[theme music]

**Tuck:** Welcome to Gender Reveal, a podcast where we answer 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 music ends]

**Tuck:** That's right, this week on the show, we are not asking intrusive personal questions; we are answering them! We are answering questions about gender sent in from our listeners. If you, too, have a question about gender that you would like to send in, you can find us on Twitter @gendereveal or on email at gendereveal@gmail.com. We also have a Google Form that I will link in the show notes, but before we do that, I need to tell you about the folks who are making this show possible.

First of all, to all of our Patreon supporters, thank you so much. I appreciate your trust and your generosity so incredibly much, and if you would like to support trans-normative podcasting, head to patreon.com/gender, and if you donate $5 or more, I will send you stuff in the mail. There will be stickers. There might be a grading of some kind, it'll be good!

Next, thanks, as always, to our good friends at Gladrags. Hey, people who menstruate! Why don't you sign up for Gladrags' newsletter? It's an extremely easy and extremely helpful way to support the show, and you'll get a bunch of stuff out of it, too. When you sign up, you get a discount code, you get product updates, tips, contests, giveaways. Go to gladrags.com to sign up! And don't forget to tell them that we sent you because again, that's how you support the show.

Lastly, I am so excited to welcome our new sponsor, Open Hand Health! Open Hand Health is a gender-affirming, body-positive, queer-owned business in Close-in Southeast Portland, Oregon. They offer massage therapy and naturopathic medicine. They're currently accepting new patients both with and without insurance! So, you can find them at openhandhealth.com for more info and online booking. And with that, it's time for a segment called "This Week in Gender"!

[trumpeting news music]

**Tuck:** This week in gender, Canada's national anthem just became gender neutral. After 30 years of activism and proposed bills, the lyric "in all thy sons" will now be "in all of us". Congrats, Canada!

In other news, a Utah state senator has proposed a bill that would let transgender folks in Utah legally change their gender through the court system. Previously, Utah had some vague law that some judges were using to allow transgender folks to change their gender marker, but other judges were not allowing transgender folks to change their gender because the law was so vague, and so that was a mess. And then two transgender folks were rejected by the judges, and they decided to sue in the state supreme court, and that's a mess. So anyway, now, this Republican state senator is proposing a way--wait, hold on, let's emphasize this. This *Republican* state senator--what??--is proposing a way for transgender folks to definitely, officially be able to change their legal sex in Utah. And yes, we just did use 'sex' and 'gender' interchangeably, and yes, they are two totally different things, but when it comes to these documents, they're sort of the same thing, and that's very confusing, but we're going to address it in one of our listener questions, so just hold tight for like, 15 more minutes.

This has been "This Week in Gender".

[trumpeting news music]

[theme music]

**Tuck:** Alright, so this week on Gender Reveal, we're taking a break from interviews to answer four very good questions from our listeners. Here to help me is, good friend of the show, Z Griffler! Z is a film documentarian and an editor, a ringtone activist, and an advocate for asexuality visibility and education. They're one of my favorite people in the world, and I feel very lucky that they're here today.

[theme music ends]

**Tuck:** Hi, thanks so much for coming on the show to tackle some gender quandaries with me!

**Z:** Oh, you know, I love gendering as much as I can, or ungendering--

**Tuck:** [laughs]

**Z:** --or agendering.

**Tuck:** I would argue that you don't like gendering at all, but anyway, um--

**Z:** That's true.

**Tuck:** Alright, so this first question comes from another podcaster, JV, I believe, and it says "I identify as genderqueer. I have for years, and I've been very public about it. What I frequently have to deal with is people coding me as exclusively male. Very frequently, this is coming from female-identified people who are trying to discredit my perspective on issues surrounding gender equality, patriarchy, and intersectional feminism, etc. Given that I have been coded by the outside world as male for most of my life, and then socialized by the world accordingly, how would you suggest reconciling the male privilege of a person who no longer identifies that way, especially in sensitive conversations that are weirdly gendered? How can I tell someone who is telling me I'm mansplaining that I'm not male without then actually mansplaining?"

So, I have thoughts on this, but I feel like you should definitely start.

**Z:** Um, yeah, sure. So, as somebody who is also genderqueer and assigned male at birth, this is something that I've definitely experienced, and I have so many thoughts about this, and let's see if they will make any sense.

Well, number one, you still got all that male privilege just from how you were socialized and how the world will probably continue to code you, or at least continue to code me, and I think it's one of those things that you're always going to have to just be a little sensitive about regardless of how you identify because that's just how the world is going to see you. You know, every day I'm still working on trying to give people more space in discussions and recognizing the privilege that I was socialized with, but when it comes to gender conversations, which I think, I guess is the core of this question, I think it depends on who you're talking with and whether they understand and recognize your experience of gender identity and what that entails. Because if they're just not very well-versed about gender stuff, it's an opportunity to explain the wonderful and weird nuance of identity, but if they're against the very concept of existing outside of a binary in the first place, then it's probably not the kind of conversation you'd necessarily want to, or feel safe having, in the first place. So, it kinda depends on who you're talking to when you're running up against people, in some ways, it sounds like, are erasing your identity, but [sighs] I don't know. Molly, what are your thoughts?

**Tuck:** I mean, my thoughts are that non-male people don't have male privilege--

**Z:** Okay.

**Tuck:** --what you have is male-passing privilege, and--

**Z:** Mm-hmm. Absolutely.

**Tuck:** --I think that with every passing privilege, whether it be straight-passing, cis-passing, white-passing, you also experience a flip oppression, which is erasure, right?

**Z:** Mm-hmm.

**Tuck:** And so, you are giving certain privileges because of the ways people perceive you, but I don't want to discount the, like, very real emotional suffering that is created when people refuse to recognize you for who you are.

**Z:** Mm-hmm.

**Tuck:** That said, despite not being male, like, obviously, as this person acknowledged, they were socialized to be male. They were socialized with, like, male confidence, for example, I would assume.

**Z:** Mm-hmm.

**Tuck:** And that's not gonna go away the minute that you start identifying as genderqueer, and so I think that if someone's calling you out as behaviors that they describe as male behaviors, you can respectfully say, "I'm not actually male, like please don't gender me that way. But also, I hear the critique that you're trying to make, and I will work on it." Because you can call someone out for talking over you and over-expaining things without it being mansplaining, right? Like you can say, "Hey, I feel like you're not listening to me," without it being like, "Hey, you're being a bro." [Laughs] You know?

**Z:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Tuck:** So I think that there's space for both sides like I think that it is important for you to try to unlearn a lot of the toxic masculinity behaviors that you've learned, assuming you've learned them. But also, you have every right to assert yourself and say, "Hi, like, I don't identify that way, and I don't appreciate you gendering me that way, and so if you're going to critique me, please, like feel free to do that, just don't bring other genders into it."

**Z:** Oh, that's such a great way of responding to that.

**Tuck:** Great! Do you wanna read the next question?

**Z:** Sure. "My fiancé and I are talking about children and want to start the process soon, and I was wondering if you could talk about being a nonbinary parent some? About what children call their parents, etc."

**Tuck:** Well, we all have the same Google, but I Googled around [laughs]--

**Z:** [Laughs]

**Tuck:** --and some options include 'maddy', which is 'mom' plus 'daddy', 'nibby', which is like 'nonbinary', I don't know, I think nibby's kind of fun. 'Zaza', which I also think is fun--

**Z:** Oh, I like zaza!

**Tuck:** --like 'mama' or 'dada'. 'Parent', which is obviously very formal, and then sometimes people shorten it to like 'par' or 'per'. 'Ren' or 'renny', which is also for 'parent', it's just the 'ren' part. And 'mapa', which is used in "Transparent," the show. I have other thoughts, but do you have other ideas first?

**Z:** Well, I'm not currently a parent, and I don't really see myself being a parent soon, but I've had discussions with nonbinary and genderqueer folks about parenting, and it seems like the biggest takeaway is, it's going to be a continuing conversation throughout childhood, and questions of identity don't seem to be quite as big of an issue for children as it is for other children's parents because children tend to be very chill, whereas parents tend to be very un-chill sometimes, and I think it's one of those places where it's just really important to have, you know, open conversations with your child and let them ask questions and then ask them questions and all, and, you know, make it a dialogue because it's just so much.

**Tuck:** Yeah, yeah. So, I am also not a parent. I am a cat mom, and I feel comfy identifying as a cat mom even though I'm not a girl [laughs], and so I think that's one thing to say is that if you're not comfortable with using gendered terms like 'mom' or 'dad', that's perfectly valid, but I know a lot of, for example, folks who were assigned female at birth who identify as dads, and a lot of folks who identify as moms despite being nonbinary. So, the upside to continuing to use gendered language like that is that if your child is ever asked like who you are, their answer will indicate that you're their parent, whereas if you use, like, 'zaza' or 'nibby', and your kid has to like, vouch that you're their parent, like that actually might get kind of tricky because, like, if some--some caretaker is trying to make sure that they're not releasing their kid to a random stranger, and they're like "Oh, that's my zibby-dooby-za," they're just like "Excuse me, what? No, it needs to be your mom or your dad." So like, that is, like, a potentially dicey situation. But again, like, I'm not a parent. I don't know what goes into being a nonbinary parent. All--I can think of like, the language thing, which is pretty superficial, and then also like you said, like the constant conversations about gender, and I think it sounds really cool and incredible to have the opportunity to, like, raise kids as a nonbinary person because you're able to show them from day one that gender isn't binary, and like, have those conversations with them constantly, and I think that's really rad, but I don't have any specific advice because I don't really know what comes up because I've never done it.

**Z:** Yeah. And I think, to what you were saying before, Molly, it's like just as people are--you know, might be okay using gendered terms to refer to their relationship to their child, it's that same kind of line along where like, being nonbinary is just being nonbinary, like, there is no rule beyond that. Like you don't have to adopt anything if that's not who you are. I mean, parenting is, like, a big thing; to me, it sounds like a really scary thing, but also like an exciting thing, and I think it's just one extra little thing to navigate however you feel the best to do it.

**Tuck:** Yeah. I will say, if there are nonbinary parents who are listening to this episode, I would love to hear from you what I missed. And that goes for everyone, if you have thoughts and feelings you'd like to share, I will say this again, but you can DM us on Twitter or you can email us, and it's gendereveal@gmail.com, which is Gender Reveal with one 'r'.

Should we move onto the next question?

**Z:** I think so.

**Tuck:** "Hi. I've previously thought I was FTM (which stands for female-to-male transgender) and have spent the past two years transitioning, but I've recently been thinking that maybe I'm nonbinary instead. I've always had a lot of internalized transphobia, especially toward nonbinary people. I've tried very hard to overcome it and re-learn what I've been taught, but I'm still terrified of thinking of myself as nonbinary and other people's judgment."

And then I asked for a little more information and they said: "I think being nonbinary feels scarier because it's viewed as less valid, and instead something that teenagers who want to feel special do, and hearing that so much, I've become scared that it is true in my case. Whereas, when I came out as female-to-male, there were lots of activists who had proved to the media that being a binary trans person should be taken seriously."

Again, I have many thoughts. Would you like to go first?

**Z:** Ohhh, so many thoughts, Molly.

**Tuck:** [Laughs]

**Z:** So, I'm gonna use a phrase that you've used before, maybe it was on your previous podcast, but maybe also this podcast. It was definitely super scary at first to think of myself as a nonbinary person, even though at the same time it felt like there were a ton of gears clicking into place in my brain, but I would rather have a slightly scary new word and identity to describe myself than the word I had before, which was just either 'very bad at being a person' or 'broken'. And it's a lot to take in to find yourself as a nonbinary human, especially in today's world, which probably has a lot--not probably. The world has a lot of work to do when it comes to respecting nonbinary people and seeing us as valid humans, but guess what? We are valid humans.

**Tuck:** I don't know if this question asker listened to this, but I was on Lacy Davis's podcast "Flex Your Heart Radio," and I think that I covered this a bit in that, but I'm gonna repeat some of what I said, which is that I totally understand that feeling that a lot of people see nonbinary folks as something that teens do to feel special. Like there's definitely a part of me that's always questioning, like, why am I making such a big deal out of this? There are all sorts of cis women that don't conform to the standards and roles traditionally foisted upon cis women, and so why am I insisting that I am nonbinary instead of just being, like, a gender-nonconforming woman, and this--that voice in my brain gets much louder when I'm reading internet comments, for example.

**Z:** Mm-hmm.

**Tuck:** And it gets much quieter when I'm around people who see me, and who respect my gender identity, and so my advice for this person would be to surround yourself with other nonbinary people, if possible. To surround yourself with, like, real good allies, which are normally, like, queer people, and surround yourself with nonbinary activists. And if you can't do this in real life, which I have been lucky enough to do, you can do it on Twitter, you can do it on Tumblr, you can do it on the internet in general. Just like, surround yourself with a transnormative space, like this podcast, and the more that you hear people that you respect and admire saying that being nonbinary is a cool, valid thing to do, the more you can internalize it, and then the more that you can internalize it, the more when some shitty person says that being nonbinary, like, isn't a real thing or is just, like, a trendy thing for teens to do, the more you can push back and be like, okay, I don't have to listen to this shitty person with their bad opinions [laughs]. Like, this person doesn't know more about my gender than I do. I know the most about my gender, and so I don't have to listen to, you know, cis people, say that my gender isn't real.

**Z:** Absolutely.

**Tuck:** As you know, because we talked about it a lot like, I resisted for a long time identifying as nonbinary, and it finally got to the point where I realized that I am a nonbinary person and my choices weren't like, do I wanna be a woman or do I wanna be nonbinary, my choices were do I want to prioritize other people's comfort and feelings and just, like, pretend to be a woman, or do I want to prioritize my own feelings and identify as nonbinary. And for a long time, I prioritized everyone else's feelings around me, and I didn't want them to be uncomfortable, and I didn't want them to have to learn new pronouns, and so, I just like, rolled with being identified as a woman, and one day, and like, a ton of therapy with a really cool, rad, trans therapist, I was just like, okay, like maybe--maybe, like, my feelings about my gender are more important than other random people's feelings about my gender, and that worked out so much better than I thought because it turned out that when I came out as nonbinary, there were all sorts of people who, like, reached out with like, respect and love that I never expected to. So, I think that until you rustle up the courage to assert yourself, you'll never know, like, how many people love you and support you and see you and respect you. So, it's hard, but I think that it's really, really worth it.

**Z:** It's totally worth it.

**Tuck:** Yeah, so--yeah, so--I mean--and that--that doesn't help with internalized transphobia, so again, that comes to the first step being like, surround yourself in, like, a transnormative space--

**Z:** Mm-hmm.

**Tuck:** --until it feels comfy, and then you can move towards, like, asserting yourself to the greater world.

**Z:** Can I also just say that I actually love all these teenagers who are coming out as nonbinary?

**Tuck:** I love it.

**Z:** Because I feel like it means that there's actual hope for the future, where people can just be cool about gender stuff. [Chuckles]

**Tuck:** Yeah! Oh, it's great. The teens are great! But that doesn't mean that it's not stigmatized because anything that teens do is stigmatized [laughs].

**Z:** That's very true.

**Tuck:** Especially teen--teen folks that aren't boys.

**Z:** Mm-hmm.

**Tuck:** Our last question that we're going to tackle is very long, so I'm gonna tackle it in two parts and here's the first half:

So this--this question asker is from the Netherlands, and so they are, they're not sure how much of their question is due to a language and cultural barrier, and neither am I, but we're gonna figure it out. So:

"First, I had a question about a discord between two of your episodes, at least I think it was a discord, but maybe my lack of understanding already starts here. In your first real episode, the glossary one, you said something along the lines that gender and sex are different; the concept of sex is about your physical things, reproductive parts, chromosomes, etc. and gender is about how you act and present yourself to the world according to the societal rules. So far, I got it, but in episode 2, you talked about Oregon allowing driver licenses to state a different gender from that which is assigned at birth, but insofar as I know, driver licenses state sex, not gender. I suspect that this is nothing but a little bit of misspeaking, but just to be sure, I was wondering if I had already missed a few conceptual points?"

It's just so confusing. I mean like, no, this is super confusing. So driver licenses do say sex on them.

**Z:** But they mean gender.

**Tuck:** But they mean gender. So technically, driver licenses and birth certificates list sex. But functionally, they're used to indicate gender. So, when folks get their sex markers changed, that doesn't mean that they're actually, necessarily, like, having, quote-unquote, a sex change, which is also a phrase you should not use, but it--they didn't ha--start necessarily taking hormones or having surgeries or anything like that, they're just expressing their gender through the sex part of the form. I don't know why it's this way. Z, do you know why it's this way?

**Z:** Probably very bad reasons, but it's the reasons that they've just decided to keep using. It's probably just outdated and there's just too many old people who don't want to change it.

**Tuck:** Yeah. So I guess, I'd just say that technically the forms say 'sex', but functionally, they mean 'gender'. It's a mess. You're--you're very correct to not understand it--I don't understand it either [laughs].

Alright, so.

**Z:** So, the question continues:

"I think we've missed a step: explaining what gender is. As you've said yourself, it's nebulous and hard to define. From what I've been taught, which initially seemed to line up with that glossary definition, the concept is as good as void to extent of its practical use and archaic in its very basis. What I've always been taught is society places roles, gender norms, upon men and women, sex; rules like how to walk, talk, dress, write, studies, even what colors you associate with the two sexes. This all just goes to show how made-up and rooted in religion and fused patriarchy it is. It's insane how strict these rules used to be; the burning at the stake of Joan d'Arc was justified because she was wearing pants, all the other charges didn't stick. Comparative to how it used to be, today we generally expect women to mostly wear pants, while men are generally only frowned upon or ridiculed for wearing dresses. Most of the gender-bucking issues I've come across today seem to be mostly focused on questioning these sorts of rules. While I agree that these rules are silly, I still don't think gender is, therefore, a quote-unquote real thing, quite the opposite. Besides identity, we seem to often talk about gender within the sphere of sexual attraction, or rather, given how we construct gender as a society, precisely because gender is very much linked to biological sex and identity, this concept is very much linked to sexual attraction. So, I'd agree with Eden, episode four, that gender is really important, but I'd also disagree because I could see a cultural setting where it doesn't matter how you wear your pants, whether you nail polish, or what professions and careers you pursue, precisely because 'gender', in that hypothetical future society, is nothing but a spooky spectre that we use in children's ghost stories. So now that you may see my point of view, where I'm coming from, I was hoping that perhaps you could help me understand what I'm missing. Many thanks to your podcast and the patience if you got this far."

**Tuck:** Alright.

**Z:** [Groans]

**Tuck:** Well, you can definitely take a swing at this, but I don't think that this person is necessarily missing anything. I think that their question is, like, why is gender real? Is that the question that you're hearing?

**Z:** I think--

**Tuck:** Like, why do you think gender is real?

**Z:** I--hear's what I think it is, and I think this is what it boils down to: is that there's a bunch of things that we as a people assign that has the word 'gender' in it, and it all adds up to the word gender, so there's like 'gender expression', 'gender identity', 'gender expectations', 'gender roles'--

**Tuck:** Mm-hmm.

**Z:** --and I think what this questioner is asking is about 'gender identity' versus the social concept of gender--

**Tuck:** Mm-hmm.

**Z:** --I would say the really quick way of breaking it down is: 'gender identity' is this core sense of who you are, which is very deep in you, and it can say something like, "I am a man" or "I am a woman" or "I am a combination of the two" or "I am the--I am none of the above" or something else. And that, in its very simple--not simple at all--place, is your gender identity. And everything else that gets stacked upon that, mostly by society, turns into the overall concept of gender. It would be really, really, really great if 'gender roles', as a social concept, no longer was a thing, but 'gender identity' will never stop existing, probably, because it's deeply rooted into who we are as individuals.

**Tuck:** Yes. I am nodding vigorously from across the country [laughs].

**Z:** [Laughs]

**Tuck:** Yeah, so, I think the point that's really important to make is that while gender, like race, is a social construct, the impacts of our societally-perceived gender and race are very real and, like, cause a lot of damage to a lot of people, so it's okay for you to say that gender feels like a ghost to you, as long as you're still invested in advocating for women and nonbinary folks and other trans people. Like you can't just be like, "Oh, gender isn't real, so I'm not gonna work on that," but it's okay to say like, "I feel like gender is an archaic social construct and yet, I'm still going to advocate for folks who are impacted by sexism and transphobia because those are still super real and terrible and kill thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands and probably millions of people every year." Another thing to keep in mind is that there's a difference between saying "binary gender isn't real" and "gender isn't real" because I don't think it makes sense to try to assign every person on Earth into one of two binary genders based on their genitalia, or really, anything, but I do think that it's also not okay to invalidate someone's gender experience. So, it's okay for you to say "gender isn't real to me," which maybe means like, "I'm agender," but I don't think it's okay to go up to someone and say "your gender isn't real" because when you say "gender is over, gender isn't real," it really invalidates the experiences of cis and trans people. So, I just--yeah. I just think that, like, gender is really, really personal, and like you said, like, we can fight against, like, traditional gender roles, we can fight against gendered expectations, we can fight against sexism and transphobia, but I don't think that it is necessarily the goal to erase all aspects of gender identity in the world, which is pretty much what you said, I'm just restating it.

**Z:** Yeah, I mean, and I don't think we really could. Because--

**Tuck:** No.

**Z:** --that's just who we are. And, yeah. So, I think that was the core of this long email, is that gender identity is different than, like, societal expectations of gender, and that's important.

**Tuck:** And if we didn't answer your question, then just write us again, and we'll loop back around next month and try to answer it again.

I did want to address, they mentioned sexual attraction, and I don't really know what the question was there, but I did want to acknowledge that gender must be, just logically, gender--knowing strangers' gender--must be more important to both straight folks and like, monosexual gay folks, than it would be to bisexual, pansexual, other queer folks, and as a queer person who doesn't really use gender so much to evaluate who I'm attracted to, like, I don't know what the ramifications are for straight people, or gay people, living in a world where so many different genders exist, and so, like, I think that's a really interesting conversation to have. Like maybe we should have a straight person or a gay person on the podcast to talk about that, especially a straight person; I think that'd be really fascinating. But, yeah, I just--I can't talk about how new concepts of gender impact sexual orientation because I just, like, can't conceptualize it. I can't conceptualize having to know someone's gender is before I know whether I want to date them or not.

**Z:** Yeah. That's--that's a wild conversation.

**Tuck:** Well, Z, thank you so much for--for coming on the show! I am so excited that you were here to answer some questions with me.

**Z:** I'm more than happy to always answer questions, and hopefully, at least two or three words I said were useful to somebody [laughs].

**Tuck:** [Laughs]

Again, if our listeners have questions, if you have responses to anything we talked about, if you asked one of these questions and feel like we didn't really understand what your question was, you can find us on Twitter @gendereveal or on email at gendereveal@gmail.com, again, that's Gender Reveal with one 'r'.

We also--I made a Google Form if you wanna submit questions anonymously, like we can always read the questions anonymously, but like, if you know me and don't want me to know that you're asking, I can post the Google Form in the show notes, and then you can submit anonymously through that. And, yeah. Just reach out anytime! We're gonna try to do these once every five episodes or so unless no one has questions, in which case we won't do them, so--

**Z:** I mean I have--

**Tuck:** --anyway--

**Z:** --I have questions [laughs].

**Tuck:** Great, we'll just have an episode where [laughs] we answer your questions, and you answer my questions; I have a lot of questions, too [laughs].

**Z:** [Sighs] Oh, gender.

[theme music]

**Tuck:** That's gonna do it for this week's show! If you learned a thing from the show, please consider donating via Patreon or PayPal, or recommending the show on social media, or leaving a review on iTunes. All three of those things genuinely really, really, really help us out!

This show was edited by me, Molly Woodstock, and Liza Yeager.

Our logo is by the talented Michelle Leigh, and our theme music is by the legendary Breakmaster Cylinder.

We'll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

[theme music ends]