**Tuck**: Urbody is a gender-affirming underwear and activewear brand that designs gender-inclusive collections by and for the community that address the fit, functionality, and style needs of those across the gender spectrum. Urbody created its own sizing and grading system that’s built to fit trans, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming folks. Use the promo code TUCK15 for 15% off your first Urbody purchase. Shop based on fit and style, and remember: You deserve to get dressed for the day with confidence, and that starts with what’s underneath.

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

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

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

**Tuck**: Hey everyone. Hope you’re all hanging in there. This week on the show I am thrilled to share my conversation with musician, artist, drag performer, and community organizer, Taylor Alxndr. I am so in awe of Taylor, as both an organizer and a performer, and it was such a treat to talk with them about things like queer community and politics in the south...

**Taylor [voice clip]**: There’s this terrible idea that transphobia, queerphobia, anti-Blackness, is only designated for certain parts of the country, or certain areas.

**Tuck**: Using drag as an organizing space...

**Taylor [voice clip]**: I’m the kind of drag queen who’s going to be like, “All right, thank y’all so much for coming out. So let’s talk about gender.”

**Tuck**: And what our genders would look like without societal influence...

**Taylor [voice clip]**: Can we just like, develop the surgery that just turns me into like, a sassy, amorphous cloud?

**Tuck**: But first, just wanted to let you know that our merch store is fully restocked with several new items, including the “Everybody knows I’m a transsexual” shirt that was specifically requested by Colby Gordon and designed by our friend Io, and a really fun new design that says “Eat the cis.” Yum! You can find everything at bit.ly/gendermerch through the end of May. And now, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[Transition sound effect, with low metallic chimes and hi-hats plays briefly]

**Ozzy**: Hey everyone, producer Ozzy here! I’m taking over today’s segment, for a story about a very impressive trans woman and her very impressive dogs. This doesn’t exactly qualify as “news” anymore, but as we’ve mentioned a few time in this segment, the news is just like, extremely bad and getting worse every day? So, beyond reminding you to support your local underground HRT/abortion providers, which I guess for legal reasons is a joke, I’m just here to provide you with some information on one of the very few small good things that has happened vaguely recently.

[Gentle instrumental music plays]

**Ozzy**: So, you might remember hearing that back in March, Apayauq Reitan became the first out trans woman to compete in the Iditarod. It’s important to note that she was the first *out* trans woman, especially because she herself also raced back in 2019, before she came out publicly. Reitan told the Guardian that it was after her first Iditarod, completing this big goal she’d had, that she decided it was time to come out to her family. She also told Outside Magazine, “That was part of the reason that I was running again, so that the world would know that I wasn’t cis. I wasn’t cis when I did it last time, either, it’s just that I was in the closet.”

Reitan has been sled dog racing, also known as mushing, since she was 4 years old. In an interview on the aptly named Iditapod, she said her biggest challenge in the race was oversleeping on rest stops, which I find extremely relatable. She also said one reason the sport is important to her is because it’s part of her Inupiaq heritage. Fun fact: Reitan didn’t choose a new name as part of her transition, because her given Inupiaq name is gender neutral. She’s named after her great grandmother! She dropped her given English name, and started exclusively going by Apayauq. Reitan said this has the added bonus of making her more visible as an Inupiaq woman. “There’s a lot of erasure of Indigenous people. People talk about America and Canada as if we’re people that used to exist. But we’re still here. It’s like a reclamation of being Indigenous.”

Reitan took 13 days, 8 hours, and 39 minutes to finish the race this year. She also won the Red Lantern Award, which is given to the last person to complete the race. This isn’t actually *quite* as shady as it sounds. Being out in the cold for so long is difficult and dangerous, so this award recognizes that the person who finishes last has also withstood the longest exposure to those conditions. In the Iditapod interview, Reitan explained that she wouldn’t be surprised if she didn’t beat her time from 2019, because the dogs she worked with this year were less experienced. Some of the dogs on her 2019 team had been in 3 previous Iditarods, so as she put it, “They knew what was going on, they knew how this works, way more than me.”

Unlike so many other high-level sports, the Iditarod doesn’t have any rules or regulations or categories around gender, for either humans or dogs. In a way, Reitan competing in the Iditarod this year is just the latest step towards gender equity in a sport that’s been, relatively, pretty chill about gender. Contrary to the unhinged nightmare fantasies of conservatives, women have won the race many times while competing head-to-head with men, and a balanced team includes dogs of all genders.

While I was looking through the Iditarod rulebook, I came across some more… unusual rules the sport has. My favorite is rule number 34, Killing of Game Animals: “In the event that an edible big game animal, i.e., moose, caribou, buffalo, is killed in defense of life or property, the musher must gut the animal and report the incident to a race official at the next checkpoint. Following teams must help gut the animal when possible. No teams may pass until the animal has been gutted and the musher killing the animal has proceeded. Any other animal killed in defense of life or property must be reported to a race official, but need not be gutted.”

Aaaanyway, back to the trans history of it all. Reitan is only the third out trans person overall to compete in the Iditarod. Before her, Quince Mountain became the first trans musher in the race in 2020. Mountain unfortunately wasn’t able to complete the race; he was withdrawn, reportedly because of safety changes due to COVID-19. Then, in 2021, Will Troshynski became the first out trans person to finish the Iditarod. In a nice little moment of cosmic trans musher unity, Reitan came out publicly the day after Troshynski started his race. No word yet on whether any trans dogs have competed so far. This has been, This Week in Gender.

[Transition sound effect, with low metallic chimes and hi-hats plays briefly]

**Tuck**: One more thing before we get started: I need to tell you about a new sponsor that I am extremely hyped about. Zoned Out is a podcast that examines the capitalist city, and attempts to imagine how the socialist city could replace it. The show is hosted by Rynn, an urban planner and a person who has a last name but really values privacy. Good for her. She does deep dives into various facets of urban geography, planning, and economics in this monthly podcast. You can listen to the show wherever you listen to podcasts, and can support the show at patreon.com/zonedoutpodcast.

[Gender Reveal theme music excerpt fades in]

**Tuck**: Taylor Alxndr is an Atlanta-based musician, drag performer, multimedia artist, and community organizer. Taylor is the cofounder and current executive director of Southern Fried Queer Pride, a queer and trans arts and advocacy organization centering southern queer communities. They’re also the mother of the House of Alxndr, an Atlanta-based drag family and events hub creating drag-centered inclusive events.

[Gender Reveal theme music excerpt fades out]

**Tuck**: The way we always start the show is by asking: in terms of gender, how do you describe yourself?

**Taylor**: Ooo. So for me, I identify as nonbinary, I identify as transfem, I identify as agender. My gender identity kind of falls in the weird landscape of like, slightly feminine nonbinary, or just completely void of gender, like, do not associate that with me. So, depends on the day and whatever phase the moon is in. [Both laugh]

**Tuck**: There’s this popular conception of drag as like, over the top, larger than life, parody-level of gender, and I know it *can* be that. But I feel like the drag that I have seen from you personally… literally, I thought that was just you, like I didn’t realize that was your drag, I thought that was just like, how you always were for a long time.

**Taylor**: [quietly] Yes…!

**Tuck**: And then I saw you out of drag, and I was like, “Oh, that is, like, a drag persona.” So I was curious, since your drag persona can also be seen as just like, “hot person in the world,” as opposed to this over-the-top caricature of femininity... I was just curious, since you’re transfem yourself, what role you feel like drag plays in your gender, and whether that persona sort of overlaps with your experiences of gender or not?

**Taylor**: Let me just first off say, that’s the best question I’ve ever been asked about drag and gender. Because it’s just like, so many times people are just like, “So you do drag, but like, you’re also trans, so like, why?” And it’s just like… what? [Tuck laughs] How am I gonna…? I don’t know, but thank you for that.

**Tuck**: Of course.

**Taylor**: Um, I think for me, I get a lot of satisfaction from performing in drag and kind of donning a certain form of femininity that I, number one, don’t really feel safe donning on a day-to-day basis, just because of who I am, and where I live, and society at large. But also, like, presenting in that feminine way feels very natural to me, but also is exhausting, so I like having drag as a space to not only be an artist, and showcase my art, and be an entertainer, but also to…. It is like, gender euphoria for me. Doing drag is, uh, it does do that for me.

I think for me, with my drag style, is that it’s kind of been all over the place. Like when I first started doing drag, I was more of like the shock art, campy kind of performer. So like, lots of blood, lots of no eyebrows and no hair, and just kind of like, wilding out. And then it’s kind of morphed into a more, as I’ve been described, “Your friendly neighborhood hot girl.” And I fully recognize with that, because on a certain level, that is who I am on the inside. Yeah, I’ve never been the most over-the-top, like, “Here’s fifteen wigs stacked on top of each other, and here are my hips at, like, sofa size.” I haven’t been there yet. Will it happen? Probably. I might have a moment or two, but I see myself onstage in drag as an extension of who I am on a daily, regular basis. That’s why there’s no distinction between Taylor Alxndr on stage or in person. Like, I’m the same person just with a few pairs of lashes, and like eight pairs of tights. [Both laugh]

**Tuck**: Absolutely. So, I’m obviously aware that the South gets a terrible reputation in all of these different ways, and that it’s seen as sort of uniformly conservative, and really erases the experience of queer and trans people there. But I didn’t realize to what *extent* that was true, because I didn’t know until I was researching this interview and reading about Southern Fried Queer Pride, that the South had the largest queer and trans population in the country. And I didn’t know that Atlanta’s seen as, like, the queer hub of the south. So I was just curious if you had any idea why southern queer culture is so overlooked, and just, if you had any thoughts about what listeners who aren’t familiar should know?

**Taylor**: Hmm. Well, I think, kind of in a historical lens, you know, the South is constantly shoved into this conservative position and role. I think part of it is because of our country’s history, obviously. The majority of the South was on the wrong side of history in the Civil War, and I feel like that has, you know, uniquely been tied to how the South is viewed. Not only just the Civil War, but also when you think about the South, a lot of folks, and immigrants who were considered poor, or even indentured servants, or the “wrong type” of European, were often made to live and move to the South. We think about Irish people, sometimes even, like, Italian people. So I think the South has always been a place that has been fighting that stereotype, but I also think it’s because of the political landscape. Obviously, the South is called the conservative “hellhole,” if you will.

And so people, both conservatives and liberals, and people of various political ideologies, I think, look at the South with a kind of sense of pity, especially for marginalized people, you know? Every time I’m like “Oh, I’m from Atlanta, I’m from Georgia, I’m from the south,” I’ve met so many northern people, or people from other parts of the country, who are just like, “I’m so sorry about what happened with Stacey Abrams, and how much it must suck to be queer, and Black, and trans in the South.” And it’s just like… I think people think I walk outside of my door and there’s just like a dozen KKK people in a truck driving past my house. And that’s only happened, like, a few times when I was younger.

But I think part of it, in terms of a queer lens, is this idea that queer identity, trans identity even to a certain extent, is very urbanized. So you think about New York as a queer capital, you think of San Francisco, you think of maybe even like, Chicago or Seattle. And Atlanta is truly like, the LGBT capital of the south. We have our own rich history, we’ve had uprisings, we’ve had riots, we have our own icons. But in the kind of like, large and national scope of LGBTQ history, we’re kind of just designated to statistics. Like, when we talk about HIV transmission rates, or the violence against Black trans folks, specifically Black trans women, our stories and our culture as a southern people is kind of just pushed to the side, in favor of this other narrative.

So, that was part of why SFQP, Southern Fried Queer Pride, started. Number one, we were a bunch of young artists who just wanted to create art for queer and trans southerners. We wanted to be able to be political, but also be artistic and recognize, like, the two are uniquely tied together in the movement towards liberation. But also to fight this idea that just because we live under the Mason-Dixon line, that somehow our lives are just sad stories and there’s nothing fruitful here. We have amazing, amazing communities. And so many people in queer culture have come from the South. So, yeah, we’re still fighting that distinction, but I think it’s slowly changing. And I think part of it is because a lot of queer people from other parts of the country, who can’t live safely or economically in their cities anymore, are moving to the South, and realizing “Oh, there’s like… [Laughs] The whole community’s down here!” And it’s not as bad as it was made to seem. So, it’s a process.

**Tuck**: It’s so interesting that people are saying, like, “Oh, I’m so sorry that you’re a queer trans Black person who lives in Atlanta.” I’m like, where… where would you live that was better? [Both laugh] I don’t know, I’m just, like, I’m so distracted by that. Like, where do they want you to go? Like, I live in Portland; I promise you, you would have a much worse time here. Like, you would see the KKK *more*.

**Taylor**: [Laughs] Probably! I don’t know. I think it’s partially, it’s this terrible idea that transphobia, queerphobia, anti-Blackness is only designated for certain parts of the country, or certain areas. It’s like, it’s global. It’s international. It’s everywhere. You can’t escape it. You know, all these phobias and antagonisms exist in big cities across the country, as well as small rural towns in and out of the South. So, there’s no safe space. [Laughs]

**Tuck**: Mm, yeah. I’m curious—and I won’t, like, dwell on the politics of this—but I was curious: With all of the anti-trans bills going on, I know there have been a few in Georgia, and obviously some horrible ones next door. Do you feel like there has been, like, a vibe shift at all in your community?

**Taylor**: I don’t.

**Tuck**: Yeah.

**Taylor**: I don’t, really…. Like, and maybe I’m just disconnected.... I don’t think I’m disconnected from community at all. Like, I do...

**Tuck**: You seem incredible connected. [Laughs]

**Taylor**: I’m honestly too connected, and like, I need to disappear. But honestly, the last time that I really saw a whole bunch of people kind of rally together en masse, in like a shocking way for queer rights or trans rights, was really like in.... Maybe in like, 2015, when gay marriage was passed and legalized? [Tuck laughs] And it’s just so sad, cause like, you know, we’ll have every year a major moment where we’re talking about standing up for the lives of Black trans women and Black trans folks who are being harmed and killed. We’ll organize within community, within Black trans community, we’ll organize, you know, rallies and protests and whatnot. And then we’ll have moments where, like, the Don’t Say Gay bills and the anti-trans bills, and those pop up. But it doesn’t seem like that same energy or fervor that was there for gay marriage has been here for any of these other kind of movements. It feels like the gays and the queers who were passionate about gay marriage just spent all their energy on that, and then once that was sealed and the paperwork was filed, then they just disappeared. I would love to see more energy, but I honestly have not felt that, at least not here in Atlanta. So....

**Tuck**: Yeah. Yeah. Well, they get tax write-offs now. What more could you possibly want as a queer person? [Both sigh] [Both laugh]

**Tuck**: We’re all just, like, synchronized sighing! [Both laugh] Ugh, God. [Sighs] Well, let’s talk about something good. Let’s talk about Southern Fried Queer Pride! Is that your full-time job, or like your “day job,” now?

**Taylor**: I basically have two full-time jobs. So it’s like, one is drag and entertaining, and then one is SFQP, which has only recently become a full-time job. So, a little background about SFQP: Southern Fried Queer Pride is a nonprofit organization that I cofounded in 2014. And we started off just as a bunch of house parties and meetings at coffee shops, just trying to formulate community around art and activism. And so we started off as a three-day pride festival in June, around the Stonewall weekend, the Stonewall uprisings. And it started off very small, and then eventually people were just hungry for more stuff. So over the years, since 2014, we had our first festival in 2015, we’ve grown into a five-day festival still in the month of June. We do anywhere from 40 to 60 events throughout the year depending on if there’s a pandemic, and we just do a little bit of everything.

So, SFQP has become a kind of, like, queer—I don’t want to toot the horn, but toot toot!—*force* in Atlanta. You know, I’ve met people who have kind of moved here because of SFQP, which is shocking to me. But it’s become just this really beautiful thing that I couldn’t have possibly imagined. And, you know, for so long we were all doing this just volunteering, like, putting on full events and festivals with no money. Because none of us knew how to write grants; none of us knew what a nonprofit really, like, 501(c)(3) was. But over the past few years we’ve gotten more structure, we’ve become a nonprofit, and now we have part-time staff. And we’re looking to grow and expand as well in so many areas and avenues, including creating Atlanta’s first Black-queer-owned LGBTQ center, the CLUTCH Community Center, which I’m constantly talking to realtors about. So, yeah, we’ve got a lot of amazing things happening.

**Tuck**: Yeah. It is such an inspiring level of community support that you all are doing. Like, I don’t know that I have seen another city that has an organization like that, that’s just consistently doing so many events throughout the year. And I can imagine that that is just absolutely so much work, and has been so much work for so long. And so I’m curious, both if you have advice for other folks who might want to get something started in their community, but more than that, advice for making it sustainable. Because I feel like that’s what we run into all the time is someone who can throw one event, or maybe two events, and then they’re like “That was so much, and I need to nap for 5 years now.” [Taylor laughs] So I’m just wondering how you’ve continued to do this, and for so long?

**Taylor**: I think for me, and for SFQP, we’ve always had so many folks at the table making things happen, even if the bulk of the work was like, something that I took home, or that I focused on. We call our organizers “chefs,” because we’re all chefs in the kitchen cooking up something good. So we’ve had chefs a part of the team, who are still a part of the team, that started back in 2014. I think you have to have a good circle of people around you, all the time, who can be there for you, share the capacity, but also hold you accountable. That’s something I was… not always perfect at. I am a workaholic. [Laughs] I will wake up at 8 a.m. and go to bed at like 2 a.m., sending emails. Like, it’s unhealthy. I think I’ve been burnt out since like 2018, but I’m just like an animated corpse, just keep going.

But, you really have to have a good team around you to make anything happen. And I think with community work, I never want to go to events or be in community with the same six to eight people. You have to share the resources, you have to share the wealth, you have to share the platforms. And you have to constantly be doing outreach and reaching out to different people, because it brings in new energy, new perspectives, new types of events. And so, I’ve really been challenging myself and some of the more tenured chefs at SFQP to, like, “You know what? We’ve been doing this for almost a decade at this point. We don’t need to be the face of every single event. I’ll organize something, and somebody else can run it. I’ll help do this, or I’ll help show up in some smaller capacity.” It’s really just sharing capacity, and making sure everybody feels heard, seen, and respected. And it’s still a process, it’s something that none of us are 100% amazing at, but it’s something that I love to work towards.

**Tuck**: Mm. Yeah, I was curious because you mentioned “Chefs in the kitchen.” You know that that phrase comes from “Too many cooks in the kitchen,” right? [Taylor laughs] And so, you have like 10, 20, 30 folks working together, and I’m just amazed that you can have that many queer people working together and seemingly have it go smoothly. So, are there particular strategies for not having conflict, or for navigating conflict when it comes up, or has it just sort of worked itself out?

**Taylor**: I think it’s partially like, it just worked itself out. But it’s also just recognizing what people enjoy doing, and how that can factor into organizing. So not everybody is a host, or not everybody is a lobbyist, or not everybody is a facilitator. You know, you have to find the moment that sparks joy within you, and just lead with that. So a lot of what I’ve come into doing with SFQP is recognizing people’s capacity in what they feel enjoyment in doing. So there’s some people who come on and volunteer, they’ll work the door, they’ll help set up and break down for events. And they’ll do that like two or three times out of the year, and that’s *all* they can do, and that’s totally fine. And there’s some people who want to be at every single event, and they don’t really care about the background details of it, but they want to be the person hosting, or the person performing, or sometimes people come and they just want to perform.

So it’s really just about connecting with people and understanding what they want to bring to the table, and some people try to bring a whole four-course meal to the table, and it’s like, “We have room for appetizers, so let’s, like, scale it down.” [Tuck laughs] It’s a lot, and I’m still learning, but I think we’re at a very beautiful moment right now with SFQP. It’s that we have all these people who have been here since day one, and then we have, I hate to say “a whole new generation,” but like, I’m almost 30. I’m 29, and there’s people, 18, 19, who are DMing me and emailing me every single day like, “How do I get involved?” And it’s just like… I don’t know, it feels weird to be in this position, but I feel very fortunate to be in it.

**Tuck**: Yeah, well, I was going to ask you because you said, you know, you’ve been doing this for almost a decade; you also founded a drag house which we’ll talk about, you cofounded SFQP…. I believe you also founded a GSA at your high school back in the day, or something like that, is that right?

**Taylor**: Oh my god, you just went through all of my history. Yes! [Laughs]

**Tuck**: So you’ve done all of this for *so* many years, and you’re also 29. So I was curious: do you see yourself—and I don’t mean this in a grandiose way, but—do you see yourself as like, a queer, trans elder at this point?

**Taylor**: [Laughs] Oh my gosh, “elder,” hmm…. Are we subtracting, like, the kind of connotation of being older with being an elder?

**Tuck**: Well that’s what I’m wondering, because there’s, you know, there’s an argument that being an elder inherently means you are old. Then there’s also an argument that being 30 is old for being trans, and then there’s an argument that that’s actually erasing the people that are trans that are like, 50’s, 60’s, 70’s. But also, some of the people who are trans in their 50’s, 60’s, and 70’s transitioned like last year, right? So like, what does it mean? I don’t know, that’s why I asked. [Both laugh] But I’m sure you find yourself in the role of sort of mentoring younger folks all the time, right?

**Taylor**: Oh, yeah.

**Tuck**: Or at least, younger-to-the-scene folks.

**Taylor**: Absolutely. I would definitely call myself a mentor, not that I take on that role, but I think people assign it to me, and I’m just like, “Okay, I mean, that does track.” I think I’m just very, like, I’m a very cynical person about work and success. So yes, looking back I’ve done a lot in relatively a short amount of time. January was like, 10 years of me doing drag, and this year is like, 11 years that I’ve been in Atlanta and organizing. But I think in terms of being an elder.... I’ll take it on! I like it. I like titles. So, yeah. We’ll call myself an elder, a mentor. I just want to continue providing as much space, and resources, and kind of guidance to anybody who wants it. And as long as I’m doing that, I think I’ll be good, I’ll be happy. Yeah.

**Tuck**: Mm. Well, speaking of that, as we’ve said, you founded a drag house, House of Alxndr.

**Taylor**: Yeeesss.

**Tuck**: I read somewhere that you didn’t have a drag mother when you were up-and-coming. So I was curious how you got involved with drag, and how you figured out the ropes?

**Taylor**: Yeah, I’m a part of a drag generation that is either born out of YouTube, or Drag Race, or a combination of the two. So I first got into drag in 2012, when I went to Georgia State University, and there was a LGBTQ student group, the Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity, one of the oldest and largest in the South. I went there because I was dating somebody at the time who was a part of the group, and he was like, “Yeah, we just show up, and sometimes we go to drag shows and talk about being gay,” and I’m like, “Okay, cool.” And then the first meeting, they were like, “We’re having elections,” and I was like, “Okay cool, well, I’m gonna run, and I’m gonna get on this board.” [Tuck laughs] And I did. And that was kind of like, my first taste of drag.

I met a few people who were already kind of, like, oddly active performers in Atlanta: Miami Royale, Janae Devereux. And through that I was just like, drag makes so much sense to me, because it’s a combination of everything that I’m good at. It is community work sometimes, it is artistry, it is sometimes being a comedian, it’s music, it’s everything. So that’s kind of why I started getting into drag, and then I started going around and performing in local bars and clubs, mainly Mary’s in the East Atlanta Village. And I kept on going; I started doing and creating different kinds of shows across the city, I started touring around the South, and I started my drag family.

We’re an eight-person house, we are also a street gang if it comes to it. [Both laugh] But we’re just a whole bunch of people who are like, you know. When I started the house I was like, I wanted people who were bringing something interesting to drag, but also have that communal aspect. They understand that, and why it’s so important to drag. And so, I’m very happy with my family, and I love them dearly, even if they don’t reply to my messages on a timely manner. [Tuck laughs] And we’re actually going to go see a drag pageant as a family this evening. So, yeah. [Laughs]

**Tuck**: Aww, good. Yeah, can you talk a little bit more about how you incorporate community and community-building into your drag and into your drag family, and the work that your drag family does?

**Taylor**: Definitely. I think for me, my drag and my kind of like, activism, if that’s what it’s being called, or organizing, has always been intertwined. So when I started doing drag in 2012, I started a show in early 2014 called “Sweet Tea: A Queer Variety Show.” It’s the longest-running queer variety show in Atlanta, and it’s a mixture of drag, comedy, all different kinds of queer performance art. And we always have aspects of the show that were dedicated towards organizing. So if we were talking about, you know, abolishing the prison industrial complex, specifically like the ICE detention center in Atlanta, I would have people come and table at the event, and talk about why people need to support that initiative. If we were talking about supporting queer and trans homeless youth, I would work with different organizations to have them at those events, and sometimes I would perform to raise money for those groups and organizations. But I think that my artistry and organizing are so connected, because I see me as a drag performer and host, kind of as like a figure, a kind of like... I wouldn’t say “church leader,” because that sounds very culty, but like, cults can be fun I think.

**Tuck**: You’re weirdly not the first person to say that on this podcast, so yes.

**Taylor**: Oh really? [Both laugh] I don’t know, it’s just like, something about being in front of a microphone, in front of a crowd, and having a moment. And I know that there’s some drag performers who are just like, you know, “Let’s all do shots, and let’s have a good time!” and “Woo!” and “No talk about politics!” I’m the kind of drag queen who’s going to be like, “All right, thank y’all so much for coming out. So let’s talk about gender, and let’s talk about why X Y Z, and let’s talk about how we should say ‘Fuck our mayor,’ because our roads are shit and he doesn’t care.” You know, I’m that kind of person. And I think—I don’t think, I know; and I still have this reputation today—a lot of people consider me a radical. They call me a troublemaker, but I don’t think I’m a troublemaker at all. I think I just, I’m very firm with what I believe in, and what I don’t believe in, and sometimes it comes out on the mic.

So bringing that into my family, I always tell them, “We can use drag to build community and bring people together,” so I’m still doing my work as a performer and as an organizer. My sister in drag, Szn Alxndr, is creating events specifically around body positivity, and just creating spaces for people of different experiences to enjoy. So many members of my family are Latinx, and so they are putting together an amazing event later this year that is going to be like, a queer and trans Latinx market and drag show experience, because we don’t really have too many spaces, that aren’t like bars or dance parties, that center around queer Latinx culture. Other members of my family are also in the health sector, and so that’s also using their drag to raise awareness around HIV/AIDS, access to healthcare for trans folks. So, we’re all a little political, and a little organizing in the house, but we can also still have fun. [Laughs]

**Tuck**: Mmm. I love that.

**Taylor**: Thank you.

**Tuck**: [Sighs] Well, when you were saying something about doing drag and then being like, “Okay, everybody, let’s talk about gender,” [Taylor laughs] it reminded me that you wrote this piece for Them, like four years ago, where you were talking about how, even when you are performing as a drag performer, it is hard to escape the gender binary. I was just curious if you still find that to be this case, because it was four years ago so I don’t want to assume that you still feel that way, and if you could just talk more about how you feel like that binary can be replicated even in drag, which is specifically a space to fuck with the gender binary.

**Taylor**: Absolutely. I think, in my time since that piece came out, I feel like the majority of the community has kind of moved past that, in a sense. I do think that gender has become a little bit more expansive in queer and trans spaces, but also in drag spaces. But in the same way, I also feel like it’s gotten... I don’t know, just like, I think, coupled with social media and queer representation at large, I feel like it’s kind of exacerbated those issues that I talked about in that piece. I feel like gender is still a competition, I still feel like gender expression is often a pageant. Especially on social media, we’re all pageanting around in our most idealized selves, and kind of trying to attach ourselves to certain standards of what’s a good gender, what’s a bad gender, what’s a good gender expression.

I feel like people aren’t performing their gender identity and expression for themselves, in some regards. I feel like it’s more so what you’re being seen as and how you’re being, in some ways, validated. It’s so complicated. I was literally talking to a close friend of mine earlier today about, like, general gender feels, and it’s just sometimes operating in certain queer spaces where people are affirming me because of how I look and express myself, but I’m also trying to put on a different kind of expression. It’s so complicated, but I do feel like the main highlights, the main points of that piece, are still pertinent today, and in some ways have kind of gotten worse, in a sense.

**Tuck**: Mmm. Now, of course, all I can think about is you just hinting at all of these gender feelings. You were like, “I was having this gender conversation…” and I was like, “That’s what *we’re* here to have! Tell me all of your gender feelings!” [Both laugh] What’s going on?

**Taylor**: Too. Many. Feelings. It’s weird, cause like, with me and me gender identity, I have days where I look at myself and I know that I’m nonbinary, agender, transfem, and I’m like, “This body makes sense, and I love it.” And then there’s some days I wake up and I’m just like, “I should go ahead and start fundraising for these affirming surgeries. Like, I wanna get my tits done, I wanna get hips done, I wanna get FFS.” And then there’s days where I go through that, and then I wake up and I’m like, “Okay, I don’t feel like that anymore.” And so it’s just like… gender’s so unnecessarily complicated, and I think so much of it, for me at least, is not only how I will feel about myself if I do, you know, go back on hormones, or if I do get affirming surgeries, or if I start presenting more fem, or even if I start presenting more masculine. I think it’s often how I’ll be perceived.

I think part of my gender feels is influenced by the people around me, specifically in drag. Because most of my friends.... Do I have any cis friends? I don’t know if I have any cisgender friends anymore, honestly. I feel like everybody is somewhere in the nonbinary or full-blown trans spectrum. But I think with drag, you know, so many of my friends are nonbinary and trans, specifically transfem and trans women. And I’ll be around them, and so many of them have had FFS, and they’ve gotten their tits done, and they’ve gotten, you know, BBLs, some of them, and I’m just like, “Y’all are just goddesses.” And most of the time I don’t feel called to have those things done, but the days where I’m like, “I’m going to just go ahead and fully transition,” it’s just wild just how constantly changing my feelings around gender and my presentation are going on. And then I’m like, well, I feel like I get my feminine fantasy out through drag, and you know, I’m doing 12 to 15 shows a month sometimes. I think last year I hit like 200 shows that I did in one year.

**Tuck**: Last year?!

**Taylor**: Yeah.

**Tuck**: Wow.

**Taylor**: So it’s like, hours and hours of me living my fantasy in a space where I feel affirmed, and it is like a sense of gender euphoria, and then I come home, take it all off, and I’m still very happy and euphoric. But there are some days where I’m just like, “Can we just develop the surgery that just, like, turns me into a sassy, amorphous cloud? I’ll just be fine, I won’t have to worry about a body, I’ll just be a cloud with a latte and some lashes directing a drag show.” But I get into too many gender feel discussions with other trans and nonbinary friends on Instagram stories, because, you know, you’ll be scrolling through somebody’s stories, like, “Oh my god, they went to a show!” “They’re walking their dog!” And then it’s just the close friends story and it's like, “Woke up today terribly dysphoric and dysmorphic, what’s happening to me?” [Tuck laughs] And it’s just like... *okaaay*. So I was outside cleaning my house this morning, and doing that to a friend’s thing, and I was like, “Okay, let me sit down, and let’s have this gender discussion, because I’m also feeling these same feelings.” So, it’s a lot. [Laughs]

**Tuck**: Gosh, yeah, it’s a lot. One, I just want a beautiful illustration of you as an amorphous cloud with lashes and a latte, because I love this. I’m imagining also, like, some good boots. I don’t know if you need boots, because you’re a cloud, but I think you should have them. [Laughs]

**Taylor**: Honestly, I feel like, um, what was the character from, uhh, Adventure Time? Lumpy Space Princess?

**Tuck**: Yeah! That’s also what I’m imagining.

**Taylor**: Yeah. I mean, honestly, I feel like it wasn’t clarified; I feel like she gives very high fem trans energy.

**Tuck**: Absolutely.

**Taylor**: So, that’s honestly my ultimate gender identity and form. Just turn me into Lumpy Space Princess. [Laughs]

**Tuck**: I love that. But yeah, I mean, just, I think what you’re describing about trying to parse your feelings and how they’re affected by other people is so real. Because I think we as trans people do all the time find ourselves trying to parse, “What is my true identity?” and “What is my true desire?” and “What is my true vision of myself?” and “What is being influenced by people around me?” But *all* gender is social contagion, and so you can’t parse those things. And then you can be like, “Well, maybe I don’t actually want this gender presentation and I am just feeling like I do because of the other trans people I see,” but then on the other hand you have to parse, “Maybe I do want that, and I just think I don’t because of all of society being transphobic.” And so there’s voices on either side that you have to kind of weigh, and it’s so hard, and almost at some point beside the point, to try to parse. Like, “If I was on a deserted island, and no one else was around me, would I still want tits?” [Taylor laughs] You know? It’s like, “I don’t know, that’s not where we are!”

**Taylor**: Right.

**Tuck**: So, it is so hard, and you know, I think about that all the time too, and it’s just…. At some point, I think part of being trans for long enough, as you also have been, is just getting tired and being like, “What is going to make me feel the least exhausted at the end of the day?” And either I’ll be less exhausted because I won’t be as dysphoric, I’ll be less exhausted because I don’t have to think about this every day now, I’ll be less exhausted because people aren’t going to be trying to hate crime me as much. Whatever it is, I think that is a perfectly valid reason to do any kind of gender transition is to just be like, “I am so tired y’all. I can’t.” [Both laugh]

**Taylor**: It’s true, it’s true. Being tired and trans is just, like, a constant state of being, so.

**Tuck**: Well, when you were talking earlier, I suddenly remembered a tweet I had seen from you that said, “Everything is cyclical, and I truly believe with how mainstream queer culture has become, that we’re headed back into our underground DIY roots, and I can’t wait.” Please say more about that.

**Taylor**: Oh my god. I was in my feelings. I mean, I’m always in my feelings, but, so I just put out a music project last month called 1993, and I had all these big dreams and goals, and it didn’t stream as well, it didn’t sell as well, and the tour wasn’t as successful as I had hoped. And so it made me start asking myself questions like, “What do I want out of my music career?” Because music has always been a passion and one of the multiple goals in my life. And a few of the questions that came up, it really spawned off of some experiences while I’m on tour. Like, I perform usually in drag, singing live, and oftentimes a lot of people were just like, “I’ve never seen something like this. You’re not like the typical drag queen.” And so part of me was just like, “Do I need to perform in drag anymore? Will that help people see my music as more valid?” Because I want to take my music to bigger and further heights, but I feel constantly shoved into this drag closet of like, “Oh, you’re a drag queen? The music you make has to be like ‘1-2-3-4, kitty cat purr purr, goin’ to the club.’” And I’m just like, no, my music is often about depression. [Laughs] And it’s just not how that works for me.

So then I started thinking about Drag Race, because obviously that’s the biggest influencer of drag in modern culture. And I talked to a lot of drag elders who have been doing drag for like 30, 40 years. And a lot of them are saying, “Yeah, drag right now sucks.” Not like the artform itself, but just like.... You used to go to clubs to see drag, and people thought they were amazing goddesses and just immensely talented, and now bars don’t even want to cough up a penny for show budgets, audiences are dwindling. I think with the mainstreamification of drag, we kind of lost that underground allure of drag, in a kind of sense. And so when I made that status, I was like, I would love to go back—even though I wasn’t performing in the ’90s —but go back to the ‘90s, or even the ’80s, when there wasn’t drag on television, and all the drag superstars were self-made. You know, like early Ru Paul, or like Divine, or Coco Peru, or The Lady Chablis. My ultimate goal is to be a self-made drag queer performance artist musician, kind of in the vein of those stars, but I feel like the only way people like me are getting seen and recognized today is through the Ru Paul industrial complex. But uh, yeah. I was in my feelings, and I still am in my feelings around that, so.

**Tuck**: Yeah, that’s interesting,. It makes so much sense to me now that I’m thinking about it, because I actually didn’t pay attention to drag at all until the last couple of years, when I realized, “Oh, actually there’s so many trans people specifically doing really exciting drag, and also cis people doing really exciting drag.” Because, I know you and I are the same age, but somehow I just missed the pre-Ru-Paul-industrial-complex drag of it all, and so I went straight to, “Well, drag is for straight cis people,” right? Not that they were the ones performing it, but they were the ones that were hyped on it. And so I was like, “Well if straight people love this, and Ru Paul is fracking, then why would I be interested in this?” [Taylor laughs] And then just recently I was like, “Oh, this rules actually!” But it took me that long because it had mainstreamed, and that made me skeptical of it.

**Taylor**: Mmhm. It’s weird because I think, over the years, for me at least with my organizing work with SFQP and my drag artistry, I feel like SFQP has remained underground, I think because we’re so grassroots. There’s still people who come up to me today and are just like, “I love what y’all are doing, it’s so interesting and new and underground,” and yada yada yada. And I’m like, “We literally have so many public-facing profiles, and we’re constantly promoting events.” But I think it’s just, like, the intention behind it? And so I think with drag, as a mainstream kind of entity as it is now, the intention behind drag I think fuels the audiences that receive it and how it’s perceived. So if there’s somebody who wants to get on Drag Race and wants to be mainstream, and that’s like their ticket to success and where they want to go, you see their intentions and it draws a certain kind of crowd and audience. And if you’re like a queer, trans drag artist who’s doing some... [Laughs] I’ll use an example from my sister, Szn. She wants to do a show called MitochondRihanna. She wants to have different drag performers be different parts of the cell, all performing Rihanna songs.

**Tuck**: Oh my god. Well, one, who gets to be the powerhouse of the cell? But, two, this is incredible. This is amazing.

**Taylor**: [Laughs] In concept, it is. It would be. So, like, that stuff makes sense to me, and I think that’s so great, but I know if that was pitched to Drag Race or to other purveyors of mainstream drag, they would just look at me up and down and be like, “So… you’re performing Beyoncé?” And it would just be like, that would be the interaction. So, I don’t know. I get so inspired by so many elements of queer performance art, and queer drag, the ballroom scene, which is still majority underground, thank God. [Both laugh] I mean, it’s definitely gotten more mainstream over the past like, two decades, but I can still actively go see a ballroom event or go to a ball through only getting information through texts, and I love that. And I want to see drag still be amazing, beautiful, and diverse, but not have to do it through a mainstream lens. I want to be a part of that, I feel like I am a part of that, and, yeah. I just hope that drag doesn’t completely become Ru Paul. That would be... ugh. I would stop. I wouldn’t stop, but I would just be very more vocal about not being pro-Drag Race per se, in all aspects.

**Tuck**: Yeah. So you’ve been in Atlanta for a long time, more than a decade, and so I was wondering earlier, I was like, “Oh, I wonder if they ever think about leaving.” And then I was listening to your song Big City off your new EP, which I want to say, it’s a very good EP and also every single music video is amazing and beautiful. And so I just want to recommend everyone that they listen to the music and also watch all the videos. But yeah, it made me be like “Oh, yes, clearly she has thought about it.” [Both laugh] So I’d love to hear how you’re feeling at this point about having been in this place for so long.

**Taylor**: Mmhm. I think for me, I started questioning if I should stay in Atlanta in 2018. Obviously, gentrification has been wreaking havoc on all cities, all major cities, but I feel like it really kicked up pace in 2018. And that was also just a really confusing, hard year for me. I put out my first real musical project, I did my first tour, but also my friends were being kicked out of housing because they couldn’t afford the new rates, and all these DIY venues that made me who I am were just disappearing. In August 2018, I lost four friends within three weeks, and it was just like, “I should just leave, move to a different city.” But I think, deep down, why I’m still here in Atlanta is because I love this city. As frustrating as it is, both infrastructure-wise and just how we are as a people, and how fucking exhausting queer community can be sometimes, I still love this city, and I’ve always seen myself as working towards a legacy. I kind of want to be that Atlanta queen. Like, when you come to Atlanta you think about, I don’t know… Killer Mike, T.I., Outkast, and then Taylor Alxndr.

Like, I love this city and it means so much to me. I bought a house here, so I’m tied here for some time. But that’s kind of what Big City, the song, was written about. It was watching the city around me change, even though I’m trying so hard to love it and still live here, but wondering if it’s like, “Am I impeding my own growth by staying here?” And it’s still a question that I don’t think I have the full answers to just yet. But I like it here, I’m going to be here for some time. I want to open my own venue and have that be there for community as well. I think what I’ve kind of decided is that Atlanta will always be my home base and my home city, where I’m rooted, but I’ll travel all the time and do things in other states and cities, and kind of be that kind of person. So when I put out my first album and I go on tour for that, that will be the moment that I get to see the rest of the country and potentially the world. But I think Atlanta is where I’m meant to be, and as frustrating as it is, I think it’s how it’s supposed to be, so.

**Tuck**: Mm. So, the way we always end the show is by asking: In your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**Taylor**: Aside from everybody being transformed into amorphous clouds of gender, I think the future when we’re considering gender and all other forms of identity.... I know we think we’re liberated and free to identify however we want right now, but like, I want in like 30, 40 years when there’s a whole new generation of trans and nonbinary kids, for lack of a better word, I want them to look at me as some kind of archaic old trans person who’s just like, “Back in my day we had trans folks and nonbinary folks, and we had these pronouns,” and they’ll just be on some new level of being trans. Like, everything they’re like, “What are you talking about?” I’ll be like dial-up to them. I would love to see that; I would love for gender expression and identification to just progress past our current generation’s wildest dreams, and hopefully for them to be more free and liberated and actually able to live fully autonomous lives. Whether it’s full body autonomy, identity autonomy, I just want the future to be actually free and liberated.

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

**Tuck**: That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. If you had a good time or learned something, please share this episode with folks in your community. You can find Taylor @TaylorAlxndr, that’s of course A-L-X-N-D-R, and at tayloralxndr.com, where among other things you can buy shirts that say “Trans people are hot.” I have one, I love it, it’s one of my favorite shirts. I cut the armpits super big, and, you know what? It makes me feel like a trans person who’s hot. Anyway, we are @gendereveal and at genderpodcast.com, where you can find transcripts of every episode and all sorts of other resources. We’ve also got a lot of new merch in the store through the end of the month, so take a look at all of those new designs before they’re gone at bit.ly/gendermerch. If you like what we do here at Gender Reveal, please consider supporting the show at patreon.com/gender. By signing up, you will automatically get access to our weekly newsletter, our bonus podcast feed, and all sorts of other stuff. This episode was produced and edited by Ozzy Llinas Goodman and by me, Tuck Woodstock. Our logo is by Ira M. Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Additional music this week by Blue Dot Sessions. We’ll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

**Tuck**: I don’t know if you’re an astrology gay, but are you an Aquarius?

**Taylor**: Yes. I’m an Aquarius sun.

**Tuck**: You are and you are.

**Taylor**: Yes. [Laughs]

**Tuck**: Yeah, yeah yeah. It just… comes out a lot in the, like, everything is also about social justice for the whole world, right? Like, you can’t just have a good time, it also has to be organizing. [Both laugh] I relate to that very deeply.

**Taylor**: I am an Aquarius sun, a Scorpio moon, and a Gemini rising.

**Tuck**: Oooo.

**Taylor**: So I’m a party on the outside, but it’s just like Mitski playing in my head at all times. So, constant sad girl.

**Tuck**: Yes, absolutely. [Taylor laughs]