[*Gender Reveal* theme music starts]

**Molly:** Welcome to Gender Reveal, a 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.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music ends]

**Molly:** Hey, everyone. Welcome to our last mini episode of the week. We've already interviewed our two grant winners, Rae and Diego, but we loved this applicant and their work so much that we decided to create a runner-up micro-grant just for them. By the way, if you would like to fund a future micro-grant, you can find us on Patreon, PayPal, and Cash App, or you can contact us directly through our website, [genderpodcast.com](http://www.genderpodcast.com).

Before we get started, just a few quick announcements. First, if you did not listen to last week's episode with Aubri Qian, I super highly recommend it; it's one of my favorite episodes that we've ever done, and I don't know why I released it on Christmas. I think it was, like, maybe just a Christmas gift to everyone, it was a Christmas gift to me to get to work on it. But it also meant that not as many people listened. So, I may tell you a few more times to listen to that interview because it's really important to me.

I also wanted to remind everyone that at least once per season, me and usually friend-of-the-show Z Griffler have an advice episode where we answer a bunch of listener questions about gender and identity and other topics like that. If you have a question that you'd like us to tackle on the show, you can submit it through the form in the show notes—that's the best way to do it. You can also reach us at gendereveal@gmail.com, or through our website, [genderpodcast.com](http://www.genderpodcast.com).

Lastly, I know you've heard me say this before, but we do need some folks to join our transcription team. If you have already transcribed for us in the past and have some more time to do that now, you can reach out to us. That would be great. If you have never transcribed for the show, but would like to either volunteer or to be paid, we can definitely pay you. Please reach out to me. We've had so many people volunteer and then almost all of them have immediately bailed. So if you feel like you're going to immediately bail, maybe don't reach out? But if you think you can commit to transcribing at least one episode that would be super rad.

With that, I think it's time for today's mini interview. Mo Tester is a stay-at-home parent and the creator of the *Parenting Is Political* podcast. Wow, that sentence has so many plosives in it! I asked them to tell me what it's like to be a nonbinary person who uses they/them pronouns in northwest Arkansas.

**Mo:** Oh, yeah. Northwest Arkansas is a place that really likes to pretend to be progressive, probably 'cause it's more progressive than the other areas of the state. However, uh, it's pretty difficult being nonbinary—um, openly nonbinary in northwest Arkansas. There's a lot of reasons why I'm a full-time stay-at-home parent right now. I've, it's OK for in this state that you openly discriminate in workplaces against LGBTQ people. So, in the past three years I've been fired from three different jobs, and I have never won an EEOC claim. So, it's really difficult to be as open as I am about things here. You know, the flipside of that is that I have an amazing core group of people who love and support me, and show up for me and make sure that I am safe and taken care of. We have just a really close-knit group of people here, who mostly consist of, like, trans people and queer people and people of color, as well, just because we kind of all have to band together. But I also am, like, very aware that this isn't an anomaly in the nation. I know that, like, no matter where I would go, even if it is a more progressive—"progressive"—place, it would still be difficult just because of, like, the current climate of our nation. But Arkansas is definitely a difficult place to live in most days, for sure.

**Molly:** Yeah, oh my gosh, that sounds really awful. I'm so sorry—

**Mo:** Yeah.

**Molly:** I've talked to a bunch of folks who are nonbinary who are applying for jobs, and, everyone’s, like, taking a different tact with regards to, like, when to disclose that they're nonbinary. Have you ever at any point considered going back into the closet for a moment? And I'm not implying that you should, I’m just curious if you have.

**Mo:** Yeah, no, I definitely did at my last job. I didn't disclose that I'm trans and nonbinary. I just kind of applied for it and got the job. And then about six months into the job, I let one of my work friends friend me on Facebook, just because we had started hanging out outside of work, um, and we kind of developed a friendship. And he was like, "Oh my gosh, like, you use they/them pronouns? I had no idea, I'm so sorry I've been misgendering you this whole time!"

And so, like, out of a place of, like, actual care, he started using correct pronouns for me, but then everybody else in the workplace was like, "What are they/them pronouns?" And it became a thing very quickly. And then about three months after that started happening was whenever I was asked to leave.

So, it, I don't think it was coincidental at all. It started making a lot of people uncomfortable, and again, it came from a place of friendship and love, but it was also like, "Oh, shit. That didn't go so well." Moving forward, just because of the, like, interpersonal work I've been doing, I can't imagine trying to go back into the closet. Just because the constant misgendering is just so hard on my psyche that I don't think it would be worth it. I would want to work at a place that would be fully accepting for me from the get-go.

So that's kind of what I would be looking for if I were to enter back into, like, a "traditional" workplace. I'm trying to make a living off of staying at home and doing some stuff like writing, and stuff like that, so I don't have to necessarily deal with workplace stuff. But definitely, I've considered it, I've done it, and in the future I don't know if I could do it again.

**Molly:** Yeah, that makes a ton of sense. You have a trans kid, as well. Can you talk about the experience of not only being nonbinary, but of having a trans child?

**Mo:** Yeah, so, our oldest daughter is a black trans girl. Because I became an insta-parent—I didn't have the first three kids with my wife, like, from pregnancy and birth and all that stuff. I jumped in when our oldest was around 9, and she did not use she/her pronouns back then, and hadn't told anybody that she, you know, was assigned incorrectly at birth. And so, as I came into the picture and started to becoming all the kids' parents, and opened up to them about being nonbinary, and we started talking about gender and pronouns, and I think that kind of opened the door for our oldest to be, like, "Oh, I have a word for what I'm experiencing now, and also I have a safe person to talk to this about, so I'm going to start talking about it."

And, you know, she came out to us, and obviously we're like, "Cool, great, let's get you the support..." And, you know, not everybody reacted that way. My bio family in particular definitely rejected the idea, and so we no longer have a relationship with my bio family just because they're not supportive and they're very harmful people in that regard.

But, you know, our kid is so resilient, and she is so stinkin' awesome. And we love raising her and parenting her. And there's definitely difficult challenges, like mainly financial. Arkansas doesn't have any sort of medical coverage for transition care. So we're currently trying to raise the funds for her to get a medical implant in January that will help—it's a hormone blocker since she's entering puberty. We're really close to raising all the funds on that. Basically, I dunno, it's like raising all of our other kids, but it's like, I always feel it's like extra special just because she's allowed herself to be so vulnerable with us, so we hold that with such tender care.

**Molly:** Gosh, I'm just, she's so lucky that she has you!

[both laugh]

**Mo:** I always, I kind of feel the same way. It's so weird being the parent who people are like, "Oh, you're so lucky you have that parent!" I'm like, man, I wish that I had that parent, too!

**Molly:** Yeah!

**Mo:** —you know what I mean? It's such a weird place to be in, and such an awkward tension to hold. But I agree, I wouldn't want her to have any other parents—I think that we're fantastic. My wife is cisgender, and so she does a lot of work to make sure that she is a safe person, and she is fantastic. And I feel like a lot of times she's, because she's constantly trying to work on it, and she does it a lot of better times than me, but we're definitely a very close-knit family.

**Molly:** Yeah, I mean, like, I feel like so many queer and trans folks are, like, so determined to create the support systems that they never had and, like, have the reassurance that they never received. So that's awesome. Can you talk about your podcast?

**Mo:** Yeah! I would love to. I have a podcast called *Parenting Is Political*. It started about four months ago, I guess. I started it because I'm a very nontraditional parent. You know, there's not a lot of podcasts out there who are—that's designed, or their target audience is uh, nonbinary blended families who became insta-parents, it's interracial, it's queer. Like, there's just not that much out there for—and if there is, I haven't really found it, and so I decided to start one myself!

So, *Parenting Is Political* is a podcast that celebrates the resilience and beauty of families that, you know, aren't considered traditional. We're not seen in media often and mostly case we're rejected by society, and there's myths surrounding, like, the makeup of our family and how we became a family. Um, and so we talk about what makes family a family, and we talk a lot about how to unlearn some of the harmful ideologies that we were taught as kids so that we don't pass them on to our kids. So we talk a lot about, like, homophobia and what was taught to us around that, and different, like, misunderstandings about sex and anger and, like, white supremacy and how nobody is raised to become a white supremacist on accident.

Like, there's certain things that parents are doing that create the kind of society that we're currently living in, and so it's definitely a huge pushback against society and the way that we're currently, like, parenting our kids. It's, like, inviting parents to have these harder conversations with themselves so that they can, you know, raise a generation that's going to tear down every single wall that holds us on the farthest margins of society.

And we also interview folks who are from all different kinds of backgrounds and have all different kinds of families, just to highlight their existence and make their stories known. Because, like, as I said, it's just so uncommon to hear about different family structures. Especially, like, on a podcast where that platform is just oversaturated with white, cisgender, you know, traditional families. It's also, like, the content in those podcasts is very much, like, how to get your kid to take a nap whenever you ask them to. It's like [laughs] well, that's not really what we're going for here!

**Molly:** Yeah, where can people find it?

**Mo:** We're currently on iTunes Podcasts. We stream our episodes on our website, which is [parentingispolitical.org](http://www.parentingispolitical.org), and we also have Instagram—which is again at @parentingispolitical. If you want a fun place to follow us, definitely follow us on Instagram.

**Molly:** So, I'm not a parent. I understand that, like, giving out parenting advice is really contentious, and also I want everyone to listen to your show. But if you had, like, one piece of parenting advice for everyone who's listening right now, what would you say?

**Mo:** Whew! Oh, man. I think it's twofold. I think the first one is that, like, you have to figure out how to create space in your life to connect with yourself emotionally so that you can be emotionally available to your kids. I know I grew up without being able to, like, emotionally connect to my parents. Like, everything was taken care of and I always felt guilty for feeling the way I felt about my parents. Because they gave me food, shelter, transportation, all that stuff. But, like, if I was sad? Or I was depressed and feeling like I wasn't wanted? I never felt like I could go to my parents. That's because, like, they didn't have that model and they never knew how to do the emotional work to make themselves someone to emotionally connect to. So that's, like, one of my biggest feedbacks.

My second, like, the twofold part of that, is to like, listen to your kids! They're telling you in so many different ways what they need and oftentimes we brush it off because we think as parents that we're the ones who have all the power. But that's not true. Kids are their own people, they're their own individuals and how you treat them is how they're going to treat other people in life. And so if you're constantly just dismissing everything that they're saying and not taking seriously their requests, um, it’s going to teach them to do that to other folks. And so, whether your kid is just screaming and having a tantrum, or if they use their words and say, "Hey, I need more snuggle time," that's letting you know that they're looking for connection. And there's lots of different ways that kids communicate and it takes a lot of intentionality, and, you know, it takes a slowing down to really listen to our kids.

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But, those two things I think would help so much in creating a deeper connection, and building like an actual close-knit family unit where people feel like they can share what's really going on—kids and adults alike.

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I don't want to, like, plug my podcast for the sake of, like, getting subscriptions because I'm not about that life. But I do want to plug it because I think that we really do create culture-changing content, and that is what I'm about. We're not a podcast that's just for people who are parents. We understand that not everyone who is a caretaker to a young person is considered a parent. And we also understand that people who have nothing to do with taking care of young people but were parented at some point—this podcast is also for you, because you were taught things as a kid by your parents. Even if your parents weren't around and they were very absent, that's still teaching you something, right? So, this podcast is for everybody who is either a parent or is hanging out with young people or was parented themselves, who wants to unlearn the things that we were taught that help society become what it is, and how to then kind of reimagine and reinvent those ideologies in order to be a more inclusive and equitable society.

We run on subscriptions and donations just like most podcasts do. You know, it's free to listen, but it's not free to make it. So, every little bit helps and everything counts. And also, the funds that I get from the podcast, just because we're a raggedy podcast, we don't have high quality production or anything like that. We're just really focused on content and so, a lot of the funds that we get from our subscribers are going directly towards funding our daughter's transition and medical care. And they also go to whenever I speak, in particular to, like, black, queer, women on the podcast. I always pay them for their work and their time. And so your money would be going to support them as well. And anything that's left over is just helping produce the podcast. And so if you want to support our work you can find that, again, at [parentingispolitical.org](http://www.parentingispolitical.org). There's a place where you can become a subscriber, or you can make one-time donations.

**Molly:** Before you go, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**Mo:** Oh look, I've been listening to your podcast for quite a while now, and I have always wanted to answer this question, but it's such a big question to answer! I think in my ideal world, the future of gender would very much be one that starts at birth, where we stop gendering our kids the moment we find out on the sonogram what their genitalia is. Because that's a wild concept, right?

So, I think the future would be allowing kids to grow up with very gender-neutral pronouns, allowing them the space to tell us how they identify, um, and then giving them the support instead of trying to change their minds as they grow up into adolescence and adulthood. I think that would create such a beautiful society, where people get to self-identify instead of having to go through all of, like, the trauma and work to undo the misgendering that's happening at the moment of birth and even before then. So, that's the ideal future of gender to me.

[*Gender Reveal* theme starts]

**Molly:** That's going do it for this week! Thank you so much for listening, thank you to everyone who applied for the grant. And thank you to everyone who made the grant possible by donating to Gender Reveal. If you would like to help fund future trans grants, you can do so at [patreon.com/gender](http://patreon.com/gender), [paypal.me/mollywoodstock](https://www.paypal.me/mollywoodstock), or [cash.app/mollywoodstock](http://cash.app/mollywoodstock). If you have any questions about what we do or if you have ideas or feedback for Gender Reveal in 2019, you can reach us on Instagram or Twitter or at [genderpodcast.com](http://www.genderpodcast.com). This episode was produced and edited by me, Molly Woodstock. Our logo is by Michelle Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Extra music all through this week by Blue Dot Sessions. Thank you so much for listening to the first year of Gender Reveal. We'll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

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