**Molly:**  Hey buddies! Just a few quick notes before we start the show. First, there's a content warning for the This Week in Gender section for police brutality and alcoholism, and also just like me having a huge attitude and kind of rude voice? I will put time stamps in the show notes so you can avoid it if you want. Secondly, there's a brief period in this episode where a dog barks. Maybe not so brief. Sorry about that, but on the plus side, aren't dogs great? Just think about how great dogs are the whole time they're barking. Lastly, I noticed as I was editing that Naseem's Skype kind of drops out so sometimes you'll miss individual syllables, but I hope that their message is still clear. I think it will be, but I just want to let you know that I didn't just randomly edit out chunks of this interview, just syllables dropped off. But I think this is going to be great. You're going to learn so much, it's going to be rad. Alright, I love you, bye.

[theme music]

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

[theme music]

Molly: This week on Gender Reveal I am so excited to share my conversation with Naseem Jamnia, who is so smart and fun and insightful and kind and taught me so much about so many different things. But first, I need to make a few announcements. This show is sponsored as always by our Patreon donors. You know who you are. I love you. In order to make this show accessible to folks who are Deaf or hard of hearing or otherwise struggle to engage with podcasts, I'm speaking with a couple of really incredible friends of the show who have volunteered to start transcribing episodes of Gender Reveal, which is just so kind and amazing and I'd really like to pay them the standard transcription rate. And so, if you are willing to help us pay queer and trans folks for their labor and help us make the show more accessible, you can donate at paypal.me/mollywoodstock or patreon.com/gender. Of course if you donate $5 a month or more, I will send you cute stickers in various sizes, and anything above $5 gets a special bonus surprise. There are other ways to support the show of course. If you can't donate money, I totally get it. We will talk about the other ways to support the show at the end of the show, but right now it's time for a segment called This Week in Gender.

[trumpeting news music]

This Week in Gender, something happened with the Supreme Court and LGBTQ rights, and I know we should really talk about that, especially because it's being widely misunderstood, but look, I said we were gonna talk about Pride and we're gonna talk about Pride! We'll probably talk about the Supreme Court next week. I will say off the top that there is so much Pride discourse this year. So much Pride discourse! I will say almost too much Pride discourse? Most of the discussion is about who is allowed at Pride. So, who is allowed at Pride? Gay people, lesbians, bisexual folks, transgender folks, nonbinary folks, asexual folks, queer folks, folks who are questioning their gender or sexual orientation, parents and spouses and other folks who want to support their LGBT family members. [Sigh] Who's not allowed at Pride? Well I don't get to make the rules, but there are a few areas of debate.

First, cops. This one seems the most straightforward. As we talked about last week, Pride commemorates the Stonewall riots, which was an explicitly anti-cop protest, and in addition, I'm sure you know that cops routinely murder black people for no reason, authorities routinely throw undocumented people out of the country for no reason, and also something you maybe didn't know is the group who is most disproportionately murdered by the police is actually Native Americans. And so if you want Black folks and native folks and undocumented folks to feel safe at Pride, don't invite the cops.

Secondly, corporations. I was in New York for Pride last year. In fact, I was literally standing outside of Stonewall and it was very emotional but you know what made it less emotional? Having huge vinyl banners for corporate sponsors hanging over the Stonewall Inn. It's tricky because obviously I want businesses to support queer and trans people. I would love if more corporations just gave their money to queer and trans people. But you have to ask yourself, does this brand actually give an actual shit about queer and trans folks? Do they have policies and initiatives and products that support queer and trans folks? Do their CEOS donate to progressive causes? Do they offer health care that covers transition-related care? Or are they just shitty conservatives who are trying to take your hard-earned queer money so they can donate it to the very worse people? Also, you may notice that many of the brands who sponsor Pride are alcohol companies of various kinds. Let me remind you that 25% of gay and trans people struggle with alcohol abuse, likely as a way to self-medicate against a world that both discriminates against them and denies basic health care coverage and mental health coverage.

Thirdly, allies. Okay, so it's not your job or my job to police who goes to pride. Just because someone goes to Pride quote unquote looks straight and cis which is not a thing, that doesn't mean that they are. And even if they are, straight cis people are allowed to come to pride. But, heterosexual cisgender people who want to go to Pride, think really hard about why you want to be there and how much space you're taking up and how you're treating the people around you. This event is not here for you to take photos and get good ally points. It's not here for you to fetishize queer and trans bodies. You are a guest in this space. On a related note, white people, this isn't the time for you to police people of color! It's also not time for you to touch people of color without consent.

Okay, to review. Everyone be respectful, everyone give your money to queer and trans people, don't police anybody unless it's the actual police, and then, go out and have fun! It's gonna be great. Have a good gay time. This has been the ranty Pride edition of This Week in Gender.

[trumpeting news music]

[theme music]

**Molly:** After the 2016 US presidential election, Naseem Jamnia skipped out on their cushy life as a neuroscience PhD student in order to write full time. They realized that freelancing is not as fun as it looks though, and decided to go back to school for a lucrative creative writing degree, starting in fall 2018. A native Chicagoan, Naseem now lives with their husband, dog, and two cats in Reno, Nevada.

**Molly:** The way we always start the show is by asking, with regards to gender, how do you identify?

**Naseem:** I identify as nonbinary and agender.

**Molly:** Great. Can you talk about what "agender" means to you specifically?

**Naseem:** Yeah. So for me, I feel like I occupy this space between binary genders, between man and woman or male and female or whatever. And it's certainly evolved over time. I don't consider myself genderless, in a weird way. I consider agender to be a gender, just a … neutral one. I don't know if neutral is quite the right word I'm looking for, but one that allows me to basically perform myself as opposed to performing a specific gender, and in performing myself I am performing my gender. That doesn't make a lot of sense but --

**Molly:** No, it actually makes a lot of sense to me. I'm just interested -- do you feel like the nonbinary label divorced from the term agender doesn't allow you to do that?

**Naseem:** No, I think that it's a more specific term if that makes sense. Like I feel -- I use nonbinary as an umbrella and as a specific gender and I guess also identifying as nonbinary as a specific gender allows me to say that I was once part of the gender binary even though it never quite fit, and agender is just a more specific form of that.

**Molly:** Yeah, that makes sense. And then, can you share your pronouns please?

**Naseem:** Yes, it's they/them.

**Molly:** Great. So I read -- you've written in so many places about so many things, which is awesome, so we're going to touch on a bunch of that but you mention in a couple places that when you were in high school, you were describing yourself as a gay man in a women's body, so what gender feelings were you experiencing back in high school and what context did you have for understanding your own gender?

**Naseem:** Yeah, I didn't have much of a context at all. Basically, the best way I felt like I could describe myself was the "girl disguises herself as a boy in order to do the thing she wants to do" trope, which is like, Mulan, you know

[Molly laughs]

**Naseem:** -- one of my favorite Disney movies of all time. I very very strongly related to Reflection as a song.

**Molly:** Oh my gosh, me too! Sorry to interrupt you on my own show, but like me too, and I never put that together until this exact moment. [laughs] Sorry, go on

**Naseem:** No, I realized, I watched Mulan with my husband, I think a few months ago and I was like, oh, holy shit,

[Molly laughs]

**Naseem:** I've loved this song forever. I always thought it was because I was very headstrong and wanted to do my own thing and wanted to be the son that my dad didn't get, which is complicated because I do have a brother. But yeah, I -- it was -- yeah, Mulan is great. And you know, another series that does that is Tamora's Pierce's series, Song of the Lioness, the Alanna books.

**Molly:** Yes!

**Naseem:** Which is, you know, one of the most formative books I've ever read. And I think Alanna does a lot of grappling with her femininity, especially in the first two books, where she doesn't want to be a woman because she wants to be a knight and then the latter tow books kind of reconciling what it means to be a woman and knight. But for me in high school to get back to your actual question, I recognized that I did not perform femininity the same way my friends did. I didn't enjoy performing that. I didn't feel as if it reflected my internal state. And you know, at the time I had this very -- I didn't know I was queer. I was like, oh, I made out with my female best friend and I didn't really like it, therefore I must actually be straight. No! You're on the asexual spectrum, that's why you didn't enjoy it. But so I was like, I've tried this thing, clearly I'm not bi, and I'm attracted to men so if the closest feeling was then like, I'm a gay man, because if I was a man in a woman's body that would imply I like women, and clearly I don't -- kind of like these roundabout trying to explain the way I feel. You know, I had met a few binary trans people by then, and that didn't really click with me, not in terms of "what are they doing?!" but in terms of my internal state. I didn't feel like a man, especially because I wanted to be a women so badly! I wanted to be a woman until I discovered the term nonbinary and was like "oh my God, this changes everything," and I remember I cried hysterically. So I wanted to somehow acknowledge that I was trying, and the best way I could do that was calling myself a gay man in a woman's body, which is not accurate, but the best I could do.

**Molly:** Totally. So how did you discover the word nonbinary? When was that?

**Naseem:** It was Tumblr.

**Molly:** Hell yeah [laugh]

**Naseem:** Tumblr's the reason I became a feminist, because I started going on Tumblr after I graduated college, when I was doing a master's program. And I suddenly became aware of social inequities and structural oppression and eventually I stumbled upon gender and the discussion that happen on Tumblr around gender and I saw the term "nonbinary" and was like, oh my God, oh my God, is this what I think it is? and the more I looked in to it, at first I identified as a demigirl and demiflux and I was like, oh my God, this is encapsulating what I feel about who I am, and oh my God there are other people who feel this way too. And a friend of mine was also exploring their gender. We actually have very similar gender and body feels. At the time he identified as bigender and around the same time there was like an NPR -- not an article, a, whatever -- a radio article where this journalist was talking about these nonbinary teens, not using the term nonbinary -- they were actually talking about being bigender, and you know, the different pronouns they had and it was a very bizarre thing to experience, to listen to, because I suddenly could empathize with these teens but also the journalist was doing a really bad job of talking about it [laughs]

**Molly:** of course

**Naseem:** And I was like, maybe there's something more to this. And I talked with my then-best friend on the phone after I heard that news whatever, and she was like, you know, you felt complicated things about your gender since high school and I had forgotten that. So you know, when I stumbled across Tumblr, I think it was summer of 2014, I was like, this is life-changing. I didn't actually identify as trans until last year though. I identified as a nonbinary woman for a while until the woman label just became more and more alien to me.

**Molly:** so this isn't a gender question, but can you talk about your decision to switch from neuroscience to writing, because I feel like that's a huge part of your story as person

**Naseem:** Yeah, it really is. Well, I've been writing just as long as I've been interested in science. So I decided I was going to be a neuroscientist when I was 11, and I decided that I was going to write on the side at that time. I had been writing for a few years. Plenty of authors are like, "oh I was writing as a kid," and I was one of those writers. But I had this conversation with my dad, bless him, I mean I totally get where this is coming from, where he said you should do your art on the side, because money. And it made sense to me. I was like, yeah, it's really hard to get published and I wrote through high school and I knew that that's what I was going to do and I came to college and forgot that I was a writer, I guess is the best was to say it. It's kind of a complicated why that happened. I was in a really messy and abusive relationship -- kind of relationship, mostly friendship. And I wasn't writing at that time. Even though I was an editor of our college lit mag, I just, I guess I just forgot that this was something that was deeply important to me. But then I took a creative writing class the end of my second year and I was like, right, I used to love writing! I was always a writer! I forgot about this! And then when I picked up the creative writing minor, I really started struggling between how am I going to balance writing, which is something that drives me emotionally and spiritually and mentally and is deeply important to me with science, which at the time I felt was like the only way I could give back to the world. I didn't -- I could say books have saved and changed my life but I couldn't believe that perhaps I could be doing the same thing, so I thought that science and especially neuroscience was the way that I was going to give back to society and the way that I was going to help people because I've always been a very service-oriented person. And specifically at the time I was still really struggling with the idea of becoming my own person, having my own desires and wants and living for that. It took me a long long time to kind of finally let go of my childhood hang-ups and be like, you can have a life worth living for yourself and not for your family. If you take care of yourself and you do the best things for yourself your family will end up happier. That was very very difficult for me to let go of. It was why I stayed in science as long as I did even though I had this unconscious realization at some point that I wasn't happy and that I was going to leave. So I was like, yeah I'm still going to do this writing on the side thing, I'll figure out a way, and after my master's program, I was working in a university as a tech while I applies to PhD programs and my commute was really really long. It was four hours a day, which was miserable.

**Molly:** Oh my gosh

**Naseem:** Yeah, it was bad [laugh], and so I had this -- I was exhausted every day and I was unhappy and then it occurred to me that I was deeply unhappy with my work as well, not just that I was exhausted. So I was thinking about it, and then I had this really horrible realization that it was because of this abusive friendship or relationship that I was in that I became a bio major, because he bullied me into becoming a bio major. And then I realized that holy shit, I've been doing this research that I very much enjoyed, don't get me wrong, I loved doing it, but I've been doing this because I've been following this path that someone else led for me, and that was deeply disturbing for me. And then the 2016 election happened and I said, fuck it. Well, when the election happened I was like, you know what, I think I, at the very least, have to take a leave of absence, because I'm no longer feeling the immediacy of my work. At the time I had published a couple of articles but I had learned a lot through different writer groups about -- more about social justice and more about the issues that plagues the United States specifically and I wanted to see if I could try to do something about it with my writing. I still didn't fully let go that I was leaving until after my medical leave of absence expired and then I was like, yeah, well, this is a thing that I have done. I have left the sciences. I have become a full-time writer. That was a very long story. [laugh]

**Molly:** So I'm going to exploit your status as a former scientist, because I would assume that everyone that listens to this podcast realizes that gender is not a binary, otherwise what are you doing here, but I know that not everyone really recognizes that biological sex also isn't a binary, so I was wondering if you could talk about that.

**Naseem:** Yeah, so, biological sex is fascinating because it is not a binary on a couple levels. One is on the broader level of, are all sexes binaries? And the answer is no. Different insects, different -- I'm pretty sure lobsters have like six genders - no, not genders, sorry, sex. There is a difference between biological sex and gender.

**Molly:** Yes

**Naseem:** Across the animal kingdom there are all sorts of different sex chromosomes that don't stick to a binary. If I remember correctly in flies also, even though they have X and Y, it's like, the presence of a Y makes the fly a male as opposed to having two Xs? My point is biologically, across the animal kingdom, there are many different sexes. And then is humans, not everyone has two sex chromosomes. They are, I think kind of problematically, called "disorders of sex development." Usually intersex conditions that you can have two chromosomes, I think you can have up to five and still have viable, functioning progeny. I'm trying to turn this into human words and not into very biological terms. Like, having a live baby. Some of these individuals are infertile but I don't think all of them are. And their presentation, clinical presentation, is all along the intersex spectrum. It's really invalidating to say that there are only two biological genders when in fact, all of these individuals exist. Some of them present as women, some of them present as men, some of decide that they're neither. Sometimes even, when they're born as babies, you can't tell from their genitalia which gender we're supposed to assign. I do not understand people's obsession with baby genitalia.

[Molly laughs]

**Naseem:** I really don't. So, these aren't uncommon conditions. At the highest estimate, intersex people are as common as redheads. And when you think about it like that, you're like, holy shit, you can't, you can't -- that's why I think it's so problematic to call it disorders of sex development, because it's so common. And it's limiting. I think some people would argue that there's still the base two, and I didn't agree with that because I think we don't have enough biological knowledge of what it means to have five sex chromosome, what that might do, and it's still, you know, many of these individuals are able to have children and so it's not fair to say that you can only procreate with an XX and an XY. This is like a very basic summary of it. But more and more in the scientific community there is a consensus that sex isn't a binary because of this. And it makes research more complicated, which isn't a bad thing. I think it can be frustrating for scientists because we're trying to limit the amount of variables and it makes animal research -- nobody in animal research is thinking about this, which is something I did actually want to address at Penn, and then I left. There are plenty of sexes as humans and then if you step outside again, there are even more. Chromosomes we don't have a human equivalent name for.

**Molly:** Thank you for explaining all that!

**Naseem:** I hope it was clear. [laugh]

**Molly:** I think so.

**Naseem:** Well people can send questions to me if they'd like. I mean, I've got articles, I'm happy to send out this information for people to stop this bullshit that sex is a binary. It's like, you know, the science that you learned in 11th grade is simplified at best, wrong at worst. You might want to talk to somebody who's had a little bit more training. And part of this, man, I could rant about science literacy. It's a topic of my fellowship at Bitch for the most part. We have a real science literacy problem and the example of sex being a binary is a great place to point to that. Not everybody, clearly, but many people are just not willing to examine this thing that you learn when you're a kid, basically. You learn that sex is a binary as a kid and you never think that that might not be the case even thought you question plenty of other things you learned as a kid.

**Molly:** Yeah. You know what that reminds me of actually is that there are lots of folks who want to make arguments about the validity of transgender individuals based purely on science and they're like, well, actually, transgender women are women because they did brain scans and they showed that they have brains like women nd I'm just not -- like, obviously I support trans individuals but not because of what science says but because they're telling me about their lived experience, and I trust them to know who they are. So I'm actually wondering, as someone with a science background, who do you view those science-based arguments about the validity of trans identities?

**Naseem:** Well, I also agree that if someone tells you their identify is something, like, that's it! [both laugh] and if next week that their identify is something else, that's it! We have to argue for our humanity, which is very frustrating, but also on a science level, I think some of those arguments are bullshit, because the brain is not so neatly divided into male and female. There are places in the brain that we say are sexually dimorphic, that are different between the sexes, but it's not that scientists are then karyotyping or looking at a person's chromosomes and saying okay, like, you're telling us you're male and you have XY. They're not doing that and so we don't actually know, like, are these places that are supposedly different between the sexes linked to chromosomes. And then on top of that, really what science had shown is that it's the presence of sex steroids that make changes in your body and in your brain. It's not your chromosomes, it's your sex hormones, it's testosterone and estrogen. And there are plenty of individuals, usually people who present as female, who have high testosterone. I have elevated testosterone levels that has been the bane of my existence for along time. I have a lot of gender feelings about it. But when I identified as a woman, that didn't make me any less of a women, even though that wasn't a good identity for me. So these ideas, that there's a female brain, there really isn't. And it's really reductive to think about it like that. And the areas again, that are supposedly different between the sexes, we haven't gotten to the point where we're actually breaking it down into more of the male and female. Again, that's not a thing scientists are thinking about. It's not a think they want to think about, because it complicated things. As it is, this is outside of human studies, in animal studies, most scientists only use male animals, because it's easier, because then they don't have to think about the presence of estrogen, because that complicates things. So saying a trans woman brain is actually a women, well first of all, trans woman are women, but also, how long have they been on estrogen? Are there any background levels of estrogen that they had if they haven't started medically transitioning in any way yet? These are questions that people don't think about and they don't think are important to ask because they don't have the background to ask them. But it is.

**Molly:** So a hard pivot from what we were just talking about but I wanted to ask you -- so your Twitter bio describes you as a queer Muslim enby and there are a lot of misguided folks out there who think that Islam is like inherently anti-feminist and inherently anti-LGBTQ+ but you wrote this article for Ravishly about how Sufism actually helped you become an intersectional feminist and I was wondering if you could talk more about those intersections in your life

**Naseem:** So I was raised a Sufi. Sufism is the mystical sect of Islam, for lack of a better description. That's what it's usually referred to as. And the core tenant of Sufism is achieving divine unity or oneness with God through the path of love. So I was raised very much with this open idea of I'm supposed to love everything because everything is a reflection of God. And even though I call Sufism the hippies of Islam because we love everyone. But Islam is not so different. Someone could be like "well, that's Sufism," but Islam as a faith is also a faith of love. I mean, we believe that everyone regardless of religious background will make it to heaven and that's something that I don't know how many other faiths believe something like that. I -- certainly of people have done bad things in the name of Islam, just as plenty of people have done bad things in the name of Christianity or plenty of other religions. It's not a unique thing to Islam. People who believe that Islam is inherently anti-feminist or inherently anti-LGBTQ+ don't have a real understanding of the religion. They see whatever is portrayed through US media and they assume that that's the case, but like everything in the media, we have to be incredibly critical. Certainly cultures exist that claim they're Islamic but are oppressive to women or oppressive to queer people. I come from a culture that doesn't believe queer people should exist. But that's very much the laws that are in that country, It's not necessarily - it has nothing to do with actually what Islam says. Again, as a religion we are a religion of love and there's nothing that says we can't be queer or that says we can't be feminist. In fact, Islam, we're allowed to divorce if their husbands were abusive. Women were allowed to hold positions of power or hold lands, this stuff that like, you couldn't do that as a Christian. And yeah, yes, there are cultures -- I think it has to do more with the patriarchy. [laughs] The patriarchy is at fault --

**Molly:** Always

**Naseem:** But building cultures that have these patriarchal standards and then saying it's Islamic is different than saying this is what Islam as a religion says. So, yes. I know plenty of queer Muslims. None of us think that we're in conflict with our faith whatsoever.

**Molly:** I've heard Trump in his effort to pretend to be LGBTQ friendly, which he obviously isn't, he's doing a lot of harm to those communities, but he often poses LGBTQ communities against Muslim communities. And it's like, you're completely erasing all the queer and trans Muslims that exist that I see out in the world.

**Naseem:** Yeah, exactly. I think plenty of people like to pit communities against each other and miss the intersections. A lot of the intersections exist. I think Black women know that better than anybody. They're the one that came up with the idea.

**Molly:** So when you were talking, you said you came from a culture that doesn't believe queer people should exist? Can you talk about that or explain that statement?

**Naseem:** In Iran, which is where my parents are born, there are anti-gay laws. Basically, what the government does is if you're gay, they give you -- they pay for you to surgically transition. If you're a trans person who wants to surgically transition, Iran's got you covered. But there are plenty of queer people who are not trans and plenty of trans people who don't want to transition medically. So in Iran, you're not supposed to be gay. But I don't know how much of that was the case before the revolution. I'm sure it was one of those things where people whispered it or whatever. I'm pretty sure it wasn't illegal until the revolution. This is a good example of humans, flawed humans and specifically men, taking tenants of Islam and claiming they're upholding it, because the revolution was an Islamic revolution. And they're not. [laugh] They're clearly not. And queer rights in Iran, I think, are fraught with difficulties because you're just not supposed to be gay. And then culturally on top of that, people don't know what to do with queer people from the communities that I've interacted with. I'm kind of in this weird diasporic position in that I didn't have a big Iranian communities around me growing up. I was never -- I should say, I knew Iranians growing up, but they were all Sufis, and since we're like, we're supposed to love everyone, I don't think it ever occurred to me that being queer was wrong. Whereas, I think maybe if I had grown up in Los Angeles, which is where all the Iranians are outside of Toronto and Iran, maybe I would have had that idea, but yeah, it's just something that we don't as a culture talk much about. As far as I know, our word for gay is -- I don't even know how to -- it's like a gay stereotype, a description. It's not even a real word. So I think as a culture we don't really talk about it but yeah, I don't think that has to do with Islam. I think that has to do with the hush-hush nature of being queer across many different cultures.

**Molly:** Of course. Again, we just have a lot of hard transitions in this interview.

**Naseem:** Great.

**Molly:** You wrote this article for Cosmo about going to the Women's March and I don't know if you wrote the deck, you probably didn't, but the deck says "many nonbinary people support the women's movement but that doesn't mean they feel included" and that's something I think about a lot, about whether we should be going to women-only spaces and being like, "it's really important to me that you make this woman-only space accessible to nonbinary folks and inclusive to nonbinary folks," or whether it feels better to be like, okay, women can have women-only spaces as long as they include trans women, and nonbinary folks will make their only separate spaces because we're not going to man-only spaces, whatever those are, and being like, nonbinary people need to be let into those.

**Naseem:** Right

**Molly:** That made it sound like I have a strong opinion, and I don't. I'm just really curious what you think about this.

**Naseem:** That's a really good question actually. I don't know how much I've thought about it. I definitively see the argument for having women-only spaces that definitely include trans women because trans women are women, again, but I think something like the Women's March was touting itself more for gender equality, and when you talk more about gender equality or inequity, you have to consider nonbinary folks. And so, if you're saying this is a space because we're fighting for equal rights, well, then we have to be included. If it's more, we want to have a space that's for women, that's a different conversation. I can definitely then see, oh, okay, you want your own space. Cool. I would never go into a Black-only space and be like, I'm a person of color, I should be here. No, that's bullshit, give them their space. I also wonder though, are we far enough along where we can have these separate spaces? Not in terms of, are we allowed them or should they not exist, but I wonder, are we stronger together at this point? Is there still so much work that we need to do that we should be banding together and making sure that these movements are inclusive? I don't know that I have enough of an informed opinion. I think I definitely see the argument, again, for having a women-only space and having nonbinary spaces. I think it will matter what those spaces are trying to do. If it's a movement, again, for gender, then yeah, sorry! Please include us.

**Molly:** Totally. I think that's a really important distinction, I'm glad that you brought that up, because there is huge difference between saying this is a woman-only space because we want to celebrate womanhood in all it's various forms, and a group that's saying "this is for marginalized genders." That's very different.

**Naseem:** Right. There are woman-only spaces that are like, oh yeah, we're actually about marginalized gender, nonbinary people can come in, but not nonbinary designated male at birth or something. We also have to be cognizant that there is this bias for individuals who are designated female at birth, as if perhaps they don't actually recognize that if we say we're nonbinary we're nonbinary, and that's valid no matter we're designated at birth,

**Molly:** Yeah

**Naseem:** And I think a lot of that language is trying to be inclusive and it's like, you're backfiring. I think that part of that comes from not having nonbinary people at the head as well.

**Molly:** Absolutely. So, as we've pointed out, you've written a lot of articles for a lot of different publications about a lot of different things but I know that centering marginalized voices is always really important to you, and I'm wondering, of all the articles you've written in the past few years, which have felt the most important, like you really, if someone was going to leave this and read one or two of your articles, what do you feel is most important to get out there?

**Naseem:** I think if anyone is interested in my science work, the very first piece I wrote for Bitch called "The Lab is Not Neutral" is -- I'm very proud of that piece. I think it very clearly lays out why science is not neutral and how we can become more science-literate. For my gender stuff, I think my Cosmo piece is a good one. Probably my -- I don't know if it's quite my favorite piece -- I wrote a piece for Ravishly called, I think it's called, what does your story add to the conversation? It's directed towards writers. If I remember correctly, I'm speaking about personal essays in it, but also about fiction, you know, like, write whatever but really think about something before you're publishing it, because I think it's a matter of balancing your truth versus what you need to put out in the world. I really strongly believe writers have a moral obligation and the things that they put out into the world are no longer theirs in a way that really has to make you cognizant of what you publish. I really strongly believe that and if someone is wondering whether or not they are taking up space, to go ahead and read that and think about it because I mean, if you're worried about it you're more likely to do it right, but [sigh] I think it's super important to think about what you're publishing. Again, write whatever you want, but I really don't think you should publish whatever you want. There are plenty of pieces I've written that I can't publish because it's not my place. And that's okay, I'd much rather drop a piece, I'd much rather decline payment and not publish something, if I know that it's going to harm someone.

**Molly:** That's such an important point, yeah. This is the part of the show where I ask, is there anything that you really want to talk about that we haven't talked about yet?

**Naseem:** I guess the last thing is also, if you're interested in video games, you should totally check out the website I added. This is a shameless plug. We just went independent and we're very small. We only publish women and nonbinary voices, all nonbinary voices, and we're great. We're called Sidequest and I love us.

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

**Naseem:** [sigh] Man, we would not talk about gender unless we wanted to. I think gender should become a nonissue. For individuals, it can be an issue. But we just put so much emphasis in gender everywhere and it's exhausting more than anything else. These gender reveal parties --

[Molly laughs]

**Naseem:** Maybe, we're having a human! Or maybe you're having a dog, I don't know. Or you know, these very binary toys that we have, and like, just get away! Stop! Stop it. In an ideal world, gender would become such a nonissue. Also in an ideal world, we would just introduce ourselves with our pronouns. It would just -- that would also be a nonissue. Someone asked me -- actually, two people asked me, and this was fine, because they're my friends and I want them to ask me questions. Apparently on Twitter, someone said that it's appropriative to put your pronouns in your bios? No!

**Molly:** No!

Naseem: Put them in your bios and in your emails, put it in your bios, put on your Facebook, put it everywhere. It is so helpful. You never know when somebody is nonbinary. I present as cis, one because I'm a fat person, one because my gender dysphoria was centered around my hips and not my breasts and top surgery doesn't make lot of sense once the money -- there's plenty of reasons that people don't transition. You never know when someone doesn't use binary pronouns. Do not assume. Please for God's sake, put your pronouns in your bios and in your emails. They are a huge huge huge help.

**Molly:** Absolutely, it's like the easiest possible form of cis allyship. And it really does warm my heart each time. I love it.

**Naseem:** Me too.

**Molly:** Okay I know that was the end, but I have to follow up -- you said you present as cis because you're a fat person. Can you unpack that for me?

**Naseem:** Oh man. I will say, I am not a great ally in this sense just because I'm still unpacking a lot of internal fatphobia. But because I'm fat and I look feminine, I've got curves, people just assume I'm a woman. And this is not to fault them, because most people assume binary genders and so like, what are you gonna do? People who know, please don't misgender me when you know better. I just feel like, as a fat person, no one's going to pause and be like, "oh, perhaps you're androgynous," or perhaps, you know, "perhaps you don't identify as female," because what they see seems very feminine. I apologize if anyone who listens to this is fat and is like, wow, that was really fatphobic. I understand that I --

**Molly:** I mean, I don't know if it's fatphobic because it's a think I've heard from a lot of folks that identify as fat, if that it's much harder to present as androgynous or have your signaling picked up by other folks when you...

**Naseem:** yeah

**Molly:** Anyway. Thank you for everything. Thank you for all the science. I had such a good time talking to you. Thanks for being on the show.

**Naseem:** Yeah, I had a blast! Please be my friend.

**Molly:** Yes! I feel the same way. Great. We're friends now. We did laugh. [laugh]

**Naseem:** Yay, friendship!

[theme music starts]

**Molly:** That's going to do it for this week's show. If you had a good time, here's what I want you to do. Find someone else's phone, break into it open the podcast app subscribe them to Gender Reveal, and say "you're welcome my dude!" Or just like, tell your friends and family and coworkers and classmates how much you like the show. That might be a more consent-based way to go about the show. If you want to help pay for the show, because it takes a weirdly large amount of money to make and I think I'm still operating at a loss, please consider donating at patreon.com/gender or paypal.me/mollywoodstock. And here's another option -- if you work for a fancy company or go to a fancy college with a big budget for speakers, get them to invite me to speak and then you and I can hang out and become good friends. And speaking of becoming good friends, you can always reach out to me at gendereveal at gmail.com, you can find me on Twitter and Instagram, you can find the show on Twitter as well. Our show is edited by me, Molly Woodstock, because Liza Yeager is at Radiolab now, and I miss her. Our logo is by the talented Michelle Leigh and our theme song is by the legendary Breakmaster Cylinder. We'll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

[theme song ends]