[*Gender Reveal* theme music plays]

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

[Theme music ends]

**Tuck:** Hey everyone. I hope you're all hanging in there. I don't know how everything keeps getting worse all the time but it does, and yeah, I'm just thinking of you. I hope you're alright. Anyway, as you know we are officially in the break between season five and season six but while I work on putting a new season together, I want to make sure that you are getting that good good trans content that you deserve.

So today I want to share a new podcast with you that I'm really excited about, it's called the TransLash Podcast and it's a show about news, culture, and politics from a Black trans perspective. The TransLash Podcast is hosted by the incredible Imara Jones. Imara is a Peabody and Emmy award winner, she's a Black trans woman, she's a journalist, and her name was recently on the cover of *Time* magazine for a feature about the new American revolution, alongside Angela Davis, among others. all of this to say that Imara is doing some incredible work, and you're definitely going to want to keep an eye, and an ear I guess, on what she's working on. So I'm about to share the second episode of her new show the TransLash Podcast with you, but first just a couple quick things from the Gender Reveal side of things.

So, the first and most exciting thing is that our merch store is back and stocked up featuring two brand new designs. We have a design that says "genitals ain't gender" that's available in a sticker and a T-shirt. Those proceeds are split between the artist and us, Gender Reveal the podcast, and we also have another excellent design from the mind that brought you other merch like "no gender only lizard" this one says "gender is Dead" and it's available on a sticker, a shirt, a tank top, and a fanny pack. We're printing our first ever fanny packs bay-bee! Those proceeds are split between the artist and Trans Lifeline. I slid a few of our other favorite designs back into the shop right now as well including the "nature is Queer" sticker, the "non-binary people can look however they want" shirts, and the classic "support trans media" design by Beth Easton. All of that is available at bit.ly/gendermerch. I know money is really tight right now for a lot of people, so I tried to keep prices really low, everything is less than twenty-five dollars, important note that the store is going to reset on September fifteenth and all of these things will be gone, so if you want anything I just described head over now to bit.ly/gendermerch.

And speaking of money being tight it is time to relaunch our biannual gender gender reveal grant program, but I have a question for y’all first. I'm wondering if it makes sense to go back to our old system of awarding several grants to trans artists and activists, or would it make more sense to do more of like a formalized mutual aid program? There's no way we can do something to the scope that we did back in the spring, where we distributed more than 104,000 dollars to trans folks in acute need around the world, but I could try to put something together that's a much smaller scale version of that for the fall. So we can run it more of a peer mutual aid program where folks who need help with rent or food, or medication can apply, or we can do more of the previous grant program where artists and activists are applying, but either way we're going to be working with a limited pool of funds, so I'd like to prioritize Black trans people and Indigenous trans and two-spirit folks with whatever we end up doing, just giving you a heads up right now. I would love to hear what you think, you can contact me on Instagram and Twitter at gendereveal, g-e-n-d-e-r-e-v-e-a-l or at genderpodcast.com. And, if you are not tight on money right now and you would like to donate to our grant/mutual aid program you can find me on CashApp at Tuck Woodstock and on Venmo at Tuck-Woodstock just let me know that you're donating to that program, we're also on Patreon at patreon.com/gender and with that, while we're here, let's do a This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender intro plays]

**Tuck:** This Week in Gender, I feel obligated to mention that yes, a smoke generating pyrotechnic device used at a gender reveal party did spark the El Dorado fire in San Bernardino County, California. The fire started on Saturday and has burned eighty-six hundred acres and counting, and is only seven percent contained. This is not the first or even the second time that a gender reveal party has started a wildfire, and I know that whenever this kind of thing happens it's tempting for a lot of folks to be like that's what you get for doing a gender reveal party, but I don't want to conflate or make light of these two issues. Gender reveals are harmful because they contribute to trans erasure by conflating genitals with gender, and as our new merch says, genitals ain't gender. Forest fires are harmful, as you know, because they kill humans and other animals and destroy the livelihoods and homes of humans and other animals. So forest fires are sad and scary, and gender reveal parties are frankly kind of sad and scary, and I don't want to gloat about suffering.

But that said, I do want to share this gem of a CNN article to you which says, quote, “the woman best known for popularizing gender reveal parties has a message for the world: please stop. This week as more than seven thousand acres in California were burned after a gender reveal led to a massive wildfire,” blah blah blah. “Jenna Karvunidis,” sorry Jenna, “who is largely created for creating the gender reveal party took to Facebook to condemn the over the top events. She wrote quote ‘stop having these stupid parties, for the love of God, stop burning things down to tell everyone about your kid’s penis no one cares but you.’” I know we've heard from Jenna before, but I just really appreciate her turnaround on this issue, you know? Anyway, as we know the only good gender reveal is this podcast, and I hope that everyone in California stays safe, and this has been This Week In Gender.

[This Week in Gender outro plays]

[music]

**Imara Jones:** Welcome to the TransLash Podcast. I’m your host, Imara Jones. Thank you all for your tremendous support that helped make our launch last month such a success. We received so many shout-outs, including one from *The Advocate* that called this podcast quote “required listening,” close quote. So, you better listen. Every two weeks, you’ll hear trans people and our allies talk back about what matters most to us and how we can create a fairer world for everybody. We need your ongoing support to do that, so thank you for lifting up my voice. This week, I talked to Kai Wright, host of WNYC’s *United States of Anxiety* about the links between transphobia, the history of fear in America, and the 2020 elections.

**Kai Wright:** Just a living, breathing, unapologetic trans human being, threatened so much about the ways in which we code power and gender.

**Imara Jones:** Plus you’ll hear from Marquise Vilsón—too bad you can’t see him—a Black trans actor and activist. He opens up to me about the importance of trans masculine representation and using his platform to combat violence against trans women of color.

**Marquise Vilsón:** Visibility and representation is super important, it allows you to build a personal relationship with that person in a way that is not always centered around our transness.

**Imara Jones:** We’re got a great show for you today, so stick around.

[music]

**Imara Jones:**We’re going to start off with a little bit of Trans Joy. One thing lifting up my spirits this week is celebrating the legendary activist Marsha P. Johnson on what would have been her 75th birthday, August 24th. As a leader in the Stonewall Uprising and a visionary organizer, she lived unapologetically, demanding space for trans women and our siblings. Because of her vision and work, more of us can thrive. I have the privilege of talking to Marsha’s longtime friend, Victoria Cruz, a legendary activist in her own right who has sought justice for Marsha for three decades, an effort portrayed in the Netflix documentary *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson*. Here’s what Victoria shared with me during Lives at Stake, a monthly show by and for trans people I host through WNYC.

**Victoria Cruz:** Marsha was ahead of her time. At the time, during the 60s and early 70s, you know, it was unheard-of having trans women; as a matter of fact the word “trans” didn’t exist at the time, they were calling them transsexuals or things like that, you know, names that did not pertain to how we identified. And Randy Wicker presented her as a saint. To me she was the Rosa Parks of our movement. Marsha knew what she wanted and how to get it. She was herself and nobody could take that away from her.

**Imara Jones:** Marsha P. Johnson, I’m so thankful for the ways you changed the world. You laid the foundation for me. You are Trans Joy.

[music]

**Imara Jones:** Next up, we’re turning to hot topics in the news with our segment called Well, the News. So many of the attacks against the rights of trans people, which hang in the balance in this year’s election at both the federal and state level, are motivated by fear. But this fear goes deeper than transphobia. Rather than an aberration, is to be afraid actually endemic to American culture? Mmm-hmm. Helping us to understand this often-unspoken part of our national life and how to transform it into hope is Kai Wright, host and managing editor of WNYC’s new weekly program *The United States of Anxiety* which you can listen to live on Sundays at 6p.m. or on demand wherever you get your podcasts. Kai is also a former editor at *The Nation* and was my editor at *Color Lines*. He is

gay and Kai’s pronouns are he/him. Kai, thank you so much for joining us. This is my first time interviewing you ever on air.

**Kai Wright:** That’s not true actually, Imara.

**Imara Jones:** It’s not true, did I just tell something that’s not true, a falsehood?

**Kai Wright:** You interviewed me on Caffeine TV once.

**Imara Jones:** Oh, okay, yeah. Yeah, back in the day, back in the day. Okay, okay, so I’m having podcast brain right now, which you as the veteran host of several podcasts know all about. Before we get started I also just wanted to give a shoutout, now that we’re going back in the past of things we’ve done, to a book that you wrote in 2008 which is called *Drifting Towards Love*, which I think personally is one of the best snapshots of Black queer life over the past 20 years. It focuses on the lives of Black queer femme and gender-nonconforming and nonbinary youth in Brooklyn and people should pick it up.

**Kai Wright:** Oh wow, thank you. That’s such high praise.

**Imara Jones:** Yeah no, no, absolutely. So I wanted to ask you why you decided to make America’s anxiety the focus of your show. It’s been a podcast over the past two years, shouted out by *The Atlantic* as one of the best podcasts that year. It’s now this weekly program and for the last few years you’ve focused on anxiety. Why?

**Kai Wright:** Well you know, I mean, so we first first started during the 2016 election and you know, I think you’d struggle to find a better word in how we all felt during that election. And you know, I think it covers a lot of ground in our politics. I mean, I think a lot of what is going on in the Trump movement, or certainly at that time, was this anxiety amongst white people in the suburbs who had been given everything over the course of the 20th century and were facing a world in which those things they had been given were questioned and challenged, and that caused them anxiety. And I think all of us you know, now four years on, there’s just, we just face so much unknown. There’s so much that we don’t know about what’s going to happen and that is both a source of optimism and power, you know, cause we do actually have a chance to have a clean slate, and it’s a source of great fear and anxiety for everybody, you know, and so it’s a moment for potential action when you have that much anxiety but it is also a dangerous, dangerous moment for those of us who sit in roles in society where we can be targeted.

**Imara Jones:** Yeah. And I’m wondering, this idea of targeting and anxiety, I’m wondering how these factor into American history, what’s the intersection of this anxiety that we’re having right now and the history of fear in America? You’ve written histories of the United States through a Black lens and I’m wondering what you see as the parallels or the roots or the things that are underneath this current anxiety that all these, you know, white people have?

**Kai Wright:** There are two things. I mean, there’s the I think more straightforward one of just, really I mean so much about the 20th century in America was about giving white people a sense of innocence around the privileges that they had, you know, and literally the purpose of the suburbs being created in order to raise a generation of white people who could be, who could have innocence from the violence and the oppression and the things that were done to give them the opportunities that they have. And I guess you could argue about that also, much about the way whiteness was coddled and managed and just conceived in the first place during slavery, you know, was about creating a sense of innocence in the face of brutality. And so you know, as that innocence is being stripped away for a host of reasons, because of just the changing reality of economics and social and cultural, those changing realities are just stripping away some of that innocence, and because of the changing politics that many of us from a variety of communities and a variety of backgrounds have reached a place where we will no longer tolerate that innocence, and so that is an unnerving thing to have it taken away. And so that’s, that’s one thing about the anxiety I’m thinking about when we think about the history of it. But the other, Imara, I have to say, and we talked about this a little bit, is like, we arrive at this moment now where, you know there are huge numbers of people of all races, but certainly white people who are ready to say, “Okay, let’s challenge the status quo, let’s look at a new world.” And what we have learned from history is that how long white people in particular are able to sit in that space is going to be really important.

**Imara Jones:** Yep. Yep, that’s right. So, I’m wondering how you see transphobia intersecting with the anxiety and the fear that we’ve been talking about and that you know so much about?

**Kai Wright:** I think that trans people, like many of us, but trans people in particular give the lie to so many things about our society and that makes them incredibly threatening to people on a personal level and certainly to our political system overall, you know. There is an increasing conversation right now about race, right, and the ways that that has informed the racism of the Trump movement and the xenophobia of the Trump movement and the way it has informed their brutality, right? But to me, I really don’t think we have had a sophisticated conversation about the ways in which misogyny and fear of, you know as the way I’ve heard you phrase it, “fear of femme” in general informs their brutality. And I think that trans people, you know, and I think trans people of all identities here, because of the challenge to the relationship between gender and power that just a trans body represents, setting everything else aside, you know, just a living, breathing, unapologetic trans human being threatens so much about that relationship, the ways in which we code power and gender, that it leads to real brutality. And I think if we can understand that, there’s so much we could understand about our larger political system and the brutality in it, if that makes sense, right? To come at it another way, you know the depth of hatred directed at Hillary Clinton was so out of proportion to the very legitimate critique of her politic, right?  You know I have great many critiques of Hillary Clinton’s politics, but the depth of hatred directed at her is just totally out of proportion with the facts of her politics, right, they’re not that far different from Barack Obama’s. So what is owing, what do we owe that level of emotional response to? It’s the fact of the combination of her femininity and her open desire for power. And I think those two things set off real blind rage for a lot of people in our culture. And so, coming back to trans people, if you are a human being who has said, “I refuse to accept these gender roles that you have put in the world, they don’t apply to me,” that is an act of power, right, like that is a statement about power inside a gender dynamic that is deeply threatening to people.

And to me that is, that is the most salient point and if we could have a society where that wasn’t threatening we would have a very different society on so many different levels, right, and if we understood transphobia in that way, if more people understood transphobia in that way, then they might be able to do the work that they need to do on all kinds of problems they have around gender and power.

**Imara Jones:** Yeah, I think that’s right. I think that’s the fact, right, the fact that fear is such a part of the way that the system is maintained, which is one of the things that is at work in all of us, and I think the minute that you step outside of that, then you become frightening, ironically.

**Kai Wright:** The minute you refuse to be afraid.

**Imara Jones:** That’s right, yeah, that’s right, that’s right. You become frightening and it’s deeply, deeply triggering because our entire system rests on fear and ways that, that you are unpacking and exploring, but just really haven’t really been unpacked in some really powerful ways, which is why I think what you do is really important.

**Kai Wright:** And it’s that relationship to power, because when you’re refusing to be afraid, you’re asserting power.

**Imara Jones:** That’s right.

**Kai Wright:** You know, like you’re asserting a power that people are not comfortable with.

**Imara Jones:** That’s right.

**Kai Wright:** It’s a, it’s an upsetting of the power structure.

**Imara Jones:** Yeah, I hadn’t thought about it, I mean, the interesting thing is that the conversation about transness and trans people is about powerlessness and marginalization but the reaction is the exact opposite, right? People react to trans people, react to us, as if we extremely powerful, as a threat. That’s how you react to things that are threats, right—

**Kai Wright:** That’s right.

**Imara Jones:** You don’t react to things that are marginal in ways that are, you know, are deeply violent or those types of things.

**Kai Wright:** That’s right.

**Imara Jones:** I think that’s really important. So one of the things that you would tell me all the time as an editor is that ‘You gotta give them hope’ in my pieces. “This is really good, Imara, but wait, you gotta give them hope.”

**Kai Wright:** Well, Imara, your analysis is often quite…

**Imara Jones:** Dire?

**Kai Wright:** Dire.

**Imara Jones:** It is.

**Kai Wright:** True, but dire, you know.

**Imara Jones:** It is, it is. So in this, you alluded to it before, but for you in this moment when you look out, where is the hope?

**Kai Wright:** I think it’s in the existence of tension, you know. I mean, I believe in Martin Luther King’s point, you know, that peace is not the absence of conflict, you know, peace is something that can come out of productive tension, productive conflict. And so we are truly in a moment of great tension, you know. In tension I mean that in the sense of, like, it’s clear to everyone that the status quo doesn’t work, you know, we’re being forced to take an opportunity to be better. Now you know, countering my advice to you, like, that can also lead to a much worse world. You know, that’s the thing, you know, and that’s why I return to the, the real question here is, how long are white people in particular, but people who have power, people who have benefited from the status quo up until recently, how long are they going to sit in the discomfort that this change is going to require? Because that’s going to be the pivot, you know, if they’re willing to sit in it for some time, then it’s hopeful because this is what we need in order to move into building a better world on so many levels. And if they’re not, it can get very dark. And that is, and you know, we can out of Reconstruction into one of the darkest periods in American history.

**Imara Jones:** That’s right.

**Kai Wright:** I would argue the darkest period of American history.

**Imara Jones:** Yeah, that’s right, I mean the interesting thing about what you’re saying is, you know I’m a nerd so I’ve been reading a book written by Ron Chernow and it’s so fascinating, and you’re right, there were essentially eight hopeful years in which white people were willing to do exactly what you said, and then you know after another 10 years after that, it really kind of came off the rails. So you know, it’s so important for us, all of us who are involved in this moment of making our country fairer and bringing about social justice and the increasing centering of Black trans people, is that, you know, these fights are long. And it’s one of the that I hope, as you do, that people understand that.

**Kai Wright:** They are so, so long, you know. The other hopeful thing I’ll say is frankly, I mean I look at, when I look at movements that are hopeful, like the trans movement is a source of enormous optimism. I mean there has been so much wonderful work, I mean, I don’t have to tell you, you know, I am old enough to remember, you know in just with, never mind within the broader culture and the broader political scene, but just within LGBT politics, like the ‘T’, give me a break, you know, and where it was perfectly appropriate to debate whether or not trans people were part of the community, right, like that wasn’t that long ago. Let alone, you know, whether or not actually the center of the political conversation is trans lives, right, like the fact the March for Trans Lives this year that that actually was the closest thing to a real Gay Pride, right, that we’ve have in probably decades. So the work has been done, and then particularly in trans communities of color, that is a source of enormous optimism to me, you know, just the amount of progress that I’ve seen made.

**Imara Jones:** Me too. Well, we did end on hope. Thank you so much for coming on, I hope that we can have you back. I really appreciate you being on today. Kai, thank you so much.

**Kai Wright:** I’d love to come back and I hope we can have you back on *United States of Anxiety.*

**Imara Jones:** Perfect, perfect. That was Kai Wright, the host and editor of WNYC’s *United States of Anxiety* which you can listen to at 6 p.m. Sundays live, or on demand wherever you get your podcasts.

[pause, music]

**Imara Jones:** Our last segment today is Transform. Trans people both high-profile and at the community level are innovating and creating the future for all of us. Transform takes us into their world. Joining us is Marquise Vilsón. He’s an activist and actor who uses his visibility as a Black trans masculine person to push for change and end violence against Black trans women including the recent L.A. attack victims Eden Estrada, Joslyn Allen and Jaslene Busanet. In addition to his activism, Marquise is a groundbreaking actor. He’s appeared in films such as the Netflix documentary

*Disclosure* and television series like *Law and Order SVU*. Marquise’s new documentary, *No Ordinary Man,* about Billy Tipton, a trans jazz musician, premieres later this month. Marquise, I’m thrilled to have you.

**Marquise Vilsón:** Thank you for having me.

**Imara Jones:** Of course, of course. I wanted to start out with your decision to define yourself as an activist first and then an actor, which is in interesting choice. Most people like you at this point in their career do the opposite. Why do you choose to identify as an activist first and actor second?

**Marquise Vilsón:** My personal choice to identify as an activist first comes from my personal life experiences, also having been rooted in activism: growing up in low income housing, in the projects; having a father whose story is the typical Black story, reported missing on Christmas Day in 1988 and having police come to my grandparents’ house two days later to inform us that he had been murdered, December 27th of 1988. So yeah, I think it’s the intersections of all of my experiences, my background, where I come from, my upbringing, have really been deeply rooted in the experiences of Blackness, of queerness, of transness. Even with regards to HIV, my first relationship or encounter with HIV was with my aunt in 1993, I was probably 12.  So yeah, it’s one of those things that for me, activism is super important, it’s just a part of who I am.

**Imara Jones:** Mmhmm. And on that note about activism, I’m wondering how it then, how given the answer that you just gave, how does acting play in your life, what role does acting play in your life if these other experiences, as you said, are foundational, what part of you is drawn to acting?

**Marquise Vilsón:** I think the role for me that acting plays really allows folks to know that people like me exist, I think visibility and representation is super important, it allows you to be inside of someone’s home, to build a personal relationship with that person in a way that is not always centered around our transness. Of course with acting, obviously that can exist as well too, where you can have a character who is trans, and there’s a need to explore that. But I think just overall in general, that relationship can really change the narrative and the way that people have thought about us, especially when we’re authentically in those roles. Hopefully we can change things a little bit more in Hollywood and see more trans people behind the scenes as well too, as content creators and writers and producers and actors.

**Imara Jones:** In this idea of visiblility that you mentioned, I think for some people the stereotype of many people who are transmasculine is that at some point, transmasculine people can achieve, not all, but some can achieve this idea of invisibility so I’m sure when most people see your spotlight graphic on social media, or your pictures, have seen you in the number of films and television series that you have done would assume you were cis, or assume you were assigned male at birth, but you choose, in that respect as well, not to be. You choose to underscore that you are transmasculine, and that you were assigned female at birth, and I’m wondering why you do that.

**Marquise Vilsón:** Am I allowed to curse?

**Imara Jones:** Yes, it’s a podcast so you can say whatever you want to.

**Marquise Vilsón:** Okay, because I’m proud as fuck, I am proud as fuck of who I am. There should never be shame in any of the layers of my experience, not for me anyway. Yeah, absolutely, like just the idea over even hearing the word when you said it, “invisible,” like literally just not existing, not having access to space. I’m a human being like anyone else, and I’m real and I exist and there’s nothing wrong with being proud of who you are.

**Imara Jones:** Right. And I mean for you that visibility is essential to being an activist, which is how you actually define yourself, even if being less visible as an actor could give all of these, you know, benefits that you spoke about, that’s just not how you define yourself. And I think that that’s why this is a really fascinating conversation because sometimes people assume that getting to a certain level in your career and as you grow in attention due to disclosure and a whole host of other things, that fame is often defined as leaving things behind, leaving behind parts of yourself, escaping, reaching escape velocity from your past. But that’s not something that you do.

**Marquise Vilsón:** No, I have absolutely no interest in doing that. I do feel a larger sense of responsibility, I would say, having the platform as an actor, I do feel a larger sense of responsibility to further amplify the conversations that I know that exist within my community. Obviously one specific thing that is happening right now with regards to queer-plus community is the violence that we continue to see around trans women and specifically Black trans women. It’s not going away, and I don’t, I personally don’t feel that it’s appropriate for me to be silent because in being silent it means that I’m complicit, which I’m not, number one, and number two, what if it were me? What if that were my story? The last thing that I would hope is that no one was saying anything, especially people who are in positions of power, people that have access to platforms and the opportunity to influence and create change and shift.

**Imara Jones:** Yeah. I think that that takes us to a really important point, you know, throughout the summer we’ve had countless protests including those for Black trans people. There’s not one that I’ve been to that I haven’t seen you at and ones that I haven’t been to that I haven’t seen you at. But a particular focus and energy and drive that you’ve had is around the recent attack in Los Angeles, Joslyn, Jaslene and Eden. And I’m wondering why you decided to take such a leading and active role in bringing attention to their attack, the way in which the police let it happen, the mob that chased them down both in car and on foot, but what struck you about that?

**Marquise Vilsón:** Ah, um. Well to be honest, I mean I feel like I’ve been vocal and adamant about the things that I’ve seen before but I realize that it also takes effort and action. And seeing a scene like that play out, and thinking in that moment in time, had any of those girls been alone that one of them would have been number 27 this year, I think for me that was just the turning point, it was like, “Okay, this is ridiculous. I need to do as much as I possibly can.” No one was interested in stepping in and trying to help them at all. And it was just really difficult to sit with, it was difficult to watch, and it’s really difficult to continue to watch.

**Imara Jones:** I mean it’s really, really apparent from the full tape that you see that their humanity is erased. Do you think that Black trans men, or trans masculine people in general have a special role or important role to play in advocating for Black trans women?

**Marquise Vilsón:** I think we should. I think we absolutely should. And I don’t know that all trans masc folk feel that level of sense of responsibility. I hope that trans men are listening, I hope that they’re tuning in. I must admit from June until now, I actually have seen more trans masc folk showing up to protests, vigils, rallies, marches. I know for myself, you know, being assigned female at birth and having the experiences of Black women, right, whether I’ve identified as being a woman or not, those things have been placed upon me and I knew exactly what that meant. I knew what that felt. I know what that feels like, you know, to feel sexualized, to feel like you don’t have access to space, to feel like people can just say and do whatever they want to you and you really, you really don’t have, you know, involvement or choice in the matter. Whether we’re talking about violence or we’re talking about sexual assault and trauma, you know, it’s just impossible to, like not, for me anyway, to just not be connected. It doesn’t make any sense to me. At all. It is not a privilege to be silent.

**Imara Jones:** Mmm. It’s not a privilege to be silent. That is a lesson for the world right now. One of the things we’ve been silent about is the role of trans people in history, and the new documentary you’re in, *No Ordinary Man,* spotlights an incredible jazz musician who was a trans man, Billy Tipton. So I’m wondering what your thoughts are about this person who was largely forgotten in the public imagination until now?

**Marquise Vilsón:** Being a part of telling Billy’s story is super important. I personally feel like because of what you just mentioned, which is, you know, trans folk not being contextually a part of history, and not even just queer-plus history but really American history. Why like, Billy Tipton was a American jazz singer, for real, like literally contributed to music, the way that we understand it, the way that we relate to it and connect to it. There’s such a innate sort of connection, you know, between myself and Billy Tipton and quite honestly all of my trans masc elders, siblings, peers, you know, there’s something that we are just, we’re naturally connected to, obviously through layers of transness, which is just, it’s just such a mind-blowing thing to think about but it’s really cool. And the fact that it now exists in film form and people can see that, you know, they can see that relationship between Billy and the folks that are there to further humanize his experience and his story, right, like that’s the other thing that I found to be just that much more powerful in terms of telling his story, that is through the lens of a trans masculine director, and it’s important for us to be at the helm of telling our own stories and that way, I mean it clearly has to come from a trans person in order to do that fully.

**Imara Jones:** Absolutely, absolutely. Well for all of the reasons that we have spoken about, I am so thrilled that you were able to be on today to talk about your experience, your framework, how you move about the world, what drives you. We are so excited not only for *No Ordinary Man*, but for every other thing that you’re going to do and to touch. Thank you so much.

**Marquise Vilsón:** Thank you so much Imara, I appreciate you having me.

**Imara Jones:** Of course. That was Marquise Vilsón, an activist and actor whose upcoming film *No Ordinary Man* will premiere on September 10 at the Toronto International Film Festival.

[pause, music]

**Imara Jones:** Thank you for joining us on the TransLash Podcast. The thing that stuck with me this week was Marquise’s quote that it’s not a privilege to be silent, I’m going to be thinking about that for the next couple of weeks. And, listen all the way to the end of the show for something extra. I’m Imara Jones. If you like what you heard, please go to Apple Podcasts to rate and review us. Please do that, it really helps us grow. You can listen to TransLash on Spotify and wherever you get your podcasts. Also check us out on the web at TransLash.org to sign up for our weekly newsletter. Follow us on Twitter and Instagram at TransLash Media, like us on Facebook and tell your friends. TransLash Podcast is produced by TransLash Media by Futuro Studios. The. TransLash team includes Ruby Fludzinski, Oliver-Ash Kleine, Montana Thomas and Yannick Eike Mirko. And the Futuro Studios team includes Nicole Rothwell, Jess Alvarenga, Stephane Lebow, Leah Shaw, and Julia Caruso. Our digital strategy is handled by Daniela Capistrano. The music you heard was composed by Ben Draghi and also courtesy of ZZK Records.

[music]

**Imara Jones:** Alright TransLash fam, I’m looking forward to some time off. I haven’t had any break to speak of since January, I’m exhausted, my plan, however, to go to a Caribbean tropical paradise, because of coronavirus, it was going to be really cheap, but sadly now the coronavirus cases there have shot up by a hundred times, and so I’m going to be in my house. But it’s still gonna be good. Thanks for listening.

[music]

[Gender Reveal theme music]

**Tuck:** That's going to do it for this week's bonus episode. Next week the TransLash Podcast is coming out with an episode that you're definitely going to want to hear, it explores the intersection of trans experiences and immigration. So be sure to subscribe to the TransLash Podcast wherever you get this podcast. You can find Imara Jones on Twitter and Instagram and at translash.org, you can find us on Twitter, on Instagram, and at genderpodcast.com. Don't forget to reach out and let us know your thoughts on our upcoming grant cycle, and what you want it to look like. Our logo is by Ira M Leigh, our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Production help this week by Oliver-Ash Kleine. We'll be back as soon as possible with more feelings about Gender. Until then, throw soup at a cop.

[theme music ends]