*[theme music plays, Molly speaks over]*

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

*[music plays and then stops]*

Hey friends. Hope you’re hanging in there. As always, it’s a wild time to be trans! I’m very stoked to say that this week’s guest is the amazing Carta Monir, who I talk to about trans comics, the intersection of transness and disability, coming out to a dying parent, and reexaminating common trans narratives.

*[recording clip]*

**Carta:**-and they are very much designed to reassure cis people that like if you were trans you would already know, like, you have, like, a zero percent chance of being trans because like you have always liked to play with trucks.

*[recording clip ends]*

**Molly:** But first, gosh is it an important time to support trans media, by which I mean stuff that’s not just about trans folx but also made by and for trans folx. So, if you can find it in your heart to support the show for as little as $1 a month, that would be so amazing. You can do that at patreon.com/gender. Of course if you donate $5 or more we will send you cool shit in the mail! Alternately, if you can tell your community about the show and nudge them into listening and subscribing, that also extremely, extremely helps us.

Big thanks to Jery at Stick to Resist for their amazing Gender Reveal fundraiser. They’ve got “Him” and “Her” and “Them” pronoun buttons plus a genderqueer flag, nonbinary flag, trans flag, and a very cool rainbow/trans flag hybrid. These buttons are only $0.50 each which is absolutely absurdly cheap and all of the money goes to Gender Reveal because Jery is a selfless angel. We’ve already raised over $150 this way so thank you so, so, so, so much to everyone who’s bought pins and of course, thank you to Stick to Resist. You can find them at etsy.com/shop/sticktoresist. I’ll put a link in the show notes, too.

And with that, it’s time for “This Week in Gender”.

*[DK music plays, Molly speaks over music]*

Yes, this week we’re talking about Twitch and Mermaids and Donkey Kong 64.

*[recording]*

**Donkey Kong Voice Actor:** *[in Donkey Kong’s voice]* Trans Rights OK!

**Molly:** I tried to script this out but I can’t because every time I think about it I get distracted and start watching videos and crying again so off the top of my head, hbomberguy is a YouTube person/Twitch person. Twitch is a website you probably heard of where people get paid to stream video games. hbomberguy, whose real name is Harris, four months ago he announced that he was going to stream himself going all the way through Donkey Kong 64 from start to finish. He had never beat the game before, it had stumped him as a child, he was like “Yea, normally these streams are like 24 hours long for charity, I’m just going to keep going until I finish it, no matter what.” A week ago he made a video to announce the date and time of the stream, and when he did that, he announced that he was going to donate all of the proceeds to the UK charity Mermaids, in part to spite TV writer Graham Linehan who used to make shows that people liked and now is just, like, a full time transphobe on the internet. I suggest you not looking at any of his content.

*[recording]*

**Hbomberguy:** All the proceeds from this stream will go to Mermaids, a charity which works to provide resources and support to young people with gender dysphoria. I chose to support this charity because as a person living in Britain, I find the media discussions surrounding this issue in my country especially in its tabloids to be woefully misinformed. I chose Mermaids in specific because when they were designated some funding by the National Lottery, Graham Linehan, a comedy writer who did some work on a good show, uh, 20 years ago? who happens to be a very normal man who’s just very angry about trans people all day nowadays went on Mumsnet and told them to email a lady on the National Lottery en masse and now the funding is under review. So, well done Graham, you fucking trash man! You pissboy! You prodigious buffoon!

*[static]*

**Molly:** Harris started the stream on January 18th. He says he expected to raise somewhere between $500 or, like, $2000 max? But the stream gained a bunch of traction and Harris’ friends started inviting guests on to chat while he was playing. That includes Carta Monir, our guest on this week’s show; it includes Riley J Dennis, a former guest; it includes Natalie Wynn of ContraPoints; it includes Chelsea Manning; and also some cis people. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez came on and got a ton of attention. The man who voiced Donkey Kong also came on which is how we ended up with this -

**Donkey Kong Voice Actor:** *[in Donkey Kong’s voice]* Trans Rights OK!

**Molly:** Overall the stream was 60 hours, over 100 people came on, Harris stopped twice to sleep - which, thank you so much because I would have been, like, deeply stressed if you weren’t sleeping - but he would sleep and just put this, like, skeleton in his chair, and this group of people called the Skeleton Crew would just do a chat while he slept and they ended up raising thousands of dollars while streaming a skeleton in a chair while people did a chat. It was so amazing and heartwarming and I think that most of the donations came from the trans community. I know that the chat was filled with trans kids. It was so heartwarming. I loved it so much. By the time Harris had beaten the game it was January 21st and folx had donated $350,000 to Mermaids. Gosh, just, did you know good things can happen to trans people? It’s really hard to be trans but I know a lot of people are holding onto this as an example of the fact that the trans community is huge and beautiful and brilliant and trans people are magical and Donkey Kong is the only true ally and Jan 18th-21st is now an international holiday for trans people. I don’t make the rules. This has been “This Week in Gender”.

**Donkey Kong Voice Actor:** *[in Donkey Kong’s voice]* Trans Rights OK!

*[interlude music plays, Molly speaks]*

**Molly:** Each week on the show I pretty much read whatever bio our guest sends me so it is a delight for me to tell you that Carta Monir is a cartoonist living in Ann Arbor, MI. She is very pretty.

Oh, and please check the show notes for content warnings before you dive into this one. Thanks.

*[music stops]*

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

**Carta:** I’m a transgender woman so I use she/her pronouns.

**Molly:** Perfect. So you’re a cartoonist and we have a lot of cartoonists on this show because it turns out that there is a wealth of trans cartoonists out there, uhm, and I know you’ve talked about this a bunch before but I was hoping you’d be willing to speak again to why comics are such a ideal medium to talk about the trans experience.

**Carta:** Yea, absolutely. Uhm, I sort of have, like, a little set of bullet points that I go down when I’m talking about this so I hope you don’t mind.

**Molly:** No, that’s fine!

**Carta:** I got this idea initially from a trans cartoonist and critic named Sarah Horrocks. She was the first person I saw talking about this. And essentially the argument that I make for why comics are an especially good medium for depicting trans or gender nonconforming people is that unlike something like a stage play or a TV show or a movie, you’re not using actors and so as long as you are the sole creator you are completely in control of how these characters present themselves, you’re not limited by the characters’ voices, you are sort of creating these characters whole cloth so it’s not like a situation where a cis actor is playing a trans character. And then I think it has an advantage over prose as well because in prose we are bound to pronouns and so a character walks into the room and immediately the reader is expecting, “Does he walk in the room? Does she walk in the room? Do they walk in the room?” And then when we talk about, like, giving cues to the reader that a character might be trans without, like, specifically outing the reader in prose there are, like, certain conventions that you are kind of bound to. Like, it’s very hard to subtly explain that someone is trans without sort of just stating it. You know, if you say, like, “Oh, the empty pill bottles for hormones,” you’re sort of giving away the game, *[Molly laughs]* or you know, like, worse, if you do this sort of, like, traditional prose thing and you’re like, “This character has big hairy hands,” you know. Like, so, in comics it’s a best of both worlds situation where you are able to have this character and you’re able to disclose as much as you are comfortable with and you aren’t, like, forced to make these choices that are immediately apparent from the beginning to the reader.

**Molly:** Yea. So you do a lot of autobio about your experiences, which includes your experience being a trans woman. Uhm, I’m wondering when you do that if you have an intended audience and whether that’s other trans folx or cis folx or both?

**Carta:** Uhm, that’s a good question. Uh, I guess at it-at its core the intended audience is kind of me. I don’t know, like, I, I really try not to cater to a cis audience when I’m working. Like, I kind of assume that my readers understand anything about gender and I don’t do the thing that a lot of people do where, like, I’ll have an asterisk after the word, like, cisgender or something explaining what it means *[Molly laughs]* you know? I try and make it so that, like, a person who knows exactly what I’m talking about isn’t bored and a person who doesn’t know what I’m talking about can sort of pick things up through inference. Like, I assume that if someone is reading my comics, they’re open to the idea that I’m a trans woman because it isn’t something that I hide about myself. So assuming that a reader is coming in with good faith, they should understand that, like, these characters and experiences are somehow specific to the trans experience.

**Molly:** So, one of the reasons I ask this - you made a comic for The Nib about being a disabled trans woman and I heard that you got, like, a bunch of edits back about how to make the comic more accessible to random cis people and I was just curious, like, what they wanted to cut or change and what that experience was like.

**Carta:** Yea absolutely! So I did a comic for The Nib and I was going to do a second comic for The Nib. The first comic I did for them was that, uhm, I’m a trans woman with a disability which is probably one of the most, like, “accessible” comics I’ve made involving transness because it is for, like, a wider audience, and, like, they’re paying me, you know, like, so they-they have some editorial input. For that one, the edits were mostly in terms of, like, language, you know, where I talked about-I would say something like, uhm, “I’ve crossed over that 50% barrier and I’m getting gendered correctly,” and they were like, “ We have no idea what you’re talking about-”

**Molly:** Mmm.

**Carta:** -you know, like, “You need to explicitly explain what you mean in cases like this.” I found that editing, like, a little bit overbearing, but it was okay. It was when I tried to submit my second story that it became kind of unworkable. Samantha Riedel and I, uhm, were submitting a story about trans women arming themselves, sort of in the wake of violence, sort of, like, very publicly known violence against trans women, uhm, and this concept of like, we all know trans women who have bought knives or bought mace, or in some cases bought guns or tasers as self defense weapons, and how interesting that is and how, like, fraught that is, especially when we’re talking about the intersections of transness and race, and, like, which trans women are able to do that safely or more safely - things like that. So we were trying to make this comic that was, like, a dialogue between our two avatars basically and all of the edits we were getting back from The Nib were, like, to make it less conversational, to make it more like a slideshow, to have our characters, like, turn directly towards the reader and quote trans murder statistics, to, like, avoid any ambiguous statements and instead, like, make everything, like, declarative and, like, it just wasn’t working because, like, both of us were interested in telling it as a story and what they wanted was, like, a series of infographics and, like, that’s really not how either of us works.

**Molly:** Right.

**Carta:** And they were not really willing to be flexible with it. So in the end Sam and I decided to kill the comic because, like, neither of us wanted to be associated with that. Like, I’m okay with a certain amount of, like, making it accessible for wider audiences or whatever but I’m really not interested in creating that sort of, like, “In 2013, so many trans women were killed,” and, “Here are the statistics about trans suicide.” It’s like that’s not - we shouldn’t have to do that every single time.

**Molly:** Yes, totally. That makes sense. So, in the- in the first Nib comic, the one that got published, you talked about having to grapple with the concept of passing on two fronts, like how it relates to gender and how it relates to disability, uhm, and I was wondering if you could talk more about how those identities intersect for you, if they do, or how those two experiences intersect for you.

**Carta:** Yea, absolutely. Uhm, it’s changed a little bit since I’ve started working from home. I have a genetic connective tissue disorder called Ehlers-Danlos that is not terribly uncommon. It is sort of on the Marfan spectrum of connective tissue disorders and functionally what it means, like, the type that I have is called the hyper mobility type, and, like, what that means is, uh, due to some genetic lack of collagen my ligaments sort of stretch out. Where they should be, like, very sturdy ropes holding the bones together, instead they’re sort of, like, worn out rubber bands. So the only thing really holding a lot of my joints together is the muscle, and so it’s very easy to sprain. And so for quite a while I was working a series of part time jobs in addition to my cartooning, and at each part time job I would eventually have to leave because I would injure myself in very painful ways from doing these very, like, everyday basic tasks. Like when I worked at a tea shop I kept spraining my wrists by lifting the teapots; when I worked at a gay bar as a hostess I kept spraining my wrists and elbows by, like, lifting trays. And so I would have to wear these very chunky braces and it would be kind of a weird thing because, like, that in many ways became a more visible identity. Like people would recognize me as a person with a disability before they would recognize me as someone with transness and that was, like, a very strange thing for me as, like, a still relatively newly out trans person. And since then I have completely stopped working outside the home and it’s been amazing because, like, functionally I’m not supposed to lift anything, like, as heavy as, like, a gallon of milk. The doctors and physical therapists have basically said like, “You can never run. You can never do anything active,” you know. So it’s good that I’m a cartoonist, but it introduces sort of a complication into my life because I have this, like, largely invisible disability, and the way that it intersects with transness I’ve found quite interesting because, like, the doctors’ visits felt very similar, convincing people of its legitimacy felt equally difficult. Like, it was just sort of an interesting thing to be going through at about the same time.

**Molly:** You take a lot of selfies and I don’t know if you take more selfies than the average person but taking selfies is definitely more, like, a specific part of your brand than the average person and I was wondering if you could talk about why they’re important to you.

**Carta:** Yea sure. I, uh, never really took selfies before I came out and as I was coming out and dealing with sort of the struggles of being a trans person in early transition, something that I was getting a lot of was, like, attention that I had not gotten before, and, like, largely negative attention, like, people staring on the street and people staring at work or you know, like, just things that, like, people really like paying a lot more attention to me and what I was wearing and what I looked like than I had ever previously experienced. And so taking selfies started as kind of a defensive thing, like, “What do I look like right now?” you know, so that I, like, know, like, what should I be expecting, how do I appear to the outside world right now, kind of thing. But the project of, like, making them and posting them also became sort of this idea that, like, if people are going to be looking at me I want it to be because, like, they recognize me, like, “Oh, I am a recognizable face,” as opposed to, like, “Oh, maybe they’re looking at me because they think I’m weird.” And like it’s pretty purely psychological because I don’t necessarily think that the people on the street in Ann Arbor will ever find my work or social media but the idea that I could, like, sort of turn my face into, like, a known face as a way to combat these feelings of dysphoria was really interesting to me and, like, worked quite well for me as, like, someone who had never previously felt attractive in any way. Like, sort of finding these angles and these pictures thay, like, I thought were attractive and other people clearly thought were attractive and putting them out, like, *[gasps]* as far as you know this is what I look like all the time, it was really, like, an interesting and helpful project for me, and, like, also, like, other trans people’s selfies helped me so much in early transition. It felt like participating in sort of like a wider tradition.

**Molly:** So I heard you say on another podcast that cis folx want trans coming out narratives to be simple so that they can assure themselves that they’re definitely not trans? And I had never thought about that before but I thought that was really interesting so I was wondering if you could just, like, expand on that a little bit.

**Carta:** You captured the basic gist of it but, like, something that I definitely have experienced and I think a lot of trans people experience, especially trans women, since I feel like they definitely tend to get more, like, reductive media coverage like tropes or whatever is, like, this idea that if you’re trans you have known since the day you were born, you’ve always felt different and weird, etc. etc. and sort of fitting into these like very neat, “I never wanted to play with trucks I only wanted to play with dolls” you know, that kind of thing and these are largely stories that, like, in practice make trans people really dysphoric and doubt themselves before they come out, like, “Am I actually trans enough if I don’t, like, fit into this checklist?”

**Molly:** Mmmhmm.

**Carta:** -and they are very much designed to reassure cis people that, like, if you were trans you would already know, like, you have, like, a zero percent chance of being trans because, like, you have always liked to play with trucks. I feel like those narratives are very kind of cis centric and, like, serve these cis narratives of, like, being reassured just like a lot of, like, narratives about gayness do-

**Molly:** Yes!

**Carta:** -uhm and especially did like a couple decades ago. Like, I feel like you could swap out trans for gay in a lot of these cases, you know? Like, “Oh, you’re a little gay kid and you like playing with dolls instead of trucks.” It’s the same kind of thing. In truth, like, transition is so messy and so complicated. Like, if people asked me now - and, like, they do, especially if they’re members of my family or people I’ve known for a long time - they ask, like, “Oh, how long have you known?” And the answer is so complicated because the answer they want to hear is all my life, and, like, to some degree I guess that’s true, but, like, I never had the language for it or an acknowledgement of it, and it certainly was complicated by a ton of other factors, and, like, if I was dissatisfied with my gender as a kid, like, it’s not like I knew that, like, being trans was a possibility, you know? Like, there’s just all of these complicating things that make it difficult for me to say, “Yes, like, here’s this straight line. I always wore my mom’s high heels,” or whatever because it-it really wasn’t like that. And I know for a lot of trans people, like, they have these big complicated feelings of, like, “Well, you know, like, there were some times where I was doing okay in my, like, birth assigned gender,” Like, it’s not like you’re constantly, constantly suffering necessarily. *[chuckles]* It’s just more complicated. So, like, these very simplified transition narratives largely I think are- are to reassure cis people and cis parents and everything that, like, you and the people in your life are unlikely to turn out to suddenly be trans because, like, all those signs would be there in the first place, so don’t even worry about it.

**Molly:** Yea, that actually makes a ton of sense in the context of the appalling myth of Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria and, like, so many parents who are, like, “My kid can’t be trans because they didn’t seem trans until they hit puberty,” and it’s, like, well of course *[chuckles]* because a lot of people don’t realize they’re trans when they’re 3. They might realize they are trans when they hit puberty.

**Carta:** Right. Absolutely. Because, like, it frames transness as, like, this fundamental defect as far as those parents are concerned, so, like, “Oh, if my kid never exhibited signs of it before then this must be a phase.”

**Molly:** Yea, exactly. So you came out and started transitioning at more or less the same time your mom was dying and my- I know, *[chuckles]* I’m sure you get this a lot actually, but, uhm, my dad died, like, right as I was coming out as well, but it was before I talked to him about it and in a way it sucks to not know how he would react but in a lot of ways it’s actually easier because, like, I never had to actually face his reaction and I can, like, make the content that I want without worrying about him seeing it and responding. So I was just wondering if you could talk about, uhm, like, the experience of, like, getting to have those moments with your mom and then also the experience of being able to make content and know that she won’t see it.

**Carta:** *[sighs]* Yea, I mean, it’s a complicated thing, and, like, I think given what you’ve experienced, and I’m sorry to hear it, like, you and I will have, like, a lot of common ideas. My mom was diagnosed with, like, extremely bad terminal cancer around Halloween of 2015 and, like, at that point it was, like, way, way, way, too late, like, the cancer had been developing for 5-7 years without being caught. And that was just around the time that I had started thinking, like, “Okay, like, I’m gonna, like, confront my family and be like, ‘You need to use this name and pronouns or else I won’t come home for Christmas,’” and, you know, like, I had all of these big ideas and that really disrupted them because all of a sudden my, like, only priority was keeping her as comfortable as possible. Like, all of my normal sort of, like, fiery defiance *[chuckles]* fell to the wayside because I was just so interested in doing anything that would make her feel, like, not as bad, potentially. So when I did come out it was when she was at, like, a relatively good point in her therapy, uhm, about six months after she was diagnosed, and I sent a letter to my parents, like, an email, and ended it with, like, “Please don’t respond until you’ve had time to talk to each other and like think about this.” And, like, I sent it and sort of, like, imagined, like, a mushroom cloud rising above, like, my small midwestern hometown. *[Molly laughs]* But, like, they got back to me and, like, they were - they said the thing that a lot of parents say which was, like,“You’ll always be our child, and, like, we don’t understand but, like, that doesn’t change anything, and you’ll have to give us some time,” you know, like, that kind of stuff. And my mom ended up being, like, extremely understanding. Like, she never got to the point where she was consistently using the right name because, like, I never corrected her, but, like, it just wasn’t something that, like, felt like a priority to me. But before she passed away she did give me some of her jewelry and she was very interested in the process of HRT and, like, what it would do to my body. She was very worried that it might give me periods because she hated having them her whole life so she was, like, “I-I really hope that it doesn’t do that to you,” you know, like, “It’s so uncomfortable.” *[chuckles]*

**Molly:** *[amused]* Mhmm.

**Carta:** And we talked about, like, breast tenderness, you know, like, all of these things. It was really sweet that she was able to sort of commiserate with me because, uhm, she only had two children - me and my brother - so as far as she knew she didn’t have a daughter up until that point, so, like, we sort of packed in all of these nice mother-daughter things, and, like, it was sort of a nice taste of what could have been, I guess? Obviously very bitter sweet and then *[deep breath]* unfortunately when she died I was not out to specific members of my family so I had to go through her funeral as her son, uhm, and that was extremely rough, and then, like, after that I cut off contact with my dad and have not really looked back or reconsidered kindling that relationship. In terms of making work without her being here to look at it, I mean it certainly makes it easier for me to make work that I know would make her uncomfortable and that sort of ranges from work about my family to work that is explicitly sexy. Like previously there was some work that I just asked my parents not to read and I think they knew well enough not to read it, like, you know, “This would make us too uncomfortable.” But, you know, at this point I really don’t feel like there is anything holding me back because at this point, like, all of those bridges are already burned, you know. Like, the fear is making work that is so controversial within your family that it tears your family apart, but in my case, like, the hard work of tearing my family apart has already been done, so, like, I really don’t feel limited in terms of, like, what I can or cannot say and instead I am trying very hard to be as authentic as possible and capture these kind of difficult things as accurately as possible within these sort of difficult constraints.

**Molly:** Yea, absolutely. Uh, a lot of your comics also have, like, a really strong technology element to them. They’re told in the forms of video games or pop up windows or Facebook feeds, and I’m wondering to what extent, like, that type of technology played a role in, like, your exploration of your gender identity.

**Carta:** Oh! That’s an interesting question. I don’t know if I’ve been asked that one before. *[chuckles]* I mean, I think technology played a fair role in it when I was a little older. When I was younger, technology was more of a general escape and so it represented, like, an outside world and pop culture that I otherwise did not have access to because our house was very much sort of a closed ecosystem. So, when I was younger, like, technology meant being able to do, like, AOL instant messenger with my friends, and listen maybe to music that I otherwise would never have listened to, and look at pornography, which was, like, a really exciting adult thing to be doing, you know, and, like, all the other, like, pre-YouTube internet stuff, like loading movie trailers for several hours or whatever. When I was a little older though, technology became a way for me to explicitly look into gender stuff just like, *[chuckles]* you know, like, doing the classic Google stuff: “Am I transgender?” “Do I-Am I trans enough to have these feelings?” or, like, “Compared to other trans people, like, are my feelings legitimate or do I just want to be trans to win arguments?” or, you know, like, uhm, “Are my reasons for being trans valid?” Things like that. So, before I came out, some pivotal moments happened when I was watching, like, you know, trans YouTubers talking about their process and things like that and just getting so emotional and knowing that that’s what I wanted for myself. Technology has always been, like, a very private way for me to explore things that I’m thinking about and a way that I don’t really feel like I have to be accountable to other people, uhm, when I’m employing, so it was the same when I was doing explorations into, like, the concept of myself being trans. Uhm, I was doing a lot of it kind of privately or secretly or, like, I had a secret Twitter that was, like, secret to everyone, you know, like, I was the only person who could look at it and it was functioning kind of as a diary. So, like, there were a lot of things like that where I was using technology to sort of, like, create this private domain where I could explore without it feeling like I was committing to anything by telling anybody.

**Molly:** *[amused]* I think that, like, secret Twitter - sorry, this is just one tiny part of what you just said - but I think that secret Twitters are, like, pretty common, and I just think it’s so funny how, like, people of this, like, specific generation, like, instead of, like, having a diary where no one reads it, we just, like, put it on Twitter - which was created to be, like, a social platform, but we just make it so that only we can see it. Like, that’s just, like, such an interesting choice that we’re all making! *[laughs]*

**Carta:** Mhmm. I think it’s interesting, too, and, like, when I was a younger teen, like, when I was in, uh, early high school, I kept a diary on a flash drive, and, like, you know, hundreds of thousands of pages, and I still have that. So, like, the secret Twitter felt a lot like that. It’s just, like, the benefit of it being on Twitter was that I could access it very easily, like from my phone, without having to, like, login to a separate app or open a separate file or whatever.

**Molly:** Yea, that makes sense. You had a really powerful Twitter thread, uh, for Trans Day of Remembrance about how Trans Day of Remembrance shouldn’t just commemorate trans folx who are, like, “illegally murdered” as you put it but also folx who were killed or allowed to die by, like, our government and the way our society is set up, and I just thought that was, yea, really powerful and important and I was wondering if you could sort of expand on that for us here.

**Carta:** Yea, absolutely. A lot of what I was saying I was paraphrasing from my good friend, uhm, Janice Rose, who is a really, really brilliant activist and musician and technology writer who you should follow on Twitter. *[laughs]*

**Molly:** Great!

**Carta:** Uhm, and basically we had this conversation on Trans Day of Remembrance about how frustrated we both were that every cis media outlet or ally was sharing the list of, like, 22 or 23 trans women who had been, like, flagrantly and illegally murdered by, like, deranged individuals, but nobody was talking about it as a much bigger systemic problem. Like, if you’re on the outside looking in, you would think that Trans Day of Remembrance is, is, like, only for these people who were murdered in these kind of, like, these ways that fit very neatly into a narrative where the people who murder trans people are, like, evil and unlike everyone else and, like, you’ll probably never meet them because they, like, hide in dark alleys or whatever, and that’s very frustrating because, you know, like, people talk about, like, wanting to respond to the bigotry of the murderers of trans people as if they don’t hold that self same bigotry, and, like, for me and for a lot of my friends Trans Day of Remembrance also commemorates the people we know who died because they didn’t have access to the medication they needed or they were denied, uh, mental health services or surgeries. Trans people know a lot of other dead trans people and it’s pretty rare for them to be, like, straightforwardly murdered in the way that you would think, like, that they might be given what is sort of, like, popularized by the media when we talk about, like, dead trans people. A-and I do think it’s, like, very self serving that, like, there’s this perception of dead trans people as, like, only having been killed by, like, these outliers and these, like, bad cruel people who are unlike, you know, like, the government and the politicians and the doctors and the news media who, like, propagate these transphobic policies and opinions all the time that lead to trans suicide and, like, denial of trans care and all of these terrible things that, like, more directly affect trans people’s lives than the fear that you’re going to be randomly murdered walking down the street.

**Molly:** Totally. Yea. Thank you so much for explaining all that. So this is the part of the show where I ask you if there’s anything else you want to talk about that I haven’t asked about yet.

**Carta:** I can talk a little bit about, uhm, the sort of home publishing imprint that I’m doing, Diskette Press?

**Molly:** Yes, I love that!

**Carta:** Maybe about a year ago I came into the possession of a risograph machine which is, like, a specific boutiquey kind of, uh, like, office copier that still has a very wide international market share but, like, works pretty differently from most office copiers in that it works through, like, sort of a mimeograph process where there’s liquid ink inside of, like, a barrel shaped drum and the drum rolls, there’s a screen on the drum, so as the drum rolls, like, the ink falls through the screen when it’s facing down, and then there’s paper below it. So it’s sort of like a very efficient form of, like, screen printing, you can almost think of it as. And so the machine can print one color at a time very, very quickly, it can print you know something like 120 pages a minute in its fastest setting, and it’s very good for zine publishing and home publishing projects. Since the time that I’ve gotten it, I’ve put a lot of work into setting up a process whereby we can print and distribute books not only by me and my friends here in Ann Arbor but also by other up-and-coming cartoonists, especially trans people and queer people and women of color. And we’ve been putting out, like, some really interesting work - right now I’m paying a good friend of mine to work on a website that will, like, help sort of put everything in one place instead of having, like, a horrible stand-in Tumblr page which is what I currently have. But I’m really excited about it because, like, it feels really good to just sort of have, like, the means of creating, like, a sort of medium run of zines in my house and I’ve been able to employ a trans friend who lives in town at like $10 an hour to help me with it and it’s really fun and feels really good and hopefully will be a good thing for our community, too, so I’m really excited about it.

**Molly:** I’m just curious because you mentioned Ann Arbor; what is the queer and trans community like in Ann Arbor? It seems from the outside like you have a pretty strong robust community there for a population that’s, like, relatively small?

**Carta:** Yea, when I moved here I didn’t really know any other trans people here. A couple of my trans friends from college moved after me but for quite a while I didn’t know any other trans people and that would really frustrate me because I would be walking down the street and see, like, a trans woman and be like, “I should already know you-”

**Molly:** *[agreeing]* Totally.

**Carta:** -you know, like, I shouldn’t feel so weird, cuz, like, you never want to walk up to someone who you’ve never met and be like, “Hey are you trans?”

**Molly:** *[knowingly]* Yup.

**Carta:** -because, like, it feels weird. So I put together this group that met, or is still going, that meets once a week for trans feminine people, specifically for trans women and nonbinary AMAB trans people. I put flyers up around town and several trans women started coming and they started inviting their friends. So we were able to build up, like, a really great core community from that. Later we started another weekly event that is open to all trans people and at both of those events we provide free subsidized tea or coffee and often there’s food. And it’s just a hang out, like, it’s not a support group or anything, it’s just, like, a place where you can hang out and check your email or work on your projects or whatever. I do drawing and talk and, like, through those networks that we’ve built through these weekly get togethers, like, people have found roommates, they’ve found housing, jobs, we’ve covered people’s hormones several times and distributed hundreds and hundreds of dollars to people who really need it. So it’s been great. Like, I feel like our community here is pretty robust. There’s still, like, a large untapped community of, like, high school trans students that I really don’t know. I know that they exist but I don’t know most of them. But they’re also quite well served in town because there’s a really great teen center that specifically caters to queer teenagers and, like, does a very, very good job. So I feel like we’re, we’re covering a lot of the sort of, like, potential groups that, like, trans people might fall into, and we’re always trying to, like, get more people to come and, like, feel comfortable just dropping in, or reaching out when they need help.

**Molly:** I think that’s actually a really inspiring story to hear you say’ like’ “Well I realized that I didn’t know all the trans folx in town, so I just sort of invited them to hang out in a space and now we have created all of these amazing opportunities and resources.” Like, that seems like a really accessible thing that people listening could do which is really, really cool.

**Carta:** I hope so, like, in-in my case I was very lucky to have been friends with, like, a local business owner who let us use his space after hours, so, like, there wasn’t anyone else around, and, like, that is very helpful when you’re trying to convince trans people into a space, like, you know, kind of, like, being able to assure them that there won’t be any, like, weird cis people hanging out. I always say, like, if allies want to, like, give and they don’t know what to give, like, space is a really good thing to give. Like, giving trans people spaces in which to congregate that aren’t, like, linked to partying or alcohol, because, like, we have a lot of those, and there’s, like, plenty of people who can’t be around that stuff, and, like, if you’re vulnerable or if you’re in recovery, like, it’s not great for the only community spaces to be based around drinking, uhm, so I really, really like providing the sort of all ages or at least sober spaces.

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

**Carta:** I mean, I guess it would look like a sort of, like, self determination that would allow people to be as comfortable as possible. Like, for me personally I’m not someone who’s big on the “abolish the concept of gender entirely” thing because I really like being a woman, like, I’m all about it, like, I fought really hard to be here, and I don’t want to abolish all concepts of gender because I really, I enjoy it. You know, like, I, I enjoy womanhood, whatever that means, and at the same time I know there are people who really don’t want to be associated with gender in any way. So I feel like this sort of, like, ideal gender utopia is one where people are very understanding and, like, very open to the idea that, like, their own experience is not the definitive experience, and, like, self ID works in, like, an intuitive and comfortable way for people, *[coughs]* and they don’t feel the need to constantly explain, because I feel like that’s one of the biggest problems with our current set up is that, like, if you have any gender or gender presentation that differs from the norm you are immediately in the position of having to explain it to everyone all the time or else get brutally misgendered all the time. And so my utopia would be a world where people could just sort of walk in and be like, “Hey I use these pronouns,” or whatever, and it would be chill and people will have been educated in some kind of way that prepares them for that, and, like, it’s not a big deal, because, like, it shouldn’t be, you know? Like, gender is a big deal but other people’s gender shouldn’t be that big a deal to you is sort of my feeling about it.

*[theme music plays, Molly speaks over]*

**Molly:** That’s gonna be it for this week’s show. You can find Carta at cartamonir.com as well as diskettepress.com. You can also support her at patreon.com/carta. We at Gender Reveal donate to her patreon and I hope you will too.

If you’d like to support us, Gender Reveal, you could tell a friend or 100 friends about the show, you could support us a patreon.com/gender, you can also contact us and learn more via genderpodcast.com where you can also find a bunch of transcripts of episodes. We are so close to getting every episode transcribed and updated. Thank you so, so, so, so, so much to everyone who has volunteered and worked to make that happen. You can also find us on Twitter and Instagram @gendereveal.

This show is produced and edited by me, Molly Woodstock. Our logo is by Michelle Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Z and I are actually heading out on vacation but we will hopefully be back next week to answer more questions about gender.

*[theme music ends]*