like having several shows per month. And then like, I started a boy band with the Backstreet Butches. So I'd - I'd perform solo as Vico Suave. And then I'd perform as AJ with the Backstreet Butches. And we were doing rehearsals and like doing shows and getting booked, and it was like a whole thing. And apart from the show part, which is - yes, I'm an actor, but it's such a different feeling when I'm doing drag, versus when I'm doing theater, even though I do a lot of like, theater-y things and like, I use my background as an actor to like, do a fun storyline, I have been able to connect, not just to my, you know, gender expression and gender identity, but I've also been able to connect to my culture in a way that I wasn't expecting, like, 95% of my shows are in Spanish. And I make sure that my storyline throughout the set is understood, no matter what language you speak. So even - even if you don't know the - the words of the song, or you don't know what I'm saying you see it, and you're like, "Oh, this is what's happening," you know. And also, on my day to day, my energy is more masculine, I tend to, you know, I'm on the trans masculine spectrum. But when I'm in drag, I feel so much more comfortable exploring my femininity within my masculinity persona. And it's been so much fun. It's very gender euphoric, like, it's, I had no - I was so like, no, like, I don't like this, like, feminine thing at all.

But, then the second I started exploring my masculinity, with drag, then my femininity was like, "Oh, this feels good, too." It's just an everyday process. But it's been really cool to learn new things dance-wise. Like it just really opened me up. Also sexually, like, I was very, I mean, I was coming from like, a very prude, very, like traditional, like, okay, and like I said, a few uh, a couple questions ago about, like, breaking traditions and stuff. Like, if you would have met me, 10 years ago, I was like, ready to, like, save myself for marriage, like, marry someone also, who was, like, a virgin, or, you know, whatever, what society thinks of virginity. And we were going to deflower each other on our honeymoon, and then have like five kids, which, you know, I'm still open to having five children, but like, maybe some of them will be adopted. But, but I was, that was it. That was 10 years ago. And I was very much like, this is what I'm gonna do. But then my first coming out started happening and more coming out and like breaking down, like, "Do I want this because it's what society has told me to? Or do I want this because \*I\* want it." So I've explored my sexuality, like myself as a sexual being in a way that I never would have done, you know. So it's been really interesting that I'm doing this through drag, and my mom saw me once.

When I was in Puerto Rico, I did a drag show over there. And - because my parents were trying to like grasp around like, what is this like, okay, yes, you're, we get that you're queer, but like, we don't really, like, we don't, like, we're not seeing it completely. But then when they saw me doing drag, they were like, "\*takes a breath, slowly\* okay, okay." Then now they have an image and my mom was like, "Yeah, you're not like a - like, I thought you were gonna be like this macho dude. But you're way more masculine, like, in your day to day than you are when you're in drag." And I was like, "yeah, cuz I feel more comfortable in my masculinity, like I know - I feel this and I'm - I feel more open to exploring this other thing. And it was really interesting to see their reaction being like, "Ah, okay, okay, now we have a visual." So yeah, drag has been a huge - a huge part of - of me, it's a big part of my identity and how I get to, you know, express it.

**Tuck:** Yeah, that's amazing. I love that so much. I'm so happy that that has...yeah, it created so much opportunity for you and exploration. I think it can be really common for queer and trans people to need permission like that to really explore and have this sort of alter ego to allow us to explore gender. I think maybe it feels lower stakes or something like that, when we're able to explore gender through sort of an alternate persona. But yeah, that's really wonderful. The way we always end the show is by asking, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**Vico:** Oh, my God. There, there wouldn't need to be one. Like, you can just be born. And then like, be whatever you want to be. And identify as you want to identify. And if that changes, that's cool, too. There wouldn't need to be boxes for nothing. You're just born a human being. And then like, there's all these options and choose one. And if one of those didn't fit, then use the other. And if you want to use more than one, then also that's cool, too. Or if you don't want to use any other than also, that's fine. So I guess like, just like a chill, chill. Just be you. Love you. Be authentic to you. And also, like, if, if you want to stick with one forever, that's totally fine. And if you don't, then that's fine, too. That would be amazing.

[Gender Reveal theme music fades in]

**Tuck:** That's gonna do it for this week's show. If you learned something from Vico, or just had a good time, please share the show with your friends, your family and your community. You can find Vico on Instagram [@puertoricaninja](https://www.instagram.com/puertoricaninja/), and you can stream these them in its entirety for free, with the Spanish captions if you'd like, at [TheseThems.com](http://www.thesethems.com/). You can find us at [GenderPodcast.com](https://www.genderpodcast.com/), where you can also find transcripts of the show. And we're also on Twitter and Instagram @genderreveal and I'm on there @MollyWoodstock. If you are looking for a tank top of a picture of a shark holding a surfboard that says "surf don't terf", you can find those along with all of our other merch at [bit.ly/gendermerch](https://bit.ly/gendermerch) until May 31st. If you would like to design your own piece of merch for us to put in the shop, get in touch with us, there's a contact form at [GenderPodcast.com](https://www.genderpodcast.com/). If you are looking for queer and trans community to support you, through the quarantine and beyond, you can join us on slack at [bit.ly/genderslack2](http://bit.ly/genderslack2), and you can support the future of this show by joining us on patreon at [Patreon.com/gender](https://www.patreo), which is my only pandemic source of income. So thank you. So so so, so, so much. And I'm also still taking trans mutual aid fund donations at [paypal.me/MollyWoodstock](https://paypal.me/MollyWoodstock). Just be sure to let me know in the memo, whether that money is for the mutual aid fund or for my existence, because sometimes people send money for that too, which either way, thank you so much. Today's show was produced and edited by me, Molly Woodstock. Our logo is by [Ira M. Leigh](https://www.instagram.com/myopicmisanthrope/). Our theme song is by [Breakmaster Cylinder](https://breakmastercylinder.bandcamp.com/). Additional music this week by [Blue Dot Sessions](https://www.s). We'll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

[music ends]