[Theme song in background]

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

[Theme song ends]

**Molly:** Hi friends! Hope you’re all hanging in there. Before we get started, I wanted to share two quick reminders/announcements. First, it’s time for us to do another advice segment on the show, so if you have questions about gender or queerness, please send them to us. We have a Google form in the show notes and you can also email them to us or DM us on Twitter. Secondly, as you know, our show is 100% listener-supported. Last month, Allison Jones became our first-ever Patreon supporter at the $40 level. Allison is not only a kind and selfless queer angel, she’s also a relatively recent Gender Reveal listener who is just now making her way through the backlogs, and she asked me to remind everyone that if you haven’t listened to Season One yet:

One, you should just listen to all the episodes because they’re fun.

But specifically, if you’re confused about some of the vocabulary we use on the show, you can listen to Episode One, which is a glossary of terms that we use to talk about gender and identity in all of the other episodes. If you want to learn more about pronouns, I also highly recommend listening to Episode Thirteen with Kirby Conrod, which has a ton of tips and information from a professional linguist.

We currently have 94 incredible Patreon donors, most of whom are donating $1 or $5 per month. If that sounds doable to you, and you want to be our one hundredth donor, please find us at Patreon.com/gender. And with that, it’s time for a segment called “This Week in Gender.”

[music plays]

**Molly:** This week, trans Twitter has been in an understandable uproar over recent Hollywood casting decisions. Specifically, there is a film currently in pre-production called “Rub and Tug” that chronicles the life of a trans man named Tex Gill, who operated a massage parlor and brothel in Pittsburgh in the 1970’s. Side note: discussions of Tex have been problematic as hell, because virtually all coverage of his life has referred to him not as a trans man, but as a butch lesbian who dressed like a man, presented like a man, self-identified as a man, and preferred to be referred to by others as a man. So, uh, sounds like he’s a man, huh?

So, this film is in the works, producers start looking for someone to play this fat, white, trans man, and naturally they choose… Scarlett Johansson, a thin cis woman. It’s worth noting that the film will be directed by Rupert Sanders, who also directed Ghost in the Shell, which is the film in which Scarlett Johansson played a Japanese woman. So, not content to play a Japanese woman, she’s now playing a trans man. Why, Scarlett, why?

So, of course, everyone’s deeply upset that a trans man is being played by a cis woman, for reasons we’ll get into in a minute, and when asked to comment on the backlash, Scarlett inexplicably responded, quote, “tell them that they can be directed to Jeffrey Tambor, Jared Leto and Felicity Huffman’s reps for comment.” She’s presumably referring to the fact that Felicity Huffman played a trans woman in *Transamerica*, Jared Leto played a trans woman in *Dallas Buyers Club*, and Jeffrey Tambor played a trans woman on *Transparent* until he was removed from the show for sexually harassing two trans women. If Scarlett is trying to imply that nobody cared when Huffman, Leto, and Tambor played transgender characters, she’s extremely wrong. It’s deeply upsetting every time, and every time, trans folks and allies call for trans roles to be reserved for trans actors. And every time, Hollywood ignores them, or worse, says “you’re right, this is the last time we will cast a cis person in a trans role” But of course, that’s not true, they do it over and over again and this repeats forever.

Now, you may ask, “Molly, why should we reserve trans roles for trans actors? After all, isn’t acting about pretending to be something you’re not? British actor Hugh Laurie played an American doctor for many years on *House*, that was fine. Robert Pattinson wasn’t really a vampire, but he still played one in several movies. Cate Blanchett played Bob Dylan once for some reason.”

Well, there’s a couple differences here. The first one is that, by casting a woman to play a trans man, Hollywood is perpetuating the extremely dangerous myth that trans men are really just women in disguise. It was OK for Cate Blanchett to play Bob Dylan because nobody was thinking “oh wait, was Bob Dylan really a woman?” But in this case, it is extremely important to clearly express that Tex was a man.

And even if they had cast a cis man to play Tex, that still wouldn’t really be appropriate. And the reason is because nobody ever, ever, ever casts openly trans actors in cis roles or even open-ended roles. When openly trans folks *are* cast, it is virtually always in openly trans roles. And there are very very very very very few openly trans roles. So when they do come along, literally once every year or two, to deny those opportunities to trans actors over and over again is deeply unfair and upsetting.

Now some folks will say, “There aren’t enough super famous trans actors, and you can’t make a movie without a star. It just won’t sell.” To that I say: there are probably a bunch of cis roles in that movie. Put a star in the supporting actor slot. As someone said on Twitter: “Do you know how many people are seeing the new *Jurassic Park* movie just to see ninety seconds of Jeff Goldblum?” And also, trans folks will never be stars if you don’t give them roles!

The thing that really sucks about this, is that trans folks will probably boycott the film because Scarlett Johansson is playing a trans man. And then the film will bomb. And then Hollywood will say: “This is why we don’t make movies about trans people.” And I’m just so mad.

If you have thoughts, questions, or hot takes about this, you can find us on Twitter or at gendereveal@gmail.com . This has been “This Week in Gender.”

[music plays]

**Molly:** Alaina Mons, also known as Al Mons, is a freelance writer and first-year Ph.D. student in Performance as Public Practice at the University of Texas at Austin. They are an artist and scholar whose work looks at the role of participatory performance rituals in the lives of queer women and non-binary people of color. Their thesis research centered around performance and play in queer S/M communities. Their work has been published online at Autostraddle.

**Molly:** So the way we always start the show is by asking: In terms of gender, how do you identify?

**Al(aina):** I use non-binary as an identifier. It’s really interesting, I’ve noticed a lot of people sort of like see that as a third gender though, and I don’t see it that way. I don’t feel like I have a gender, but “agender” doesn’t feel right for me. I feel like I’m always *doing* gender, and so it’s an act, and it’s a verb, and “non-binary” feels like it describes the way that I do my gender the most accurately.

**Molly:** Do you use “trans” for yourself?

**Al(aina):** Yes, yeah, I identify as trans

**Molly:** And what pronouns do you use?

**Al(aina):** I use they, them, theirs pronouns.

**Molly:** In regards to sexual orientation, how do you identify?

**Al(aina):** So, I identify as either queer, bi, or lesbian, really depending on where I am. I came out originally when I was like 16 as bi, and for me that was very much a gateway into saying that I don’t like men. Which is still true. So, bisexual for me means that I like women and non-binary people. And I use “lesbian” because I’m really inspired by Alice Walker’s writing about womanism, and the way she talks about it as something where it’s like a political ideology for folks who are dedicated first and foremost to women. And that feels very accurate in the way that I think about my sexuality. More than anything, I want people to know that I have this huge love and affinity for women. So it really sort of switches. But I’ve really liked trying out “lesbian” since I’ve sort of come out as trans.

**Molly:** Yeah. Do you ever get push back on that?

**Al(aina):** Not from my friends.

**Molly:** From others?

**Al(aina):** Yeah. From people on the internet, sure, definitely. But I think because I write for the internet, I’ve gotten really good at ignoring that. But there are definitely people that I’ve heard who think that, either by using “lesbian” I’m saying that I’m cis, or who think that trans people can’t be lesbians, which is just very strange.

**Molly:** Yeah**.** So I saw you identify somewhere on the internet as a professional queer. Could you tell me more about that?

**Al(aina):** Yeah, I think it’s because I write for Autostraddle, which is a website for queer women and non-binary folks, and I am in grad school doing queer research at the state’s dime. So I, like, get paid to do queer research. And it’s really- like I have trouble making small talk with straight people often. [laughs] Because I try to say, so much of my identity is not based around queerness, but like I’m literally in school- like if anyone asks me “what do I do / what do I write for?” - like, I write gay things, and I’m at school doing gay things. So there is very little part of my professional life that is not directly attached to my queerness.

**Molly:** Yeah. Does it feel great?

**Al(aina):** It does! It feels really good. Especially thinking about it, like, as a grad student- and thinking about the way- like I go to a public university. So my funding is federal dollars. So it feels really good, in an administration like this, to know that I’m getting thousands of dollars a year from an administration that like, probably would not like me to be doing this research. But I’m getting paid for it! Yea, I love that so much, it feels great.

**Molly:** Can you talk more about the program you’re in and the research you’re doing?

**Al(aina):** Sure, yeah. I’m in a program at UT Austin called “Performance as Public Practice.” The program looks at the way that performance and society intersect with one another. So it is a Performance-Studies-esque program housed in a Theater and Dance department. And so my research specifically is looking at queer women of color and non-binary people of color, and their experiences with S/M.

**Al(aina):** So I’m thinking about S/M as a performance, and thinking about the way that- I’m calling it a “participatory performance ritual.” So I’m thinking about S/M as that sort of ritual, and thinking about the ways that people take part in S/M and the ways that, specifically for queer women of color and non-binary people, it offers them a place to sort of generate new knowledges about their bodies and about the way that they perform their gender and sexuality and race, even. And question the way that- because of the way that power is so deeply involved in S/M- question the way that power has played a role in their everyday performances of gender and sexuality. And perhaps sort of offer them some sort of transformational change in the way that they understand power and performance.

**Al(aina):** And I think that what I haven’t sort of written about yet and gotten to, but what I think will come out of it, is this idea that there is a change but because of the veil of whiteness and the way that white supremacy has sort of taught those in power to see identity as fixed and to see performance of that identity as fixed, that maybe isn’t perceived by people in power and by white people, but that is perceived within their communities and within themselves.

**Al(aina):** And then therefore sort of allows a shift of how we understand power, or how we understand dominance or submission, to be, sort of, unhealthy or healthy within our own communities.

**Molly:** Really quick for those who don’t know, could you identify S/M?

**Al(aina):** Yea, S/M stands for “sadism and masochism.” And that’s, I don’t know, there’s a lot of really interesting research that I’ve read. I think I’m using S/M as an acronym that sort of encompasses a large set of practices that are more widely known as kink. But I’m sort of staying away, in my research, from defining it as “sadism and masochism” because of the ways that those have historically been seen as pathological illnesses, and still are in the DSM today.

**Molly:** Wow.

**Al(aina):** Yeah.

**Molly:** What does it look like to research that?

**Al(aina):** I got to read a lot of really cool books written by lesbians who practiced kink in the 70’s and 80’s. These two books by this queer women’s S/M collective out of the Bay Area called [*inaudible*] which has now transformed into a different group, which name I can’t remember. I believe it’s the Outlaws? But they’re like this queer kink collective, and they do education and stuff, so I got to read these books by self-identified lesbians from the seventies and eighties about their experiences with S/M. Which was really really awesome! I’ve done a lot of archival research, because I got a grant to visit the GLBT Archives in San Francisco. So I went through and- anything that was flagged “kink” or “S/M” I just sort of picked out. So I got to see some really cool pictures. And then a third really large part is just interview-based, so I am interviewing queer women of color and queer non-binary people of color who identify as kinky. And I was able to use some of my archival research, like I found some questionnaires that they did in meetings, and I was able to kind of use that to create my own questions to interview folks.

**Molly:** Obviously a Ph.D. is a huge project. But is there something specific that you’re looking to do with this, or do after this?

**Al(aina):** So, realistically, because my Ph.D. is in Performance Studies and is housed in a Theater and Dance department, most of my teaching experience is in theater and theater history. So there’s a large part of me that would love to go live in rural Massachusetts and teach at Smith or Mount Holyoke or something. But I think with regard to this specific research, I want to find a way to make it public. Public scholarship is really important to me. I think the paywall is really detrimental and harmful. ‘And I think that more queer sex education needs to be out there. Even just thinking about the scholarship that has been produced- other than my thesis, which isn’t peer reviewed or published right now, there’s nothing out there that has been written about specifically queer women of color and/or queer non-binary people and their specific experiences with kink.

**Al(aina):** The biggest sort of work that’s been done, that I’ve seen, that’s looking at S/M and performance in the same way that I am, is written by Robin Bower. And they’re based in Germany, and their work is about older white people, so folks over the age of 40 for the most part. And everyone I’m interviewing is also 40 or younger, and of color. So I think it’s really important just because it doesn’t exist yet, and so a big part of me writing this is just getting it out there and letting people read it. I’ll probably build a website for it or something.

**Molly:** I’m so glad you’re doing that. That’s so exciting!

**Al(aina):** Yeah, I’m excited about it, too. It’s work that needs to be done and seen.

**Molly:** What has your experience been like being a non-binary person in academia and in Texas?

**Al(aina):** Sure. It has not been the easiest. I think I have, for the most part, very supportive colleagues and professors, for the most part. Talking about pronouns in class and things like that is common. I’m rarely misgendered by people who know me. But, I mean, Texas is just a difficult state to be in. There is, like right after I moved there. There was, sort of, trans bathroom bills passed. I live in Austin, which is sort of seen as a Mecca [*sic*] of liberalism, but is like a really dangerous place for people of color in general. And is the capital of Austin, so people who work for the state legislature meet there ever couple of years. And so it’s a very politically charged environment, and very red. And so it’s been difficult- I think the biggest difficulty for me is being in an environment where a lot of the people around me are praising Austin for being this really great, wonderful place. And my experience with Austin is not necessarily that truth. So, yeah.

**Molly:** So you mentioned that you write for Autostraddle, and you wrote a piece recently that I saw get a lot of love on the internet – maybe it’s just because I’m friends with everyone at Autostraddle, so they were talking about it – but, um, can you talk about your love letter to butch people that’s actually about your dad? [laughs]

**Al(aina):** Yeah, so I actually wrote that specifically for the A-Camp staff reading. I’ve been really depressed this year and I have been in a really bad writing rut and I had a goal to write one personal essay every six months. So that was my one personal essay. And I’ve been dating- I, like, also identify as a femme. That is an important part of my identity, not as much aesthetically as it used to be, but in the way that I think about my gender and sexuality. I do think of myself as a femme, who is primarily attracted to butch people or masculine-of-center people. And there is something really beautiful, I think, about butch/femme relationships, and subversive, that often gets ignored or seen as mimicing heterosexuality in ways that I’ve always found really confusing. And also, just, doing my archival research, there was a lot of really beautiful writing. Joan[?] Nestle writes a lot about, um, she was a Jewish lesbian who wrote a lot about butch/femme relationships and BDSM. So I’ve been thinking a lot about, like, qualities of masculinity that I find extremely attractive. And there is a part of it, for me, and in the relationships I’ve had, that’s this sort of care giving relationship.

**Al(aina):** And almost everything I write ends up being about my father in some way. I just have a lot of unfinished business with him. I was thinking about the ways that these butches have been care givers to me in ways that, like, cisgender masculine men have not been care givers to me and I don’t think ever think will be. So I wanted to write something to say thank you to these people who practice masculinities in ways that feel healthy, and comforting, and supportive to me. And one of the side effects of being around these butch people and loving them so much, has been that I am able to think about my father less. And when I do think about him, like I think that a lot of the negatives aspects of my father that I have attributed those to the fact that he’s masculine – sort of as a way, I’ve used masculinity historically as a scapegoat for bad behavior. And been like, whatever, I can’t help him, he’s a man and his masculinity is what is causing him to act this way. And thinking about masculinity as something that is inherently toxic and harmful. And these people that I’ve dated have, sort of, undeniably been masculine and have not been harmful in the same way. And so it was also a way for me to think about, what do you do if like you can’t blame the reason why someone is awful and has been awful to you on masculinity? Especially when someone is as important as a father figure often is in a person’s life? And, for me, it was like “oh I guess I just sort of have to deal with the fact that my father is a bad person” and that that is, and can be, separate from masculinity.

**Molly:** I want to go back to what you said about identifying as a femme, but not necessarily thinking about it in terms of aesthetics.

[Al(aina) hums affirmatively]

**Molly:** Because I think that for a lot of folks, femme is a description of an aesthetic, and obviously like you’re thinking about it on a deeper level, and I was wondering if you could talk about that?

**Al(aina):** Yeah. There are definitely femme aesthetics that appeal to me. But the way that I think of femme and my femme ancestors and my femme inspirations, have been people like single moms and grandmothers who aren’t always dressed up, but who are nurturing in ways that feel really fulfilling and who have an emotional capacity that I strive for and are very empathetic. When I think about femmes, I think a lot about hands: hands that care, but also hands that are capable of doing work when that work needs to be done. So for me, this is very much a way of thinking about femme-ness that is deeply rooted in Blackness for me, and definitely communities of color, but specifically deeply rooted in communities of Blackness where the femmes are the ones who keep things going and thriving. And they’re the folks who help make sure you’re surviving, but who are also not, like, taking shit. And so there’s this fierceness that’s also wrapped in care and love and empathy, and that’s what I think of when I think of femme for the most part.

**Molly:** That’s really interesting to me, in part because you were just talking about how you learned that butch and masculine-of-center people can also provide that kind of care, and that that’s not an excuse to not provide that kind of care. So, that’s really interesting.

You’re wearing an A-Camp sweatshirt right now, and I did want to ask about A-Camp. So A-Camp is Autostraddle’s summer camp that was originally for queer women and is now inclusive of non-binary folks and trans men. And we did get a question on Twitter the other day from someone who was wondering what an experience might be as someone who doesn’t identify as a woman, but is attending a camp that was originally founded to center queer women. So I was wondering if you could speak to that?

**Al(aina):** Yeah. So, I like realized I was non-binary going to camp. And I’m 90% sure the first time I went to camp that it was a camp designed for queer women, but it didn’t necessarily gatekeep. And it still doesn’t. So this is similar to why I identify as a lesbian. I think that it’s important that there are spaces that are primarily there to support and uplift women, and I think that’s what A-Camp is. I think that that is true.

**Al(aina):** However, I think that A-Camp has also worked really hard at making sure that all the communities who come there have space and time to build community with other people who are like them. So, while I do think that the programming is often queer-woman-specific, I don’t think that’s a problem. And I know that, for me, that’s something that I’ve enjoyed because I go to A-Camp to build community with other queer women. And queer women were the people who made me feel safe enough in my body and comfortable enough being who I was to say “I am no longer a woman.” And, like, this is how I want to be identified. And, even changing my name. I decided very off-the-cuff at A-Camp this year that I also would like to be called by Al instead of just Alaina, and literally the very next day, everyone called me Al. And so it’s a super supportive place to be whoever you are. One of A-Camp’s mottos is “be here now.” And I think that that’s true. I think that as long as you’re present, and you’re there to be in the moment, and you go there with the desire to make the best out of the place and the understanding that everyone else has that desire, it’s a beautiful and healing space. I think. A lot of people go there and it’s the first place they’ve ever seen that many queer people in that space. Even little things, like, food preferences are honored there, and so people can eat in community with people that they love, which is important. So, yeah, I really really love A-Camp. And I think that as a non-binary person, I personally have never felt that I was treated as less-than because I don’t identify as a queer woman. But I do feel like I’ve learned how to be more supportive to queer women who need my support. Especially, in the last few years there’s been more programming about trans women and how to support queer trans women. And I think that I’m also still able to build community with non-binary people. Like, this year there was a feeling circle for non-binary folks that happened. But there are always, sort of, unofficial meet-ups and things like that that happen.

**Molly:** You said that you sort of realized that you’re non-binary at A-Camp. Was there a specific moment when that happened?

**Al(aina):** No. It was after my second camp, and it was really- I feel like A-Camp is one of the few spaces in my life where, because it’s a queer-normative space, I am encouraged to bring my whole self there. And I think that in my day-to-day life I have to leave so many parts of myself at home that I don’t have the space to be able to, sort of, explore that. And A-Camp was one of the first places where I felt like I had space to bring all of myself, anywhere. And in doing that, I was like, “Oh my God, what is this part of myself that I haven’t thought about before?” And so I don’t think it was any specific moment. I know that the first time I called myself non-binary was on the exit survey, from that A-Camp. Because they ask you what your gender is, and I was like, oh my God, oooh, what *is* my gender?

[Molly and Al(aina) laugh]

**Molly:** That’s so relateable.

**Al(aina):** And I was like, I don’t know. And I don’t know, because I just had a week where I was, like, seen.

**Molly:** I asked you what you wanted to talk about, and you mentioned “gender failing.” Can you talk about what that means?

**Al(aina):** Yeah, well, I’ve been reading Halberstam. I think when he wrote it he was going by Judith, but it’s The Queer Art of Failure by J. Halberstam. And he’s writing about failure as an art, and the way that queer folks have always failed. We’ve always failed at heterosexuality, we’ve always failed at sort of gender normativity, but in failing, the way that we are able to succeed at stepping outside of societies that determine that identities are fixed or that we’re supposed to present or look a certain way- and so thinking about failure as a success. And so I’ve been thinking a lot about gender failure, and even just like language and discourse around “passing” as trans or “passing” as cis. And thinking about the fact that like, because the fact I’m viewed as cis most days, like when people just see me on the street- like I’m failing at my gender every single day. Because that’s not my gender and not what I want other people to see me as. And instead of letting that bog me down, I’ve been thinking about how is that failure subversive then, and how can I use that as a privilege? Or within my communities, or outside my communities, because I’m seen as cis I think there’s a lot more availability for me to, like, go and speak to people in power. Whereas people who are visibly trans in other ways aren’t able to do that.

**Al(aina):** So, yeah, I’ve been thinking about what are the ways that I am not doing my gender “right” that are offering me possibilities that I wouldn’t have if I was doing it “right”?

**Molly:** What would it look like to do it right?

**Al(aina):** Ooh, I don’t know. I think that if I was “doing it right” in the sense that cis people thought I was doing my gender right, then- my body would probably be more ruly, so I’d be thinner, and I would be- I would probably not be, like, as black? If that’s real?

[Molly and Al(aina) laugh]

**Al(aina):** But you know, I think that part of “doing gender right” is being a white cisgender person. So I think it would be reaching for whiteness and cisness in a way that I have no desire to do anymore. But I also think that there’s a way to succeed at gender in a queer way. I read something- We had a guest writer on Autostraddle a few years ago, or maybe last year, write about “being a queer ten, but a straight zero,” and it was about facial hair. And things like that. And so I think that there are ways, where there are either aesthetics or experiences that queer people value that cis hetero folks don’t value. And so I think there’s also a way to be gender successful in a queer way where you, like, proudly wear your facial hair or wear something that you, like, know that straight people don’t find attractive, but know that other queer people find attractive. There’s a lot of that.

**Molly:** So, total pivot.

**Al(aina):** Great!

**Molly:** So, you identify as Christian?

**Al(aina):** Yes!

**Molly:** So I would love if you’d be willing to talk about that. Because I always think it’s really interesting to hear folks who identify as queer and/or trans and who also identify as religious in any way, especially a religion that is used to justify homophobia and transphobia. Could you talk about that?

**Al(aina):** Yeah. So I was raised Christian, and my father and mother are both ordained ministers in their denominations. And it’s never been something I considered not being. At least, being religious in some way. Something that never really crossed my mind. And I feel really lucky in that I didn’t have harmful experiences at church as a child. I came out when I was 16, and right before I came out publicly to people in my life, I started asking a lot of questions. And those questions were not necessarily responded to with grace, but they were listened to and responded to and these people were like “I don’t know, but this is what we believe.” I was never taught like, “just shut up and stop asking questions,” like, this is why it’s supposed to be that way. My curiosity was always, like, encouraged in church, which meant that once I left home I knew that I still wanted to go to church. But I didn’t want to go to church in the same way that I had growing up.

**Al(aina):** Which, for me, meant a few years of a lot of discernment and personal study of what the Bible says or what I think the Bible says. And finding a denomination that was inclusive and accepting of my queerness and my transness was something that I knew had to be number one. So it wasn’t ever going to be like, oh I like their music, and I hope that they are accepting. More than anything, it was going to websites and seeing like, are you very clear in your statement of faith that you affirm all people? And if that wasn’t the case, then I wouldn’t go. But I think that the Bible is a very dangerous book and is very unclear. And I think that’s part of what makes faith exciting, is that it’s not clear, there’s no clear-cut answer, you’re supposed to sit and wrestle with it. And I think that that’s why I’ve been able to call myself queer and a Christian for so long.

**Al(aina):** Most of the people I’ve read who have written about the Bible, most of the people I trust, have said that this is a confusing book and it’s not clear. But one thing we can get from it is this “arc of salvation,” and this arc that salvation is for anyone who wants it. And that like “who wants it” has been a vital part for me, of how and why I can identify as a queer Christian. I understand that this is like one route of sacredness and spirituality, but it’s not the only route of sacredness or spirituality for all people. And that this is the route that I have chosen and that I want, and if someone else wants something else, then I’m down for that. And if someone else wants to learn about Christianity from me, then I’m also down for that. But I also don’t talk about it unless someone asks, because it’s been used to hurt people.

**Molly:** [*inaudible*]- in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**Al(aina):** Yeah, I think about this a lot because I am in a very family planning stage. But I think the future of gender is one that would feel a lot easier than it feels now. This is very weird to say as a person who identifies as trans, but I feel like I had a girlhood, and I feel like I grew up and wasn’t a woman. And I think that’s not true of all trans people, but I think assigning sex and gender as equal can be dangerous if the two are seen as so tied together that they can never be separated. And so for me the future of gender is one where exploration is encouraged, and where children, even if they are still assigned gender based on their sex, are taught that there is nothing set about them staying in this gender and that exploring and playing with other genders is OK and is fine. But also like being very happy and changing your mind later on is fine. I think that the future of gender is one where there’s more than one acceptable, like, pathologized trans narrative. Because right now, it’s like, if you don’t experience dysphoria and if you don’t want to take hormones then you’re not trans- and I think that perhaps is more harmful to anyone who’s really having questions about their gender than sort of gender essentialism is (the idea that you have to have these things to be this). It’s really harmful. So I can not wait for a future where, like, our histories are able to be celebrated and we don’t have to really hide those to be able to, say, get hormones if we want them. To say that “no, I was actually super happy being a girl for 18 years.”

**Molly:** I know I said that was the end. You said you’re in a family planning stage, what does that look like?

**Al(aina):** Yeah! So I’m going to meetings right now. I just went to an orientation meeting about becoming a foster parent, and I like, want to have kids in the next couple years. So it’s been something that I’ve been looking at. It’s very very expensive and probably not possible on a grad student’s salary, but having children, like getting pregnant, is something that’s very important to me one day.

**Molly:** Are you thinking about what the experience of being a pregnant person who does not identify as a woman might look like?

**Al(aina):** Yes. I think that- so similar to going to A-Camp, I do identify with womens’ culture in certain ways. Um, and so like, I’m in Junior League which is this womens’ social organization- so there are things like that that don’t bother me. But I do think that it would bother me a lot to be referred to as a woman while receiving prenatal care. I will be a mom, though. That’s something that I know. I do want to be a mom, but moms don’t always have to be women. So I am a little nervous about that process. My doctor currently, though, is like a butch queer woman so I trust her a lot and think that if I were to do that with my current doctor that it would work out very well. I did see, though, my friend just had a baby, and they had a lot of really harrowing and damaging experiences, I think, with pre-natal care. And even just shopping for maternity clothes can be really hard if you aren’t a person who necessarily wants to dress femme.

[music plays]

**Molly:** That’s going to do it for this week’s show. If you like what you heard, please tell a friend, write a review, or share the show on social media, because it’s the only way we get the word out and we really appreciate your help! If you want some Gender Reveal stickers and other surprises, simply donate five dollars or more at Patreon.com/gender or Paypal.me/mollywoodstock , and we’ll send it your way! And if you’re our one hundredth Patreon donor, maybe I’ll send you an extra bonus surprise. Thank you so much, again, to everyone who supports the show. We literally couldn’t do it without you.

**Molly:** Just a reminder that we are soliciting questions about gender. If you have any, please send them to gendereveal@gmail.com , or use the Google Form in the show notes, or DM us on Twitter. This show is edited by me, Molly Woodstock. 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.