[*Gender Reveal* theme plays]

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

I’m back! Thank you all so much for your patience, as I hiked through the wilderness, and then came back, and then had to emotionally recalibrate to live in a world with cars and twitter and stuff. Thanks again to Sarah Esocoff, Spoke Studios at SiriusXM, and Mac and Abe from *Public Trans* or sitting in for me while I was gone. I hope that everyone enjoyed the episodes that you heard, I certainly enjoyed them and I’m excited to continue sharing other trans and queer content when—times when I need a break!

We have a heartbreakingly vulnerable episode for you today, I love it so much, and I cannot wait to share it with you. But first, as always this show is sponsored by our Patreon donors. When I got back, I sent out lots and lots of Patreon rewards, all over the world, and I ordered hundreds of more stickers and a bunch of more envelopes and global ‘forever stamps’. So I’m ready for the next round of Patreon pledges, wherever you are in the world, I’d love to take your money! [laughs] I would really love to one day make this my job, instead of like an extra bonus job on evenings and weekends, uh, but in order to do that, I need your continued support. We’re also still paying our transcriptionist to transcribe all the episodes, and I need to get a website up and pay for that. So, thank you sososososo much to everyone who has pledged so far, and thank you to everyone who continues to spread the word about the podcast, it really helps so much. You’re the only way we get the word out about the show, and uh, thanks for being here. Thanks for listening. This brings us to “This Week In Gender”.

[trumpeting news music]

This week in gender, Christine Hallquist. You knew we were gonna talk about this— something good happened for once. Christine Hallquist became the first transgender individual to be nominated for governor of any state, by any major party, in the United States. Last Tuesday, Hallquist won Vermont’s democratic primary election for governor, handily beating out three other candidates, receiving nearly fifty percent of the vote. Sidenote, this is one hundred percent true, one of the other candidates was a fourteen year old boy, who got eight percent of the vote—didn’t even know that was allowed. Anyway, Hallquist was already somewhat known in Vermont for serving as the CEO for the Vermont Electric Cooperative for more than a decade, and for transitioning publicly while serving as CEO in 2015, and for starring in the feature length documentary *Denial,* which was made by Hallquist’s adult son in 2016. Something that I extra appreciated was that during her campaign, Hallquist was mentored by Danica Raom. You might remember from making headlines for being the first transgender individual to be elected to the Virginia state legislature. Hallquist now faces a general election against Vermont’s current governor, Phil Scott. The bad news is that Vermonters have not thrown out an incumbent governor since 1962. The good news is that Scott’s approval ratings have been down lately, and the weird news is that the reason folks have turned against Scott is that he signed gun control legislation…? Anyway, that’s the scoop on Christine Hallquist. Uh, you can donate to her campaign or learn more about her at [ChristineForVermont.com](http://christineforvermont.com). Just a reminder that if you have suggestions for future “This Week In Gender” segments, have a topic you want us to tackle, or a news story you wanna make sure we see, you can always email them to us, or tweet them at us with the #ThisWeekInGender hashtag. This has been “This Week In Gender”.

[trumpeting news music]

[music interlude]

**Molly**: This week, I am absolutely honored to share my interview with my friend TC Frost. TC is a Mainer who’s lived in Oregon for the past 4.5 years, and has been mystified by gender his entire life. When he’s not planning adventures for the Venture Out project, you can find him plucking out old-time tunes on his banjo.

[music ends]

So, the way we always start the show is by asking: In regards to gender, how do you identify?

**TC**: I identify as a non-binary trans person.

**Molly**: Yeah! And why does it feel important to you to say non-binary and trans?

**TC**: That’s a really good question. I think because within the trans-masculine spectrum in which I have been sort of identify, or— in that category, I still don’t necessarily fit in with a lot of my peers. I don’t identify as a man and I’m not aspiring to be. And so, once non-binary started to like, come in to my consciousness and like realize like, “Oh! That just makes so much more sense!” But I still identify as a trans person because I was born and raised female and now I mostly pass as a dude and I like that. But, y’know I want people to see me that way because it’s safer for me to like, get through the world. But within my own community, people know that I’m not like a man, or—

**Molly**: Yeah.

**TC**: —that’s not what I’m trying to do.

**Molly**: Yeah! That makes a lot of sense— and what pronouns do you use?

**TC**: He or they.

**Molly**: Do you have a preference between he or they or do you like to mix it up?

**TC**: You know, I don’t, and it’s funny I— I feel like I’ve started to say that as a way to let people know that I actually identify actually as non-binary and um, no one ever exclusively uses “they”, but it’s— it— it feels good to me.

**Molly**: So, in your bio you said that you’ve been mystified by gender for your entire life, what does that mean?

**TC**: I mean, that means that as a little kid— and I think I may say things that I wouldn’t normally want my parents to hear because I may not tell them about this podcast—

**Molly**: Great, don’t tell them! [laughs]

**TC**: — when I was a little kid, you know I was little, as young as four, I remember looking at my body and thinking, like I actually legit thought my clit would eventually grow into a penis. And, I kind of knew what that was— I had a little brother— and so, he had a little penis and so like, I don’t know. It just made sense to me—

**Molly**: Mmhm.

**TC**: —that that was next. But, that never happened, and thankfully I was able to grow up really— like my parents let me be really tomboyish. And my mother would try to dress us up every once in a while, for like, Easter, or something. So there were some tears, but for the most part I was able to just be myself and so, you know, like I’ve always just been myself and then I’ve had the world start to tell me that I was wrong, and I feel like that started mostly— It really started in seventh grade. Um, I was a skater and I— my body started to chance. I grew breasts, I had to wear a bra, and I remember some kid coming up to me and saying to my friend, “why is that boy wearing a bra?” ‘Cause you know my shirt was white and he could see it, it was like so horrifying and so, that’s where it just started to like twist in my mind: something was wrong with me, you know. And it wasn’t cool—where like, fast forward twenty years and I would be doing the opposite of trying to pass, but back then I wasn’t, I was just trying to exist. And I was basically being told, in so many ways, like there’s something wrong with you and you’re kinda weird.

**Molly**: So, You grew up in rural Maine. What was it like growing up as a kid who was sort of, intentionally or maybe unintentionally, gender non-conforming in rural Maine—twenty years ago?

**TC**: I mean, it sucked. I love Maine now— but, as a kid, I mean, probably in any rural community, maybe even cities, I don’t know— But this is a world before the internet, it was the nineties— or late eighties early nineties— and I was teased a lot. Ad I cut all my hair off in the sixth grade— and that was because I went to a woman’s basketball game at the University of Maine and I thought it was the most amazing thing to see these women, and a lot of them had short hair. And I said to my mom, “I want that hair. I want hair that doesn’t move around.” Because you can play sports so much better without hair everywhere. So, she let me cut my hair off, and you know, obviously it wasn’t a political statement, it didn’t have anything to do with gender. I just wanted short hair so that I could play sports easier. And that’s when it started the sort of, “Are you a boy or a girl?” thing. When I reflect back that was really painful and I think it really shut me down and has continued to kind of give me a lot of anxiety issues that I’ve carried into my adulthood and that I still carry around with passing, but that’s a whole n’other issue— but yeah, rural Maine was hard being different. And I’ve tried— there was different attempts at trying to be feminine that were hilariously failed. [Molly cracks up] I mean I had some really… you know, I would like have a headbanger shirt on and then would try to like wear dangly earrings and then maybe put some gel in my hair but I also had this like, Tony Hawk haircut thing, so— it was kinda messy, and I got teased a lot like I said. They called me “dyke” a lot, and it’s funny because I actually had a boyfriend so, it really didn’t make any sense.

**Molly**: I heard you talk on the *Flex Your Heart* radio podcast, and you spoke about how the first time you transitioned it was more out of an attempt to conform to how the outside world was already seeing you more than like any sort of internal gender identity, can you talk about that?

**TC**: Yeah, I mean it’s funny because, the way you just put it is actually really articulate but I’ve never been about to like ‘articulize’ it— or whatever that word is— like that. But um, yeah, when I first transitioned it was— I was really struggling in my adulthood of— again I was just trying to live, right? This is the early 2000s and a lot of incidences started happening, you know, I had security chasing me into bathrooms at my work, umwhere they saw me every single day, thinking I was a guy trying to get in the women’s room— and there was a few times when different cashiers would question why my credit card y’know, said ‘Elizabeth’ and I had to like, be like, “‘Cause that’s me.” And they’re like kind of accusing that I’m stealing from them, and—which is also a big trigger for me because I got— I used to be a huge shoplifter when I was a kid—

**Moll**y: Mm.

**TC**: —and I got caught, and it was really traumatic and all this stuff. So, I’m really sensitive about people thinking I’m stealing from them.

**Molly**: Yeah.

**TC**: So to have that experience— so, once I realized I could— that that was a thing that I could do— I could take ’T’ and start to pass as a dude, which I was doing anyways, but then like— you know, I would start talking and people would be like, oh you know, and then of course my name, so— yeah. It was like well, “Fuck it. I’m gonna transition.” And that’s what I did—and then it kind of caught up with me a couple years later, realizing I actually felt a little lost in that because I—I wasn’t on the same trajectory as my peers—my other trans guy friends, and I felt really alone in that, and I didn’t have a community or language around it. This was in ’05, ‘cause I started ’T’ in ’03. And, at the time, there was one Yahoo Forum that I found about people de-transitioning and I kinda clung onto that a little bit. But, It wasn’t that active, and I had to just— yeah, I had no support and no one to talk to, and it was a really confusing time.

**Molly**: Yeah, that sounds really hard. Uh, what made you feel that your path was different than the other trans guys you knew?

**TC**: The first thing was that all my other trans guy friends were straight. They were dating women before they transitioned, and then they continued dating women because that’s who they were attracted to. Um, and for me, I— I had dated guys in high school, and a little bit in college, but when I got to college I came out as a dyke, and that was the closest thing I could find— like I knew I wasn’t a straight woman but I had no idea what else— and again, it was late nineties, all I had was some really great nineties dyke movies, which I still love to death. And like, that was what helped me realize like, “Oh! I’m a dyke.” Except the component that was missing was that I actually wasn’t that physically— like sexually attracted to women, so— which is actually kind of the definition. So, it was like really confusing. So, once I started to transition, I was like, “Oh wait a second, I can date guys again.” Because also I—, ‘queer’ wasn’t really a thing yet, and all sorts of partners wasn’t really a thing, it was like once I got my ‘lesbian card’ that was it, you know, kind of thing. And I remember one of my bandmates back in the early like 2000s, she identified as a dyke, and then she slept with this dude and I was like, “What?! You can do that?! I had no idea” It’s so funny to think about now like, durr, you sleep with whoever you want kinda thing. But, back then it felt really rigid to me. At the time, I was identifying as a trans-fag, and um, I was also using Craigslist a lot to try to find sexual partners and I would like—

**Molly**: RIP, Craigslist.

**TC**: Right, so Craigslist right, but at the time I would type in like, ‘FTM’, and nothing would come up so, I would actually write to bi guys and I’d be like, “Hey, this is the sitch, do you wanna hook up?” And we would hook up, and sometimes that was okay, and sometimes it wasn’t. But then I would like go to San Francisco Craigslist page and type in ‘FTM’ and like, four pages of like, either FTM guys looking, or people looking for FTM guys that— it was like, mind-blowing. So, I kind of set my sights on San Francisco. I was like, if I’m gonna date anyone, I think I’m gonna have to move to the Bay because I can’t— there’s just not a community here for that. I was living in Boston at the time, and it was just kinda small. So, that was one thing. Like, the dating thing that made me feel different, and even thought I couldn’t articulate it then, I still— I’m not sure I thought I was a man, or wanted to be a man, where it seemed like my peers like, that was just so clear to them— and that’s great. It was just like, I don’t think that’s my story. Um, so that’s— it was really confusing.

**Molly**: Yeah. So, when you de-transitioned, did you feel better?

**TC**: [laughs] Well, no. It was such a train-wreck. My de-transition was just so horrible. Um, and again, I think a lot of that was just because I was so alone. It was so confusing, and I was living with my best friend, Tam, at the time and, you know, she was watching me go through this. And I started shopping and trying to find women’s clothes because I had quit my job. I had transitioned on the job, and then I was about to de-transition and I was like, I can’t do this.

 I was working at BU at the time, and— so I quit my job, and I was just going to go be a temp worker. But, in order to join the work force again, I was going to have to try to look female after being on ’T’ for two years, and passing 100%, so— I went out to try— I was shopping in the women’s department for the first time in my entire life and bringing home things and my friend Tam was like, I mean she just asked me one day, “Are you wearing that because you want to or because you think you need to?” And in my mind, I was like, “Cause I want to!” But what I wanted to do was not feel scared, and I was scared shitless, and I just didn’t know what to do. The only thing I could think to do was: well, maybe I’ll dress like a woman, and then I can try to re-enter society again, ‘cause I felt just completely outside of community, society— like I just felt so alone. So, it was not easy but, um, during that time, that was when my friend and ex had called me, who lived in the Bay, and invited me to mo— to come to San Francisco to work on a film of his, to play this trans character, actually. Actually, this gay sailor, and I was like, you know, “But I’m not even on ’T’ anymore!” And he was like, “I don’t care about that!” And he invited me to come and be in this film, and it was kind of a big moment for me, because it allowed me to get out of Boston—which at the time still felt very like, everything was still binary. Even though there was a lot of trans folks, it was just one binary to the next, you know, there was a lot of fluid going on. So, San Francisco was a good place for me to feel safe again.

**Molly**: What led you to… re-transition? [TC laughs] And, how was it different— like how was the motivation different the second time?

**TC**: So, slowly… during my time in San Francisco, I started to feel safe again. I still had ’T’ with me, so every once in a while I’d take ’T’ and I’d start to feel like, “Okay I can do this, I’m not gonna get my family involved.” Also, that’s another piece of it too. I felt like I had lost my family. So not only was I feeling really alone in the world, but I also didn’t have family.

**Molly**: At what point did you feel like you lost your family?

**TC**: [sighs] It’s really—well, okay when I first transitioned, my siblings just weren’t on board. So, I, and I have two of them, and I’m in the middle… so I’m classically… more…I— you know, middle child syndrome, I just—I fit all those things. And they were both really uninterested, and to the point my sister was like you know,“You’re kinda dead to me” kind of thing—

**Molly**: I’m sorry.

**TC**: y’know, “I don’t want another brother.” And I was kinda like “Maybe I don’t need to be your brother, I can just still be your sibling!”

**Molly**: Yeah.

**TC**: But— so, that was a huge loss, to lose my siblings. And bo— both my parents, they were on board— I mean, not on board, they weren’t psyched, but they were okay, they still loved me. So, by the time I moved to San Francisco, y’know, I had de-transitioned and I thought de-transitioning would like, get my family back, and that’s really not happened at all. And again, I think I was just really suffering from some really intense mental health stuff, um, my anxiety was just through the roof and just having a really hard time [laughs] like coming back to feeling safe. And I think that’s a common thread in my life, like, “Do I feel safe?” So, I started to feel safe again in San Francisco, um, living with all these queers and artists and gender-fucks, y’know, it was just kind of all over the place and it was great and every once in a while I’d feel safe, and I’d start taking ’T’ again, and then something would happen that would kinda derail me again. And I remember while living in San Francisco, I had told my brother at one point that I had started taking ’T’ again, and he was not supportive, and so it was kind of this going back and forth and back and forth for a long time, and eventually after like, three years of kind of like ‘not sure’ about what I should do, I moved back to Boston. And I think, it was just a moment of realization like, I’m not gonna get my siblings back, regardless, either way—and I was craving that sense of safety I felt when I first started taking ’T’.

‘Cause when I first started taking ’T’, I felt like a million bucks, and I also felt really safe ‘cause I passed—and I just— everything felt safe to me, so I started taking ’T’ again, because I felt so safe doing that. I was— it was— I noticed over the years though, it’s been a different transition. I— I take less, I’ve actually— the changes— I’ve been on ’T’ now well over a decade, and I still can’t grow a beard. Where—whereas the first two years, everything was right on point, you know, like, the changes were happening, and now it’s just kind of like, I’m in this prolonged in-between state, and I’ve actually come to settle like, that’s actually great. That’s actually exactly where I wanna be, and it’s totally okay that I don’t have a beard, and I’m not even sure I actually want one, even though I think they look super sexy on everybody but— I think I— my body just wants to be in-between, it just is— IS androgynous whether I have T or not. It comes— It’s nice to finally like, be like, “Oh, that’s okay. And that’s actually like— I really like it.”

**Molly**: Yeah. Do you remember the first time you heard of the concept of someone being non-binary?

**TC**: I think that I had first heard those words in Portland,

**Molly**: Yeah.

**TC**: actually, and I moved to Portland about four and a half years ago. I probably had I think just started to hear the sprinkling of people—maybe—and the ‘they’ pronoun, but not really in usage yet.

**Molly**: Mmhm.

**TC**: I didn’t have anybody— nobody in my world was using ‘they’ pronouns yet, or identifying as non-binary. But, I knew it was existing. And then at some point, I remember Oregon approved the like ‘non-binary’ on your license and I was like “Wow this is really a thing”, and it’s funny ‘cause like back in the early 2000s, and in San Francisco, people were using, um, different pronouns, but, they didn’t stick in the same sense that ‘they’ did. I have some friends that used ‘Z’ and it was much harder of a struggle to get people to use those pronouns— and I was noticing how seamlessly like the ‘they’ pronouns were working and it was like, “Wow this is actually— this could be a thing.” And um, I was getting really excited about it. And then, people around me started— I started noticing some non-binary identities showing up. And then I had some people in my life— including my ex— switch to the ‘they’ pronoun, and then it really— and I’m close to my ex— and it’s like full in my consciousness and something I use every day and is very easy and it’s—it’s such a great pronoun. I’m just so happy that it happened.

**Molly**: You said on Flex Your Heart that when you uh, transitioned the first time, you changed your legal documents and when you de-transitioned you changed it back, and when you re-transitioned you didn’t re-re change it, is that correct?

**TC**: Yeah— yeah, so yeah. When I first transitioned, I was right on track with all the things. You know, got the ’T’, got the chest surgery, didn’t have a hysterectomy scheduled but at the time it wasn’t something that—

**Molly**: Uh huh.

**TC**:— was on the list of things to do—yeah, I got everything changed. I spent so much time at the DMV because they— you know, this is still really new-is to them so I developed like a hatred for the DMV ‘cause I had to go so many times and stand in line in Boston. But eventually it all happened, and I got my birth certificate changed, I got my documents saying that Travis was born on my birthday y’know, as a little male baby— this official document. And at the time, I was like psyched because I knew at the time, other people in other states were having a hard time doing it, so I was just kind of like— I felt sad for them that they couldn’t do it, but I also felt grateful like for some reason, I just— maybe I was the first one in Maine? Maybe they just didn’t have a protocol? I don’t know. They just sent it to me and I didn’t care about it until I did do my de-transition, and then I was so shocked and sad that I had done that. Um, it felt that I had been erased and that I hadn’t been born.

During my de-transition process, I had to go back to the courts and go back and get my name changed to my legal name, and then I went back to the state of Maine to get my birth certificate changed. But this time, on my birth certificate, my official birth certificate now, has the word “Travis” crossed out, with my birth name in it. And I was like “Hey! Can you actually just give me like, just— just the way it was before. Totally fine.” And then they were like, “No, we legally can’t do that.” And I was like, “Well, on the first one you didn’t put “Elizabeth” and then cross it out and put “Travis.”” So, now on my legal document there is the word “Travis” with a cross off and “Elizabeth” and it— it does, it causes a lot of anxiety in me and I’m not really sure why, it just— I— I feel very attached to this one legal document—this one— and I should probably look at why— [Molly laughs] So, I don’t know it, it’s— the one proof, the one really solid proof, it all comes back to the birth certificate. There’s some sort of attachment to that. So, so yeah, I have one copy of my birth certificate from before I transitioned that just says “Elizabeth” and I have kept that. I did legally change my name again, which means I’ve been to the name change— the Name Courts— three times. But this time, during my second transition, I— after having that experience of a total meltdown about gender, I was like “You know, why don’t you just go ahead and keep your status because your name is your name, it doesn’t matter, and then this just gives you more flexibility.”

**Molly**: Yeah.

**TC**: And so, I’ve kept my legal status as female and, actually just recently like a month ago, um, I was at the DMV and it’s so easy here now. They were just like “Just check that box if you want”, and I was like “Okay”— cause I had lost my license while hiking, but then, this person—a person found it and sent it to me. So, now I have— and this is illegal probably— two licenses. One says “male”, one says “female”. So, when I like, travel or if I need it to like match my passport, I can bring my female one and it’s totally legit but um, if I’m just flying in the US—which I do a lot for my job— which: constant anxiety. I have to put “Mrs.” because I’m afraid they’ll be like, ”This doesn’t match.” if I put “Mr.”, and I— I just want to get through security as seamlessly as possible. Like, I don’t really care about anything, just get me through it. But now, I have the “M” on my license that I can move more easily through the US, and that feels good.

**Molly**: Yeah. That’s what I was wondering, ‘cause you said you… like the theme throughout your life was wanting to feel safe, so like having multiple names and multiple genders in more than one place would maybe feel maybe uncomfy. Does it make you feel like you’re sort of a fragmented person?

**TC**: Not really, ‘cause I understand it. And I know that those little letters are just for them.

**Molly**: Mmhm.

**TC**: And it’s for everybody else. And it’s for me to try to move through this world as easily as I can with the least amount of trauma as possible. So, it doesn’t bother me at all, and I think in some ways it’s so like, validating, like “Yeah, I don’t really have a gender. There isn’t a box for me, and that’s fine.” I mean there is actually a non-binary box, but I actually don’t feel safe checking that box.

**Molly**: Yeah.

**TC**: For me that’s not— that’s not safe. Like, I just think about being pulled over, and somebody discriminating against me. I just have such a fear of cops, um, so. Somehow having an “M” would feel safer, I guess.

**Molly**: Makes sense. If you can have male privilege, why not? [laughs]

**TC**: Ha, oh God, that’s weird. [Laughs] Yeah,

**Molly**: Sorry! Male-passing privilege, not male privilege, but you know what I mean.

**TC**: Mmhm, yeah.

**Molly**: Oh! So, again, on *Flex Your Heart*, you were talking about how you’ve made a conscious decision to not be stealth and to come out to folks, and I was wondering how that decision came to be.

**TC**: Um, well that’s also really directed towards the first transition than the second transition.

**Molly**: Uh huh.

**TC**: During the first transition, I was doing— I mean I had a community of trans-guy friends but I was, you know, stealth in different areas of my life. And even though I questioned it a little bit, I had a lot of encouragement from my stealth friends that it was totally okay and normal, and that it was “Nobody’s business but your own” kind-of thing. And I was like “Oh! Okay!” I was acting in a film for this movie and they didn’t know that I was trans and um, I probably—I think I talked about this in the other podcast, but— I was in my underwear and i— they didn’t know and it was horribly scary and um, I had to get out of that. After that experience of, um, I mean— it was— it rattled me so much, and I took those three years off from identifying fully as trans, when I re-transitioned, I wanted to keep that, like a part of my life.

Right now, I have a queer job, so my whole life is queer and trans, and that’s awesome. But, it wasn’t always like that. I mean I was working at Universities—again back in Boston— and I would usually find like, a friend right away that I was— that I knew that I needed to come out to. And, the last place I was working at Harvard, this admin job, I found someone within the first couple weeks, and I told her, and it just felt so good. Cause I just— if I’m gonna be in a straight space, I just need somebody to know. And i— I literally can’t be— I feel like I can’t be seen if somebody— if nobody knows because I— I’m not what you’re seeing. I actually—sometimes I have no idea what people are seeing. Because sometimes I pass, sometimes I don’t. Like am I a shapeshifter? I have no idea.

And, it changes, you know. I can do different things with my voice, if I feel very scared. If I need to use that male-passing privilege to get myself out of a scary situation, I will definitely use it, you know. And often times— but that’s not my normal voice. My normal voice is actually pretty high, y’know. Again, I’ve been on ’T’ for like ten years, and this is just where it’s at, and that’s totally fine. So, yeah being not stealth is so incredibly important to me feeling seen, and grounded and whole.

**Molly**: Ah. So you mentioned your queer job— can you talk about your queer job, please?

**TC**: Yeah! I have a queer job. [Molly laughs] Back the 2000s, people used to be like, “I’m gay for pay!” And I’d be like, “Wow! How cool!” To like, you know. I’m so used to everything being like, being— me being the odd one out. So, it’s so different when to—to work for a queer organization. Um, so yeah, I work for the Venture Out Project, and we are a Outdoor Organization that leads trips for adults and youth—um, so wilderness and adventure trips. We’re based here in Portland and in New England— in the North Hampton/Massachusetts area. I got on board a couple years ago, and I’m the now— I started as helping with the admin and also leading trips— and now I’m the Director of Operations, and continue to lead trips. Although now, we’re starting to hire other instructors to lead other trips, which is so exciting to be kind of growing in this way— to get a more diverse lineup for our instructors and to get more trips out there, and hit different pockets of community.

**Molly**: I just think it’s really cool and important that there’s this organization that leads trips for queer and trans folks specifically, and I’m wondering if you have any specific stories about any particularly touching or notable or impactful moments that have happened that made it feel like you were doing really important work.

**TC**: I think the thing—the stories that stand out in my mind— um, are definitely working with the queer youth. You know, as a queer adult, working with the queer youth, and thinking—seeing yourself reflected back in them and just seeing the incredible amount of— the language they have, their identities, it’s so big. There are so many options, and a lot of them feel really safe within their communities within their schools. Y’know, they have communities so they feel really safe to do this. Some of them don’t, but on our trips, you can see them kind of coming out of their shell a little bit. And the conversations they would have— I don’t remember when I was talking about when I was sixteen, but it certainly wasn’t this amount of thoughtfulness. They’re talking about consent— and y’know, like the way— also, the compassion for each other, it’s really touching. All of that combined and also seeing this silliness and giddiness and giggling all night, it just touches my heart.

Um, and especially because a lot of them come to us and their moms are really nervous, like, oh, “My kid has a ton of anxiety, they need their phone.” And we kind of have a phone policy, like— take the phones away. Which is really hard, because I think that people— you know, people use it as an anxiety relieving tool, and so it’s really scary to do that. Um, but these kids are coming on this trip, and they’re having a really good time. They’re connect— even though they didn’t think they’d be able to connect with anyone, they’re connecting, and it’s— and seeing them sort of transform over the week— and it’s really touching.

**Molly**: So, I have friends who are hikers and backpackers and thru-hikers, I feel like you’re probably friends with them, too— and they talk about that kind of like, outdoor community being really steeped in bro-culture and toxic masculinity, and sort of being relatively intolerant of folks that aren’t like straight, and cis, and white, and wealthy, and male. I’m wondering if that ever comes up, uh, when you’re… out on your trips? Like if you ever get pushback or anything like that?

**TC**: Yeah, all the time.

**Molly**: Oh no. [laughs]

**TC**: Y’know, I started hiking in the nineties, so in a way, I just expect that—versus going into it expecting— outdoor world to be open and awesome. I created a shell around me at a young age from being harassed, basically all the time. So, when I started hiking in the nineties, I carried that into the woods— it follows me. And sometimes, that gets um, broken down, but— with our trips in particular, um, we definitely have some scary and weird situations, and we’ve moved camps before because of— there was this one really sketchy dude that was really confused about our group. He was trying to figure out what kind of a group we were. Um, and it’s ‘cause all of us have that kind of queer face. It’s confusing to people that we’re adults because our faces look different. I don’t know— and then when you get a whole group of them, this guy was literally like, “What the hell are you?” And we’re like, “We’re getting the hell out of here.” And meanwhile, this guy has like a handle of Vodka and like a giant bonfire, we’re like, “Ew.” We’re obviously not safe here, so we moved.

 That’s the only time we’ve actually had to move. Whereas other groups maybe get to proudly talk about where they’re from, but we’re actually— we don’t, because— for our own safety, and the safety of our members. We’re not even super public about where we’re even going, because we don’t have that privilege of feeling safe. But, we’re safe together, and we create a container, and absolutely when we’re together, there’s no problems, um, except for a few, y’know— we just take— we just move, kind-of thing. No one’s actually like, said anything to us.

But then on a personal level, my friend and I thru-hiked the Long Trail a couple summers ago in Vermont, which was awesome, and she’s also totally gender-queer and fluid and— we’re just used to it, or expecting it in this weird way. To a point where if somebody’s not like that, we’re like, “Oh! What? That’s exciting!” like, but it’s so like, we weren’t expecting to see any other queer people, and we didn’t. A lot of dudes, some women by themselves, and we would chat with them. And, y’know, when you put Tam and I together, people get really confused. We’re both forty, and don’t look it, and it’s not super easy, actually. And so, yeah. Total bro-culture out there. In fact, we had just missed by a weekend this thing called, “Bro Fest”. [Molly cracks up laughing] And we had seen it, like you read the journals on the trail, and we were seeing this countdown like, “Only a few more days til Bro Fest!”, and we were like, “Oh. My. God. That sounds like hell on Earth.” And um, so we finally got to where Bro Fest was supposed to be, in— at Long Trail, which is kind of like half way— it’s—for the Long Trail it’s like where the Appalachian Trail and the Long Trail divide—and Bro Fest was over. So, we were able to have T’n’T fest. [Molly cracks up] There was some Irish band, and my mom came to visit, and it was great. Um, but yeah. It’s—it’s a weird world out there on the trail.

**Molly**: The question we always end with is: In your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**TC**: Wow! Um, y’know, I’ve never read that book, um, *The Left Hand of Darkness,* but I’ve been told about it, and to methat sounds so awesome, like, people are just kind of androgynous until you like, go one way or another or something. I think that’s what it’s about. I don’t really know, it’s too—it’s too hard for me to read.

Molly: Yeah! That’d be cool!

**TC**: Yeah, it’s just—androgynous. Or y’know, if you are androgynous, that’s awesome— just more flexibility. And I feel—I can see it happening. And it’s so amazing, and so cool, and it makes me just feel great— and ‘cause twenty years ago, it didn’t feel great, it felt really scary. But, it’s feeling better and better and better and—so, I just hope that this trend continues and that more and more people continue to be out about it, and feel safe about tif they are feeling non-binary or androgynous, and that we continue to— I mean, you know, again, the fact that you can get this on your license in Oregon. Maybe other states will do that and this is— y’know, medical forms, all the things. Or how about we just don’t even have it, you know? Also, just for the record, can we stop gendering outdoor gear?

**Molly**: [cracks up] WHAT?!

**TC**: Yeah— ‘cause it’s— literally. Actually, like— my boss picked— got a tent recently and it had a gender on it. I mean, I’m sure it was just some sort of weird—needed it for their system, but seriously, it’s all so un-… not necessary, and total bullshit, for the record.

**Molly**: Yeah! That’s so wild!

**TC**: How about gear in like, different sizes? Long torso, short torso, you know— narrow foot, big foot.

**Molly**: That would be much more useful!

**TC**: You know, yeah. That’s what I got to say.

**Molly**: Yeah, that’s so wild. Well, thank you so much for speaking with me. I appreciate you being so vulnerable, and sharing so much— it really means a lot.

**TC**: Well, thanks for having me! It feels so good to talk about it.

[*Gender Reveal* theme plays]

**Molly**: Well, that’s gonna do it for this week’s show. If this felt at all valuable to you, or fun, or interesting, please send the episode to a friend, or maybe five hundred friends. And hey, if you’re on iTunes or the Apple Podcast app, I’d love it if you’d consider leaving us a five-star review—especially because we just got our first ever one-star review, and I just wanna clear that negative troll energy. Of course if you want Gender Reveal stickers, or pins, or handwritten letters, or other fun rewards— or you just wanna help us pay our bills and keep existing, we gladly accept donations at [patreon.com](http://patreon.com/)/gender, or [paypal.me/mollywoodstock](http://paypal.me/mollywoodstock). If you have questions, or comments, or feeling about this week’s show— or if you have a question about gender that you’d like us to answer on air, you can reach out to us at gendereveal@gmail.com, that’s gendereveal, or on Twitter, same handle. We also have an anonymous Google form in the show notes.

This episode was edited by me, Molly Woodstock— with extra love and emotional support from Liza Yeager— who’s visiting Portland this week after just finishing her stint up at *Radio Lab.* I love her so much. Anyway, 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.

[theme music ends]