[*theme music plays*]

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

[*theme music plays*]

**Molly:** Hi, friends! This week, Z Griffler is back to speed through listener questions with me, and I am very excited about that. But first, just a fun, chill reminder that you are the only way we spread the word about this show and you are the only way we fund this show. So with that in mind, thank you so so much to everyone who tweeted or posted or talked about the show this week, and thanks an extra time to everyone who joined our Patreon squad during our extra special bonus pledge time! There are a lot of you, and I am grateful for all of you, and I'm excited to send you stickers. Special shoutout this week to our new patron, Lee. Lee is a trans person who works in tech and uses that good good tech money to support other queer and trans people, and I think that's really rad. And also they have a dog named Jpeg, which is very good. If you want Gender Reveal stickers or just want to support the show, head to Patreon.com/gender. And with that, it's time for This Week In Gender.

[*music plays*]

**Molly:** This Week In Gender, rather than taking a deep dive into one specific topic, I thought I'd just give you a quick list of good news. Because, gosh, wow, what if we had, like, good news for once? A quick disclaimer though that these stories are from all around the world, and I'm not like super extremely thoroughly educated on any of them. And so if I mess anything up and it isn't actually good news, please tell me. But in the meantime, here's some probably good news!

**Molly:** Number one, [*ding* sound], Maine recently became the third state to allow gender neutral 'X' markers on their drivers' licenses and IDs. Good job, Maine!

**Molly:** Number two, [*ding* sound], a U.S. Appeals Court ruled against the Trump administration and upheld a court order that stalled a ban on transgender individuals serving in the military. So in other words, the court continued to block the trans military ban. Good job, court!

**Molly:** Number three, [*ding* sound], the southern Indian state of Kerala announced this month that it would require that two spots in every college class be held exclusively for trans students, creating what is essentially affirmative action for trans folks. Kerala has also created other inclusivity initiatives directed towards trans folks, such as providing government jobs, skill development trainings, scholarships, driving classes, and a twenty-four seven help line.

**Molly:** Number four, [*ding* sound], somewhere between four and thirteen trans individuals are running for political office in Pakistan's July twenty-fifth elections, which just seems very cool to me. Good job, four to thirteen folks in Pakistan!

**Molly:** Number five, [*ding* sound], Ireland is currently reviewing its policies regarding trans and non-binary children. Currently, children sixteen and younger are prohibited from acceessing legal gender transition services, but a new official report recommends that children under eighteen should be allowed to change their gender if they have consent from both parents. The report also recommends that Ireland officially recognize non-binary gender as a thing that exists. Cross your fingers that these recommendations actually get turned into law soon.

**Molly:** Number six, [*ding* sound], last but not least, Scarlett Johansson withdrew from her role as Tex Gill in the Rub and Tub film, which we talked about recently on This Week In Gender. This is great news. The not-so-great news is now Hollywood folks are talking about just cancelling the film entirely. Just hire a fucking trans person! How is this so hard? This has been This Week In Gender.

[*music plays*]

**Molly:** This week on Gender Reveal, I am excited to answer more listener questions with my friend, Z Griffler. Z is a film documentarian and editor, an advocate for asexuality visibility and education, and the editor of the Open Sanctuary Project, which is a free digital guide to creating and maintaining animal sanctuaries. They're my favorite person in the world, and I'm excited they're back to answer more listener questions!

[*music plays*]

**Molly:** Hi Z! Thanks for coming back to the show.

**Z:** Thanks for having me!

**Molly:** Are you ready to hear the first question about gender?

**Z:** Let's do gender questions.

**Molly:** Great! This is from Charlie. Charlie says: "I recently came out to my coworkers as non-binary and using they/them pronouns, which they have been super receptive to. We are a non-profit that brings in a lot of volunteers on a regular basis, and we always do an opening circle at volunteer orientations where folks can introduce themselves. I've started opening this by asking folks to share their name and pronouns. Since I've been open about being non-binary, my co-workers have been questioning how inclusive it is to request people to say their pronouns. I personally think providing a space to say pronouns *is* inclusive, but some are saying that it's kind of "PC," that not everyone knows what pronouns are, and some people don't even use pronouns so it might be hurtful to them. I feel like they're just making exuses, though, and pressuring me to not share my own pronouns by bringing this up. What are your thoughts on this? Is there a better way I can help create a welcoming space for folks to share their pronouns if they want to?"

**Z:** Well, I think that's a lot of garbage answers!

[*Molly laughs*]

**Z:** Um, first of all, if people don't know what pronouns are then they should just learn what pronouns are, because they're using them all the time. Hey, I just used a lot of pronouns – wow!

[*Molly laughs*]

**Z:** Yeah, that's terrible. I also work at a non-profit, and shockingly, we think it's totally cool to share pronouns. And it's actually very inclusive. If anything, I guess you could say it's a learning opportunity, so people understand what pronouns are and how they function in the language and how people can be more inclusive by sharing them and learning about people who use neutral pronouns. It's always good to normalize pronouns, regardless of which ones you use, because then it makes it easier for everybody. And if someone doesn't use pronouns, I mean I guess you can phrase the question in a pronoun go-around, "If you use pronouns, which pronouns do you use?" But I feel like people who are really specifically- who choose not to use pronouns, will just say that they prefer not to use pronouns. And I don't think they're gonna be offended, I think they're gonna be really excited that somebody asked them. As far as "political correctness" goes, how about just, like, being a nice person who isn't a jackass?

[*Molly laughs*]

**Molly:** Yeah. I mean, I agree with all of your thoughts. I would say that there are a couple of good faith arguments about whether pronoun go-arounds are always the best solution. I have personally felt uncomfortable in pronoun go-arounds when, for example, it was sixteen cis women in a row and then it got to me. Because then it felt like I was, just- the whole pronoun go-around was just a set up for me to be outted as the only one who wasn't like everyone else, you know?

[*both laugh*]

**Z:** [*in a "radio show detective" voice*] This was a sting operation!

**Molly:** And that's fine, but it was really hard, especially when I was first coming out. Like it made it really really scary. So there's space to talk about it. Like that's why I still think pronoun go-arounds are helpful, but there's space to talk about a nuanced discussion of certain cases in which it still might be intimidating to folks. But that said, like, I don't think your coworkers are engaging in that level of, like, nuanced and good faith argument. I think they're just making literally every excuse they can think of, because they're uncomfortable grappling with what I presume is their own cisness. I presume if they are not cis, they would be more comfy with this. I apologize if I'm making assumptions. But like Z says, something being "PC" is not a reason not to do it- that's like really really wild. If not everyone knows what pronouns are, you can teach them. And if some people don't use pronouns, they'll probably say "I don't use pronouns, I just use my name" and then you can do that. Also I think there are trans and non-binary people who don't use pronouns and just use their name and that's, like, super valid. I also think there's cis people who literally again don't understand what pronouns are, and they may think they don't use pronouns because they literally don't understand what they are, and that's another good opportunity for engagement, right?

**Z:** Yeah, I see literally zero downside to doing this, other than like maybe awful people feeling like they don't have a space to intentionally misgender people anymore?

**Molly:** Totally. I feel like your coworker is just trying to figure out an excuse to make sure that everyone is allowed to misgender you. And I don't like that!

**Z:** Me neither! [*reading a question from a listener*] "OK, I'm like so so close to be ready to come out as non-binary. Woot! But the first time I actually started talking with someone about how I'm feeling about my gender and how I'm ready to identify as a non-binary woman, they were like 'that doesn't make sense' and 'how can you identify as a non-binary woman? Isn't that an oxymoron?' I know that it's possible, because hello folks, it's me! But what's the best way to talk about this when people don't totally understand? Help, gender detectives!"

**Molly:** I think that this, again, comes down to good faith versus bad faith. And without hearing the tone and context of what your friend said, or what this person said, it's really hard to know. And so if this person you were speaking to is really genuinely interested in educating themselves and putting in the work, then might create a toolkit of resources. Like, maybe you could recommend that Riley J. Dennis video, because Riley J. Dennis made an entire video about what non-binary women are, what it means. Or you could recommend the podcast that we made with Riley. If they're looking for more of an elevator pitch version of what non-binary woman means, maybe you could just have a sentence or two prepared in your mind, like "non-binary just means that I do not identify as a woman all of the time, but I do identify as a woman some of the time, and that's why I use both words" or maybe like, "If you think of gender on a number line from one to five, I'm a two. Or, I oscillate from one to two, or one to three, or whatever,"and so you have like a quick easy explanation. But if this person you're talking to is more sarcastic, and was like "isn't that an oxymoron?" then I think that they're not trying to learn, they're just trying to make you feel shitty and bad about your identity. And maybe you need some space from them until they figure out how to be more supportive. Because, unfortunately, there are a lot of people who are going to be really shitty about your gender, and I hate that, and I wish I could protect us all from that but I can't. So at that point it's sort of just about, like, *not* getting in arguments with every single person, and instead just like picking your battles and trying to surround yourself with as much people who do accept you as a non-binary person as possible. Z, what are your thoughts?

**Z:** Yeah, exactly those thoughts. Obviously gender is a super duper individual thing, and everyone is going to have their own conception of what that means to them. And being a non-binary woman is super duper duper valid, as a number people who we've had on the podcast identify as non-binary women. And, finally, being a gender detective is great, but nobody should ever be the gender police!

**Molly:** Hell yeah! [*reading a question from a listener*] "Hello! Thank you guys for a wonderful and very enlightening podcast. I love listening, but I'm afraid I'm very behind on episodes, because I have a lot of trouble processing information via audio only. I understand that a new up-and-coming podcast almost certainly doesn't have the cash for something like written transcripts for every episode. But that leads me to my question: what, if any, blog sites et cetera would you recommend that are writing good posts about non-binary issues, trans issues, or gender generally?" And that's from Michael Hughes, they/them pronouns.

**Z:** Well, I know that the Gender Reveal Twitter account shares some really great articles from time to time, and generallyjust has quality content. Shout out to the Gender Reveal Twitter account!

**Molly:** Thank you.

**Z:** I don't know a ton of like websites that are one hundred percent geared towards non-binary transgender issues like all the time. Like there's a few. For me personally, I've found some of the best discussion and some of the most nuanced discussion of gender, surprisingly, on some of the gender subreddits, such as r/agender, r/nonbinary, r/genderqueer, r/TransyTalk. These are all subreddits. And, yes, reddit can be a toxic cesspool sometimes, but sometimes the community is good too. So.

**Molly:** Yeah. So, first of all, we don't have a ton of money but we do have enough Patreon money that I'm trying really hard to get transcriptions of every episode and I think we can just barely eke it out if we use all of our Patreon money on that. And so at this point, it's more like just looking for folks who are willing to transcribe, than it is the money. Like, I will just make the money happen because I think that it's really important that resources exist. And to be honest, I haven't found a lot of, like you said, like consistent resources. Like there are a lot of sites like My Kid is Gay or Autostraddle who will dabble in writing about gender, and- I shouldn't say dabble. Like, they do a lot of good work around gender, but it's not just about gender. There's a lot of other stuff going on there too. I don't know of a lot of sites that are just, like, filled with really good resources. And I've looked, like, a few different times. And so if other folks who listen to the podcast do have resources, I would really love for them to send in any resources they have, because I do get a lot of questions about that and I don't have a lot of answers right now. But I am working on transcripts, I'm trying. If anyone would like to join the transcription team, hit me up!

**Z:** [*reading a question from a listener*] "I'm twenty-two, and up until recently I've come to really identify as a cis gay guy. Recently I've felt a disconnect between myself and the idea of masculinity or maleness. I still prefer male pronouns. I haven't really changed my presentation beyond my vaguely 'neutral,' whatever that means, wardrobe I've always worn. But I just have a difficult time seeing myself in terms of binary identity. Thing is, I'm studying history, and as I explore my identity, I find myself becoming increasingly interested in the histories of non-binary individuals and the gender binary in the United States, to the point where this has become a major attribute of my writing, research, and proposed thesis. As I try to figure out what the hell is going on with my identity, I can't help but feel gross, like I'm another cis white dude trying to tell the stories of trans and non-binary folks. I genuinely want to translate my own struggle with identity into meaningful work through academia and public history. Am I treading into dangerous territory here? Do you have any advice to keep me from becoming the Jesse Singal of my field?"

**Molly:** I love that this person is concerned about being Jesse Singal. It reminds me of- I'm a white-passing, unenrolled mixed Indigenous person, and I spend so much time worrying that I'm literally Rachel Dolezal, which is not real. But it's easy to be worried about that. But to this question-asker, I would say, like, I don't think you have to worry about being another cis white dude or another Jesse Singal, because you don't sound like a cis dude from the way that you're describing yourself. It sounds like you're someone on a gender journey, and you're using the research in your thesis as a tool on that gender journey. And that's like actually rad as hell! Like I think that's a really really cool and important thing that you're doing! And as long as you honor the voices of the folks that you're researching, instead of talking over them or projecting your own experiences and conclusions onto them, I think that you'll be doing really great work and really useful work. And if you're worried that maybe because you're new to your gender journey that you may not catch something that may be hurtful to somebody else, you could always have- I mean, hopefully, I don't know if this is possible. But hopefully you can have another trans or non-binary person to read the stuff you're working on and flag anything that seems concerning to them. I know that when I've been writing articles about non-binary people for a magazine, even though I identify as trans and non-binary, I still had other trans and non-binary people outside of the magazine glance at it and let me know if there was anything that seemed particularly concerning to them. Or, if I had a specific question, I'd say like "does it seem problematic if I say this?" That's my thought! Z?

**Z:** Yeah, you covered everything I wanted to say. I just wanted to cover a few things. One, if you're concerned about becoming Jesse Singal, you're probably not going to be.

**Molly:** Totally.

**Z:** It's a good first step, it's kind of like the "Worried you're a sociopath?" thing.

**Molly:** Yeah!

**Z:** I was just going to say, and I feel like you covered this Molly, but: don't take credit for other people's work. And, listen to the stories of other non-binary and trans folks. Try to use your platform to elevate more marginalized voices. And don't make blanket assumptions, and don't claim that your experience is the sole authority. And I think you'll be good!

**Molly:** Yeah, totally. I think you'll be good. I think your head's in the right place. Oooh, I want to ask you this one, because I don't know what the answer is. [*reading a question from a listener*] "Sports are traditionally for male and female categories. Do you think it's reasonable to expect a category in the future for non-binary sports, especially in sports traditionally for men or women?"

**Z:** Well, there *are* non-binary athletes. Um, and so far it has been all over the map in terms of how non-binary athletes get to compete and with whom they compete. I do know that Lauren Lubin is a spectacular non-binary athlete advocate, and they are doing excellent work for non-binary representation in sports. I think they're even doing some work as far as how the Olympics can incorporate non-binary athletes. I don't necessarily know enough about this specifically to like make a blanket statement about this. I feel like, in a way, we need to rethink the binary nature of sports categories like in the first place, before we go much further with it. But it's definitely a squishy one. And people like to say really terrible things about it. But, yeah, look up Lauren Lubin's work, because they are working on this. There's like a Mashable article with them. Like, they're trying. They're trying to figure it out.

**Molly:** It's fuckin' hard. I don't wanna comment on it. I'm going to move on. Ask me about butches!

**Z:** [*reading a question from a listener*] "What does the term butch mean? What gender or gender identities is it used for?"

**Molly:** All right. My understanding is, like, as femme was originally introduced to describe feminine of center queer women, butch was originally introduced to describe masculine of center queer women. And as our Western understanding of gender has evolved to include trans and non-binary people, certain trans/non-binary folks have adopted that term as well. So, generally speaking, today butch is used to describe someone who is masculine of center but doesn't necessarily identify as a man. What do you think?

**Z:** Yeah, that about covers it. It's like less of a thing in trans and non-binary spaces for butch to be adopted as a full-on gender identity, like in the same way that, like, as we discussed on the previous Q&A, how femme has kind of been co-opted into a gender identity. So I think you definitely nailed it.

**Molly:** I know that seems like the end, but we just got DM'd one more question. Are you ready?

**Z:** Let's do it.

**Molly:** [*reading a question from a listener*] "Hi, I'm a big fan of this podcast. I don't know if you get this question a lot, but do you have any advice on how to come out as non-binary to family and friends, specifically if you're planning on telling them 1-on-1 instead of in an email or on facebook?" I will say, I have very limited experience with this, because as I have told people many times, I didn't really come out to people. What I did was ask my friends in my group chat if I could still be in the group chat if I wasn't a woman. And then they said "What? Do you want us to use different pronouns for you?" and I said, "Maybe." And then I did that for a while. And then I just sort of started passive-aggressively posting in larger and larger circles on the internet until eventually everyone was just like "Is there something you need to tell us?" And I'm like "Muhhh.."

**Z:** That's a great way to do it.

**Molly:** I mean, the thing is, I've said this before- I'm indignant on all of coming out culture. I don't think that everyone should be assumed cis and straight until they specifically take the effort to tell you personally otherwise. And so that's just my personal, stubborn Capricorn of resistance, and it makes no sense! So I have very little advice because I avoided it. Do you have advice, Z?

**Z:** As an overly-placating Libra, I am very bad about coming out and asserting my gender. I will say that I kind of did it in more of a "threw myself into the deep end" sort of way where I wrote a Facebook note and I shared it with two people. And then I said, fuck it, I'm going to share it with everybody I know! And that's kind of how it happened. I will say that it was mostly OK, but I realized that a lot of people didn't know what I was going for. So I've had to like, individually re-come-out a few times. And also, like, because everyone assumes everyone is cis, you kind of have to come out all the time forever whenever you feel safe and you have the energy to do it and you feel the need to assert yourself. So it's like one of those things that- I will say that on an individual basis, I think it depends on if you feel like you have the energy, if you feel like you're safe to do so, if you feel like you've got- you know, if it's worth doing? Because I don't know if it's always worth coming out to everybody, because some people are just toxic and terrible. I think just, um, for people that you really trust and you feel like you're really seen by, it shouldn't be too bad. I guess start with seeing where they're at with like understanding the nuance of gender- I think that's like a good starting place, because if you just like- I don't know. Everyone has a different way, though. Because like, I was about to say like, you know, start there and work your way up. But other people are like, this is me, you figure it out. And that's totally valid too. I think it's such an individual thing, and that's why there's no, like, coming out handbook.

**Molly:** Yeah. I mean, do what feels good to you. I just remembered that I also came out in a popular regional magazine, which is still so funny to me!

**Z:** It was very good.

**Molly:** It was just so absurd! It was like, I came out on Facebook and then in a magazine, and I'm like "that seems good." I do have one piece that's basically what you're saying, but I think that the best way to do it- which is what I did, and what you did, Z- is to come out to people who you know will support you and practice and then move out slowly from there. Like you said. And so, find another non-binary friend or a trans friend or a queer friend or just someone who loves you really a lot and is chill and supportive. And come out to them, and then practice from there. Honestly I think sometimes it's easier to come out to random people than to come out to people who are close to me, because I get really scared about losing those relationships, whereas random strangers it's like "Who cares?". So like literally anyone you can find, practice coming out to. It gets easier the more and more you do it. And like Z said, and like Matt Lubchansky said on an episode a few weeks ago, you just have to do it over and over again until you die- so get going!

[*Z laughs*]

**Z:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Z, thank you so much for answering all these questions. I feel like it was a speed round, and I feel like we nailed it!

**Z:** I feel really good about this one. So, bring on the hate DMs!

[*both laugh*]

**Molly:** No! Only to Z. Z what's your handle?

[*Molly laughs*]

**Z:** Mail in the hate DMs to @stillnotzak, one word, still not zak. Because my name is not Zak, it's Z.

**Molly:** Oh yeah, can we all say congratulations to Z for legally changing their name? I'm just really happy for them.

**Z:** Oh my gosh, it is like right now in a little tiny spot in a newspaper, just being like "hey is it cool if Z changes their name?"And I just have to wait for that. And then I just have to tell everybody until I die that I changed my name, and it's gonna be great.

**Molly:** The most important fact is that you got a legal document on lavendar paper in Comic Sans.

**Z:** I felt really affirmed by that!

[*both laugh*]

**Molly:** They're like, "We see you, Z!" All right. We're gonna go. If anybody else has gender questions, you can reach us at gendereveal@gmail.com , which is Gender Reveal with one "r," you can find us on Twitter and there's also an anonymous Google form in the show notes, which is where most of these questions came from. Yeah, I hope that we helped someone, somewhere!

**Z:** I hope so too!

**Both:** Bye!

[*music plays*]

**Molly:** That's gonna do it for this week's show. As we just mentioned, you're always welcome to send us your questions and comments and thoughts and feelings and resources via email or Twitter or the anonymous Google form in the show notes. We'd super super super love it if you'd recommend this show to a friend, or to all of your friends, or if you left us a five star review on iTunes, or if you made a little pledge at Patreon.com/gender. All of those things are so helpful to us, and it really means so much!

[*music plays*]

**Molly:** Our show today was edited by me, Molly Woodstock. Our logo is by the talented Michelle Leigh, and our theme song is by the legendary Breakmaster Cylinder. We'll be back next week with more feelings about gender!

[*music plays*]