[*Gender Reveal* theme music starts]

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

[*Gender Reveal* theme music ends]

**Molly:** Hey everyone! Happy pride, happy solstice, I hope everyone's hanging in there. I have a great show for you today, but before we get started, I need to remind you that, as always, this show is sponsored by our incredible Patreon donors. We have 12 new donors this month. Thank you all so*,* so much. We've got a lot of $5 donors. We've also got a lot of $1 donors. And hey, everyone donating a dollar a month—I see you, I appreciate you, you're great. Special thanks this week to Jackie, who just a second ago donated $17. I don't know the significance of that number but I love it! It's so many dollars. Thanks so much, Jackie. If you'd like to start supporting the show, you can do so at Patreon.com/gender.

Alright. This Week in Gender, we've got a doozy for you. So let's dive in.

[This Week in Gender theme music plays]

This Week in Gender, we're talking about that cover story on the new issue of *The Atlantic*. The headline is, quote, "Your child says she's trans. She wants hormones and surgery. She's 13." Alright, already we've got a couple of problems, right? Because this article is entirely about children who were assigned female at birth and transitioning to be masculine-of-center, and so, already, this headline is doubting this child, likely misgendering the child, and there are even more issues and we'll get to them soon.

This article was written by Jesse Singal, a cisgender journalist who's well-known in the trans community for writing articles that concern-troll trans youth. Concern-trolling is the practice of using health concerns as an excuse to bully or critique someone. Fat folks experience this constantly. Random strangers will use health as an excuse to criticize their bodies and tell them that they have to lose weight. Jesse and many other folks use concern-trolling as a way to question trans kids identities and keep them from accessing transition-related services.

Specifically, Jesse claims that while some kids are "legitimately trans," other kids experience gender dysphoria that's just caused by depression, anxiety, trauma, social contagion, internalized misogyny, or the discomforts of puberty. He claims that if these other problems are addressed and treated, the gender dysphoria will just go away sometimes. He doesn't really cite his sources on this, and for all we know he just made it up because it felt right.

The whole premise of the article, which is 43 pages when I printed it out, is that sometimes folks assigned female at birth think they're trans due to all of the reasons I just listed. And they get on testosterone and they get top surgery, and then a few years down the line, they detransition, and identify as women. And it is implied that this is a terrible, terrible thing, because otherwise, why write 43 pages on it?

Here's the truth: children do not transition physically. They transition socially, which means that they might dress differently, cut their hair differently, or use different names and pronouns. When trans kids get close to puberty, they might be put on puberty blockers, which are a fully reversible medication that gives kids and their families and doctors more time to assess the situation. Because once your voice drops or your Adam's apple grows in or your breasts develop, you can't easily undo that. So the easiest thing to do is to delay it with puberty blockers.

I want to remind you that the headline of this story is, "Your child says she's trans. She wants hormones and surgery. She's 13." The headline is implying to anyone who glances at the magazine that a 13 year old child might be able to get on T and get top surgery. That doesn't happen! I've literally never heard of it happening to someone that young. Even puberty blockers are very expensive and difficult to access. It's very common that a kid will be gate kept out of transition resources until it's too late and their body has been irreversibly changed by puberty, but it's very unlikely that kids end up on puberty blockers when they quote unquote "don't need them."

Instead of writing about how cool puberty blockers are, Jesse writes about several older teens, all assigned female at birth, who have expressed interest in top surgery and testosterone. Some of them aren't even able to access treatment and eventually go back to identifying as female. Jesse presents this as a case of a troubled teen getting confused about their gender identity. But what he doesn't mention is that this person's parent is an open member of anti-trans organizations and openly lies to their kids to deny them access to resources, so maybe that's why the kid gave up on transitioning right now? I mean, there's no way to know, but like, it seems like maybe that could be a reason!

Some of the other kids in the article get T and top surgery and are now living as men. Some other people in the article get T and top surgery, live as men for a while, and eventually detransition and identify as woman. Jesse seems really concerned about figuring out how we can provide transition related care to kids who are "really trans," AKA the ones still living as men, while keeping transition services away from kids who just "think they're trans," such as the ones who detransition.

Here's the thing that the article misses. If you think you're trans, and you say you're trans, then you're trans! There are no objective tests that you can administer to someone else to determine whether they are "really trans," because here's the thing, gender is made up! We're all just making it up together as we go along. So you don't have any basis to decide what gender anyone is! And in reality, gatekeeping doesn't keep out the confused cis kids while letting in the real trans kids. What it does is letting kids from supportive communities with access to wealth and health care while kicking out kids from unsupportive communities or kids who can't afford to pay for care.

So. What about the kids who detransition? Well, first of all, detransitioning is rare. Secondly, folks who detransition often do so because they live in transphobic and unsupportive communities where it is miserable and dangerous to be trans. Most of these folks will retransition at some point when it feels safer to do so. Thirdly, some folks who transition from male to female or female to male will end up transitioning again and identifying as nonbinary. They try one binary gender, doesn't feel right, try the other one out, doesn't feel right, and they end up somewhere in the middle. By the way, the word nonbinary is used twice in this entire 12,000 word article, which is a wild oversight considering how often this happens. Lastly, there are people who are assigned female, go on T, get top surgery, and end up detransitioning and identifying as women, but that doesn't mean that they were *wrong* about their gender before, or that they weren't really trans when they got surgery,

Gender is fluid. It changes all the time. Many people who detransition don't regret transitioning in the first place because it was just a part of their gender journey. Sometimes you can't know if hormones will make you feel more or less dysphoric until you start them. Sometimes you think top surgery will fix all of your problems, and then it doesn't. Sometimes, some part of your transition will feel really good for a while and then maybe your gender feelings shift and they don't feel good anymore. And sometimes, often, *most of the time*, surgeries and hormones are lifesaving tools for trans people that they never regret.

So Jesse, instead of pitting trans kids against detransitioned kids on the quest for who's right and who's wrong and who deserves service and who doesn't, maybe you could just let everyone have their own fucking gender journey.

I have so much more to say, but it's time to get to the interview. If you have questions about anything I just talked about, you feel like I left anything out or got anything wrong, you can find me on Twitter or email me at gendereveal@gmail.com. This has been, This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender theme music plays]

[Transition music plays]

**Molly:** Demian DinéYazhi´ is a Portland-based Indigenous Diné transdisciplinary artist. Their work is routed in radical Indigenous queer feminist ideology, landscape representative, memory, HIV/AIDs related art and activism, gender, identity, sexuality, Indigenous survivance, and decolonization. Demian is the founder and director of the artist and activist initiative RISE as well as the co-creative director of *Locus*, a post-queer nation zine. Demian currently has work in the exhibit *Between the Waters* at the Whitney Museum of Art.

[Transition music ends]

**Molly:** The question that we always start with is in terms of gender, how do you identify?

**Demian:** Uh, They/them. I don't know. I just had a conversation with my friend in New York about this. Because I want to disrupt the way the gender binary works. As an Indigenous person I also realize there are different types of gender systems that existed within my tribe. But then knowing that there's still this cultural disconnect between myself and my tribe just because I don't live there, don't reside there. When I started to become more comfortable with my queerness and my gender identify, I did a lot of that work here in Portland. I became more comfortable and more confident being in Portland. And so the way I've come to identify, both with my sexuality and gender, it has all been through this western construct.

There's a term within Indigenous communities known as two-spirit, and I don't personally identify as two-spirit. For my tribe, there are different gender systems and I don't feel confident either, in identifying as [stumbling over words] someone who existed within those societies. I think a lot of that is being reclaimed, restored, a lot of people in the community are trying to bring it back in. But I don't do enough work there to feel really confident navigating those spaces. But I do realize that within western society, life outside the reservation, even on the reservation, the way that Indigenous cultures have had to assimilate to Western culture and Western civilization — I still feel like, I benefit largely from cis male privilege.

And my main interaction or disruption is trying to think outside the way gender works for myself. Yeah. I don't want to say something naïve like it's not something I think about, because it. On a daily basis, it's in the clothes that I wear, it's everywhere in the things that I do or the worlds that I surround myself in.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Demian:** You know, I grew up in a household with four older girls and I was always around this very feminine energy. So coming in to my sexuality as I'm going through fifth grade and into middle school and high school, I don't know, it felt like the masculinity that was inherent in some of the qualities in some of the students at school, I felt like some of that was really revolting and disgusting and aggressive in ways that I both recognized in myself but also that I didn't really feel comfortable with.

**Molly:** Yeah. Well, I wanted to ask you—so you have a tote bag in your Etsy shop right now that says, "Abandon the concept of gender identity. Abandon the concept of sexual orientation. Abandon the concept of fear. Abandon the concept of your country." Do you feel like you've personally abandoned the concepts of gender identity and sexual orientation?

**Demian:** I mean, that's something that I'm still battling with. I don't feel like I personally have. I don't know if anyone in my generation.... I mean, this is difficult. I think there are certain people who have existed since the dawn of civilization who are tapped into, like, some other cosmic magical shit, and it's amazing and it's brilliant. And it pops up over and over again throughout history, and it will continue to pop up throughout history. But I think there's a large number of people who, because of the world that has been pre-constructed prior to our birth, this is all we know. As much as we fight against whatever powers that are, whatever social constructs that existed or are continually being built, I think it's truly hard for any of us to completely abandon something, to completely let go of it, to completely disregard it. You'd had to be almost like an amnesiac and be reborn into a different world.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Demian:** But I—that tote bag and a lot of my work is more about—I think of words sometimes as little rituals or something. When you say something out loud or when you put something out into the world, it creates the opportunity for a space to exist in the future. So with that tote bag and some of the other work I've created, it's more about helping to construct a world that will exist in like 20 generations down the line if we're lucky enough to still be alive and around here, you know?

**Molly:** Yeah

**Demian:** And so while I can fight for a decolonial approach to sex, love, relationships, gender identity, nation states and settler colonialism, capitalism, or any of this shit, I won't actually in this lifetime probably be able to realize what that feels like.

**Molly:** Yeah. Why does that feel like—well, specifically gender and sexuality, because you just said a lot of things—why does that feel like it is something that is worth moving towards and worth fighting for? What would the value be in moving towards that?

**Demian:** Well, the settler colonial state is really fucked up. Prior to colonization, I feel like numerous Indigenous tribes had numerous types of sexualities and gender identities that just don't exist anymore. And so with the onslaught of European invasion and the genocide of Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas is the introduction of transphobia, homophobia. Even descendants of European invasion feel and know that there is this huge separation and disconnect from their ancestries and actually being an American citizen. That's really fucking deep. So any ties that people have to this land is going to also include aggression and really fucked up apocalyptic scenarios.

And that's gotta suck! It's gotta suck to be like, "Oh fuck, I know my ancestors did wrong, I know we fucked up and there's no place else for me to go back to. This is all I know. This is also the world that I was born into. And it's also fucked up, but I'm going defend my right to also be here. And I'm going to tell myself it's totally fucking cool for me to have these really fucked up views." You know? "And I'm not going to deal with that shit in my lifetime because my parents didn't deal with it and none of us are taking accountability for it."

I know that European civilizations have had a really fucked up history with homosexuality and gender identity. So much homophobia, so much transphobia, so much of this disdain for women and this fear of the female is, I think, also tied to the genocide of Indigenous people.

**Molly:** That's something that I wanted to ask you about, because we had another Diné guest who was talking about growing up in a matriarchy and living in a society that has four human genders and a bunch of other genders and I've heard you say that you felt like going back to the rez you feel homophobia, queerphobia, so I'm wondering, do you feel like that's all learned from Western society?

**Demian:** Oh yeah.

**Molly:** So, it sounds like a battle. It sounds like a battle that's going on in the minds of that whole community, of the ancestral traditions that are really dope and then all the western stuff. Where do you think folks are at right now?

**Demian:** I think it's almost the same thing as Middle America.

**Molly:** Damn.

**Demian:** It's this entire generation — there's a few really kickass elders in the community who are like, this is the way it's supposed to be, this is cool, we should not forget our traditions. But then again, the people who are running the show on the reservation, the council members and delegates and the president and whatnot, they vote to outlaw gay marriage. And while I'm against the institution of marriage in general, especially gay marriage, I still think that that says a lot.

**Molly:** Yeah, it's not a good sign. [laughs]

**Demian:** No, it's a horrible sign! It's so fucked up! And I can't speak for all reservations, I can only speak for the Diné, but there was a point where there was a female candidate for the president of the Navajo nation. And so many people on the reservation were not happy with a female running for president. Again, this fear of the female, this learned rule of patriarchy really kept her from advancing or becoming the president of the Navajo nation. And so within the Navajo reservation during this time, they had gone back to our creation stories and they had said, "Oh well, remember this time when women led? And all this societal mayhem ensued? And there was a separation between the men and the women. Remember when that happened? And we decided that from that point on we decided there wouldn't be female leaders" or something like that. It was weird fuckin’ shit.

And so they were trying to use that and a tornado had touched down outside of one of the communities outside of the reservation and so they used that as a sign that the holy people were not happy with a female leader, because a tornado doesn't really ever touch down on the reservation. Long story short, it kept her from advancing into that position. Her entire campaign pretty much fell apart. Well, it didn't fall apart; she didn't have as much support as she needed.

But it's interesting that at the same time as they're referencing these creation stories and these traditions, they're also leaving out the fact that Indigenous people or Indigenous Diné people had different types of gender systems and sexualities. They're willing to leave that part out. They're willing to reconstruct whatever narrative they want in order to make sure men and patriarchy rules over the land, in much the same way that the colonizers did on to them. I feel like these things are hardcore married to each other. It is a consequence of colonization. It is a consequence of assimilation and survivability, which is really fucked up. But what do you do when other tribes in the area are getting wiped out and you're on the brink of getting wiped out?

**Molly:** I feel like we should talk about RISE. You want to talk about what RISE is and also the fellowships you're putting on?

**Demian:** So RISE stands for Radical Indigenous Survivance and Empowerment. It started off around 2010. I started to have ideas about what a community space could look like in Portland that helped Indigenous people find support and education about — at the time, it was, I was looking for my own space to heal from this cultural disconnect. I was both within my own tribe and my own self, my own individuality, but mostly because I live so far away from the reservation. It's a 23-hour drive in order for me to get back to the rez. I'm feeling this huge, vast cultural disconnect between myself and my rez.

I wanted a space where I could have conversations with other Indigenous people, either from my tribe or elsewhere. I wanted a space where you could learn more of this Indigenous retelling of history and this reconnection to who we are as individual tribes and individual people. Not this western anthropological perspective, an actual hardcore space where Indigenous people were leading the conversations.

I didn't really know how to do that! I was in undergrad. This idea — initially it was radical Indigenous support and education. And so the first thing that I had done was construct this labyrinth inside of PNCA and it was this retelling of a Native North American timeline. So as you entered it, I made these porcelain rocks with text on them and then I had taken all these rocks from the Columbia River Gorge, Rooster Rock, and put them in the space. Some of that text was like, this prehistory, prior to colonization, and then it jumped right into European contact, and then it listed some treaties and some legislation and some chiefs and some women. It creates space for Indigenous people, essentially. And then as you get closer to the center, the rocks aren't—I didn't fire them. There's no text on them. So it's pushing toward the future.

Anyway, that was one of the first projects that RISE did. After that, RISE curated a show, *Bury My Art at Wounded Knee* that brought together all these emerging and established artists at PNCA as a way to call out PNCA for the lack of any sort of Indigenous art history or even holding space within their art gallery. No shows at PNCA the entire time that I had been there were dedicated to Indigenous artists. That was very successful.

After that, after getting a little bit of traction, I realize that RISE was something that need to continue going on. At the very beginning, it was about creating a community space. Then it evolved into this idea of an imagined collective that would just create all this politically motivated artwork. It would just throw it out there. Within five or ten years I would look back and see if any of that had been archived or how it had been discussed. And then after that, RISE moved into the idea of having a collective or an initiative. So right now, where RISE stands, it's more of an initiative. I think of it more as a collective in terms of, a collective experience of Indigenous people. So whenever I make a poster or engage with other artists or initiate any sort of project, it is also taking into account the other labor and research that other Indigenous artists have done in order to get us along to where we are right now.

So RISE right now is an initiative. We put out free posters that are available on our website, burymyart.tumblr.com. We also put out a zine every year called *Survivance Zine* and we also curate events. But like I said, RISE is more of an initiative, so whenever I have an opportunity to do something, I usually try to work with other Indigenous artists. So in a way, doing that means that RISE is always evolving and transforming? But it still maintains some of the aesthetics and overall missions that are central to RISE's... I don't know... drive, essentially; which is to amplify and empower Indigenous communities. And through our engagement, through different curatorial efforts, different events, I've just noticed that RISE has been very successful in creating space for Indigenous, queer, trans, two-spirit, gender-nonconforming and gradient and matriarchal feminist voices. And that leads into the fellowship that you were talking about.

So I had personally applied for other fellowships that are geared more for Indigenous Native artists and are hosted by Indigenous organizations. And I've also been looking at the way different shows that supposedly address contemporary Indigenous art and cultures, a lot of the time leave out Indigenous queer, trans, gender-gradient, nonconforming voices. And I feel like that is doing an entire disservice to who we are as a community and as a people. And also is not honoring the way our cultures function traditionally. So I was really annoyed at some of the opportunities that I had gotten turned down on personally, and had conversations with some of the institutions and organizations that had hosted them.

And though talking with them, a lot of the times it was like, "Well, we know we're not doing enough and we're sorry for that, but we're still not going to continue to do enough." It's like, they can apologize, but an apology isn't anything without an action. And then the other part of it was being like, "Maybe you could share these opportunities with your community."

And I was like, "No. That is free labor. You're basically asking me to do labor for you. And instead of giving me the opportunity that you're organization offers or your institution offers, you want me to hand everything over to you." My response at that point was wanting to be more reactionary, was wanting to put out a large call-out to these institutions but I figured, you know, doing that also wasn't providing the community any support. What comes from that if you don't have another option?

And so at that point, through a lot of the success that RISE has had selling T-shirts, selling tote bags, working inside of institutions (last year we worked with Converge 45), I felt like RISE has institutional support. It has enough of a community and people who are willing to donate and step up and help RISE do what it needs to do. And so at that point I figured, it's important to call out these spaces but it's also important to provide an opportunity for other Indigenous artists. I know that I'm not the only Indigenous queer artist out there who's gotten turned down for an opportunity. And then seeing the list of names that have gone up afterward and realizing that there's only two potentially queer artists and the rest of them are straight cisgender artists. So I felt at that point it was important for RISE to begin trying to build some sort of community. That's how the RISE fellowship was born.

While it may not be a lot or enough, I feel like it still had the potential to help out a young and emerging artist who lives in the middle of nowhere on a reservation or an elder in the community who never had the opportunity to tell their story. It provides them with support that they may not potentially have in order to create whatever work that they need to. Or pay rent or pay an electric bill or pay any of this shit, anything that helps them sustain themselves and makes it easier for them to survive as an artist or as a poet. But there's just shit.

Yeah, when I first put that call out, within three days, I just sat down, opened up the email, and there was like 20 responses. And it was like, holy fuck! How is it that like, these native art organizations or institutions feel like they're so tapped out of any conversation? They're just not fucking trying hard enough.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Demian:** I'm just a single fucking person sitting on my computer in my living room and writing out the application and putting it out. That feels really great. And I feel like a lot of this has to do with like, the fact that Indigenous communities and particularly queer communities, while they can sometimes really suck and be patriarchal or conservative or weird and jealous and what have you, I always feel like I'm held. I always feel like if I need a home or I need a place to rest or heal or become empowered again, I can always come back to those communities.

**Molly:** You make a shirt that says "Radical Queer Indigenous Feminism" and then I have one, and then I sort of don't wear it because I get nervous because Radical Feminism, the first and last word, is also another word used for trans-exclusionary feminism—

[Demian laughs]

**Molly:** —which is opposite of what you're trying to do, so can you talk about what Radical Queer Indigenous Feminism means to you?

**Demian:** I think it's about the convergence between different communities, almost like a delta, coming together and flowing freely toward a larger body of a thing, or water. And so Radical Queer Indigenous Feminism, I totally see what you mean about the radical feminism thing. But you know, okay, you know how I don't identify as two-spirit, I do identify as Indigenous queer?

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Demian:** A lot of the times I see people will post queer Indigenous artist. I think it's very important for me to be like, first and foremost, I'm an Indigenous person. That is who I am. Secondary, I'm a queer person. But like, who I am as a person will always be influenced by my indigeneity. The way I see the world, the way I *navigate* the world. Which doesn't completely tie into the term Radical Indigenous Queer Feminist.

I was interested in creating a space to have conversations about radical politics, subversive politics, politics that are about deconstructing sexuality, deconstructing capitalism, heteropatriarchy, or even decolonizing it. I use that term radical as a way to be all-encompassing of these—I guess just of radical politics. And radical practices, radical aesthetics. So being subversive. Being transgressive, high jacking, stealing shit. A lot of the work that RISE makes is just pulling these posters off the internet that for the most part, the majority of the time, some white dude had taken back in the day. And so it's more about stealing this shit, trespassing almost, and giving it back to Indigenous people for free. So that's how I think of the term radical.

And so everything that follows after, it's just Indigenous queer feminist. So I feel like, again, the way that I see the world, the way that I navigate spaces is always through this Indigenous lens and perspective that hasn't hardcore influenced my queer practices, but I guess I'm more familiar with queer sexuality than I am with how sexuality functions within my own tribe. And I feel like I can just fuck with it. I feel so much more comfortable fucking with queer subcultures than I do fucking with my own traditions and whatnot. And I think it's a safe space for that. I think that's what it's there for. I think we can build so many fucking awesome spaces for the future within that. And then, then the term feminist, that's a really hard one. I always felt, I fucking listen to Bikini Kill when I grew up

[Molly laughs]

**Demian:** And Sleater-Kinney and Bratmobile and Liz Phair. It was also about creating space but has an actual riot girl come out and made a land acknowledgement before a concert or anything? I don't think so. Which is really telling of where the politics actually are. Within Le Tigre's “Hot Topic” song, they don't mention any Indigenous artists or Indigenous women. So, I don't know. I also recognize early Indigenous societies were standing up against patriarchy in these really awesome ways. There's a lot of discussion within Indigenous feminist communities about these early impacts that the Iroquois women had on the first or second wavers of feminists in the United States, being like "well, hold up, everything that y'all are fighting for, we had prior to colonization."

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Demian:** "Everything that y'all are striving for existed here." So there are also conversations about how white women had seen the way women were revered within Indigenous cultures and how that helped to influence some of the feminist movements in the United States. And so, I think it's complicated to think of it within an Indigenous perspective because of that. But I think it's still totally necessary as a social movement. And I think a lot of Indigenous feminists have done such important powerful work. I think of feminism in the same way as I think sometimes of my queer sexuality.

And so I think the term—sorry, this is all wrapped up in the term Radical Indigenous Queer Feminism—that term Radical Indigenous Queer Feminism is more about creating a space to have conversations about, again, how we move forward as a culture, how we're moving forward having any sort of ethical responsibility for the future. And I think these are also tied up too, in how we treat the earth and how we treat the land. I do think that a Radical Indigenous Queer Feminist mindset does recognize where we come from, both as beings that are tied to the earth but that are also tied to the cosmos. We can talk night and day about science and figure out cures and take medication and whatever and find tumors and shit all we want, but at the end of the day, we're all just cosmic energy that is existing in this space right now.

**Molly:** So you're born in 1983 and a lot of your work has to do with HIV/AIDS. So you were really young in the worst of the AIDs crisis, so I was wondering what draws you to talk about that topic now in the past few years.

**Demian:** I was just talking with a friend—I haven't shared some of this shit with people publicly, in like a podcast or anything but for some reason or another, I feel like today's the day the day to just talk about it.

**Molly:** Great!

**Demian:** I was talking with a friend recently—we were talking about masturbating when we were younger. I had said that whenever I was done masturbating, I would use hand sanitizer. I would use hand sanitizer after I jerked off! Both on my dick and on my hands.

**Molly:** Oh my god. [laughs]

**Demian:** I mean, I probably only did it like 10 times. When I was thinking about it, I was like, oh, that has ties to both shame, to being raised as a Catholic, but also realizing my queer curiosity at that age. And realizing that everything that I had been exposed to up to that point, this was like fourth grade, fifth grade, was all about "You're a queer, you're going to die of AIDS," and not knowing exactly where that comes from. So it's like, oh, once I decide that I'm queer, does this just magically appear in my blood? Am I just magically going to be HIV positive? And if so, maybe hand sanitizer will keep me from seroconverting or whatever. I don't know. It was fucking scary.

I remember at one point asking one of my friends, "Hey, if I ever became positive, would you be my friend?" and realizing how scary that was, you know? So I felt like, growing up during the 90s as a young person that was the biggest scare, was getting AIDS and dying. Especially prior to eighth grade, not really realizing how you contracted it or whatnot. I feel like, no, it totally has impacted the way I came into my sexuality and my gender identity. The only option for being queer was death.

The only option for being a native person was death as well. So it just—those two things, I think they're really complicated to have similar conversations with. I think some of my work is about, not necessarily comparing the genocide of Indigenous people to the AIDS crisis, but at least realizing that these two things were motivated by settler colonization and patriarchy and capitalist greed and bullshit and dominion. It continues to be a central point to my work because AIDS is still, while we have successful antiretroviral therapy, it is still devastating queer communities and it is for sure as fuck having a huge impact on communities of color. I can't imagine, in my lifetime, not talking about my queer identity without talking about the impacts of oppression that have been faced.

**Molly:** My last question is always, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**Demian:** I think it would be a lot more naked. I mean, fashion is important. I was again, talking with a friend and walking down the street and I was like, why are all the clothes we have so broken down to male and female? Why aren't there more designers out there breaking down boundaries between the two?

**Molly:** Right. And then when you do make quote unquote "androgynous fashion," it's always just menswear.

**Demian:** Yeah. Or half of the time, it's just not that intriguing.

**Molly:** Yeah. Or like, a bag.

**Demian:** Yeah!

**Molly:** Like a shapeless smock

[both laugh]

**Demian:** Yeah, so it's — I think naked is beautiful, you know? I think a lot of the baggage we have as a society is about — I realize there's so much violence, too, that's ensued because of sexuality, because of patriarchy. Because of nudity. But at the same time, I think of that more as this freedom to be in your body and feel safe and confident and not to be violated and not to be scared of how people will or won't judge you. That's one of the ways that I see the future.

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

**Molly:** That's going to do it for this week’s show! If you learned something or just had a good time, please recommend the show to a friend, share it on social media, rate it on iTunes, or support the show at patreon.com/gender. You can support Demian by buying their extremely good zines or merch at etsy.com at Demian Dineyazhi. If you have questions or comments or hot takes about this week’s show, you can reach us on Twitter or at gendereveal@gmail.com. I'd especially love to hear from teens this week! Teens, are you out there? What's your take on this whole Atlantic thing? Or just like, gender? What's your take on gender? Our show was produced and 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.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]