[*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.

Hey dudes, and dudettes, and gender-neutral dudexes.

Hope you’ve been hangin’ in there! If my voice sounds at all lower this week, it is not HRT, it is the fact that Oregon and Washington have a ZILLION wildfires right now, and apparently bringing the smokey air is the equivalent of smoking MANY cigarettes per day, so that’s been fun. This week on the show, I am VERY excited to share my interview with the extremely cool, and extremely thoughtful, and extremely kind, Madin Lopez: the founder of Project Q.

 But before we get there, I gotta remind you that this show wouldn’t be possible without the generous support of our patrons on Patreon. We have some extremely exciting ideas in the works for ya’ll, and the money that we get from Patreon, and from folks who donate via PayPal, is what helps us make those dreams a reality— including transcribing every episode of the show, paying our hosting fees, paying for our theme song, paying for our logo, all sorts of other stuff. If you’d like to help us sponsor the show, you can join us at [patreon.com/gender](http://patreon.com/gender), and if you donate five dollars or more, I will personally send you stickers, and maybe some other stuff in the mail.

 Season 2 of Gender Reveal is already wrapping up, we have have five more episodes for ya’ll including this one—and I am already booking interviews for Season 3. Wow! Time! It never stops! And if you know anyone who’s doing radical shit around gender, especially if they identify as anything other than cis, especially if they’re folks of color, and you’d like to hear them be interviewed on the show, you can reach me via Twitter, via Instagram, via Gmail, via the Google form in the show notes, all sorts of places. But for now, it’s time for “This Week In Gender”.

[trumpeting news music]

This week in gender, we’re following up on the Masterpiece Cake Shop segment that we aired back in June. As you may remember from Episode 18, Masterpiece Cake Shop is a Colorado bakery owned by Jack Philips. Jack identifies as a devout Christian, and in 2012, he refused to make a wedding cake for a same-sex wedding. The couple sued for discrimination, and that case went all the way up to the Supreme Court, and before we get any further, I need to read you the second sentence of the official Supreme Court decision. “In 2012, Jack told a same-sex couple that he would not create a cake for their wedding celebration because of his religious opposition to same-sex marriages,” marriages that Colorado did not then recognize, “but, that he would sell them other baked goods, e.g: birthday cakes.” So, here’s where the update comes in. Last summer, Denver attorney Autumn Scardina, (or Scar-Die-Nuh… who’mst knows?) called Masterpiece Cake Shop to order a birthday cake, and specifically she asked for a cake that was pink on the inside with blue frosting on the outside, because her birthday was also the anniversary of her gender transition. Jack, of course, says, “Yeah, of course! Whatever you want!” Just kidding, he says no, and Jack ends up back in front of the Colorado Civil Rights commission, and the commission decides that Autumn was discriminated against for being transgender, obviously, and orders Jack and Autumn to seek immediate solution, even though that cake would be, like, a solid year late by that point.

Anyway, at this point, Jack sues, and the lawsuit claims that he “can’t make the cake, because that would have celebrated messages contrary to Jack’s religious belief that sex, the status of being male or female, is given by God, is biologically determined, is not determined by perceptions or feelings, and cannot be chosen or changed.” Listen to some Gender Reveal, my fuckin’ dude… Anyway, Jack’s lawyers claim that Colorado has been on a crusade to crush, “CRUSH”, Jack since 2012. And, I mean did Autumn like REALLY want a cake from this guy? Was she just trolling him with her lawyer smarts? I don’t know! She should be able to get a fucking cake. Anyway, that case is making it’s way through the courts now. So stay tuned, maybe go bake a trans cake just to prove that they will never, ever, stop us from eating cake.

This has been “This Week In Gender”.

[trumpeting news music]

Madin Ray Lopez is a gender-queer hairstylist, activist, and small business owner, living in Los Angeles, California. They’re the founder of the non-profit organization Project Q, which gives free gender-affirming haircuts, and free mentorship classes to homeless LGBTQIA+ youth. For the record, we had some teeny Skype hiccups on this one, but you’re gonna love the interview anyway.

[theme music interludes]

**Molly**: The way we always start the show is by asking with regards to gender, how do you identify?

**Madin**: I identify as gender-queer, so, “they/them/their” are my pronouns. So, um, yeah! Gender-queer. The term itself is sort of something that arose after my feelings did, if that makes sense. It was always there, and then I learned words for it. Just like everything else in life.

**Molly**: Yeah. Can you tell me about these feelings that you were having before you had the language for it?

**Madin**: Yeah, I can remember being a kid and like thinking I wish that my belly button actually was like a button that I could switch genitalia, you know?

**Molly**: That’d be amazing.

**Madin**: And being really young and being like you know maybe one day I will be a different gender and I can experience half this life in both ways you know and I think what that really meant for me was that I wanted to be able to move in between gender fluidly, that it was something that I wanted to experience from both ends. But it is a difficult thing ,you know. I’m intersectional as well, so being a Black person thats also non-binary, or gender-queer, you know, there is a certain amount of… its very different to be seen as a female Black woman walking down the streets than a male Black person walking down the streets. Those are two very different things, and it is very difficult to kind of like, figure out the in between and so thats kind of where I lay.

**Molly**: Yeah that’s something I wanted to ask you about. Specifically your experience as being a black, genderqueer person. Based on what you said, do you have trouble being seen the way that you want to be seen?

**Madin**: Umm, in our community specifically, it’s a very interesting world that we live in because there is like a whole n’other generation of people that kind of had to assimilate in order to be able to maneuver the world and the way that felt most comfortable to them without being able to really bend any binaries or bend any rules you know, them switching gender was them bending the rules, as opposed to them saying, “I actually don’t like gender at all.” Yeah, I kind of noticed that in the community and then they see someone like me that is kind-of in the middle, where they call me an “aging millennial”. I am old enough to know why AOL is, but I’m young enough to have a Gmail account, you know what I mean?

So there is this whole like, in-between phase that I live in. So, there is the older generation that expects like, or has expected me in the past to like, get top surgery and kind of go into this like very male identified space when I also like sometimes like to paint my nails, and sometimes like to wear lipstick, y’know, my boobs only bother me sometimes. Like, there’s an actual middle ground. And the gender-queer erasure has been very real and alive, and it’s something that I’m trying to get rid of. I’m trying to erase the erasure!

[both laugh]

**Molly**: Yeah! How are you trying to do that?

**Madin**: Ooh. Maybe… by being myself? I think that as a lot to do with it. That and just like, the more I lean into it and the more I feel that about myself and just not really letting anybody tell me any different, and then speak up about it. That’s how it’s able to change, you know? I can say that, exactly what I told you, to a younger generation and get an applause. And I san say it to an older generation and get booed out of the space. Just like with anything, the old ideas die off. So, you know, being patient.

**Molly**: Yeah! Can you tell me about Project Q?

**Madin**: Sure! Uh, so Project Q is an organization that I started in 2012. I’m a hairstylist, I have been for 16 years. In a certain way, in a certain amount in my career I just realized I want to be able to give back. I live in Los Angeles. Here, if you’re a hair stylist, then you either end up owning your own salon or you end up going into the entertainment industry— and at that time, I didn’t want to do either. I wanted to like, help people that needed the ego boost, you know? I’d worked in film; I’ve worked in film. I’ve worked in music videos and commercials. I’ve done all that stuff. The hierarchies are disgusting. It’s extremely racist, you’re not going to be seen as the person that you actually are, and nor do they care unless you’re talent.

 So, I wanted to switch that dialogue and be able to be there for people that needed that. They’re very deficient of self esteem. So, I started Project Q and I do haircuts for homeless, queer youth— specifically youth of color— because our hair is just a little bit different. Curly, extremely curly, kinky… like, it doesn’t matter, for whatever reason, there can be two homeless people on the streets, one can be white and one can be Black, and If they’ve both been on the streets for months, the Black one looks like they’ve had a rougher time because if they can’t take care of their skin and their hair in the same way, it just… ours just goes to a bad place much quicker. And so, being available for queer youth of color, and being able to give them that service, so that at least that part of them is taken care of, then usually they’re able to experience, like that exact feeling: knowing that they’re worthy of that in so many other areas of their life.

**Molly**: Yeah! I’m specifically interested in- I know you get a lot of questions about uh, why you focus on hair specifically—but I know that there’s all sort of significance in hair in the LGBT community— whether that’s signaling or passing, or self-esteem as you said— and I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about why.

**Madin**: Um, yeah! There are um, you know, if you don’t know what you’re doing as a hair stylist, with somebodies gender identity, if you don’t see them for who they are, then how are you going to help them be seen by the rest of the world? That is like, number one. You know, I have so many folks that come to see me and say like, “Oh you know I, I cheated on you, I went to the barber shop by my house,” and… you know it might be a gender-queer person and the guy says to them, “Yeah, isn’t it nice that you, as a woman, can come in here?” And it’s just like, dude. You know, ruined the whole experience. And also, Black barber shops specifically, are extremely gendered, you know? Salons in general, are very, um, binaried. There’s the man salon, there’s the woman salon. There’s the Black salon, there’s the white salon. And in no space is there any room to budge that in most spaces. So, you know, being able to be the person that can help that specific demographic of folks feel seen is very important— ‘cause it does help them feel seen. At least in that moment, in that chair. And on top of that, seeking that from the rest of the world. You know, knowing that they will get it, because they’ve received it, and then not accepting anything less.

**Molly**: Can you talk about the concept of currency that you have at Project Q?

**Madin**: Sure! So we don’t necessarily base our community—because it’s a salon and a community center—I know I said earlier that I wasn’t looking for a salon: I was looking for a salon and a community center. [both laugh] And so, in this space, we try to you know, minimize the effects of capitalism, because we are working with a homeless demographic. So-but- the haircuts are not free. The haircuts come with- it’s kind of like a “penny for your thoughts” kind-of a thing. Um, so when the youth come in to get a service done, they basically need to respond to a question. For a long time the question was, you know, it’d start off really small, like, “Here’s a quote. Respond to the quote in your own words.” And it turned into, as our social climate got a little bit heavier, it turned into, “Today you have to register to vote.” And, if you don’t register to vote, then you don’t have enough money in your account, pretty much, to get service. And some people didn’t want to register, and didn’t understand why that was important. So, you know, we let them know why it was important, [laughs] and some people still didn’t want to, and that’s okay, but you don’t have enough to pay for today. Like, that’s how much it costs, is to register.

 Where we are now, we have weekly workshops for the youth. We just had one on sexual empowerment, that was done by the Pleasure Chest. The week before that, it was embroidery. The week before that, it was, uh, financial empowerment. And so, usually the question now will be based around the workshop that we’re doing. So, this past week when it was sexual empowerment, the currency question was, “Represent three times that you need to ask for consent” and my favorite answer was “before, during, and after.”

**Molly**: Mmhm.

**Madin**: Everything. It’s just like yes! You get it! You ALWAYS have to ask for consent, for everything. So that was… I’ve seen this change youth, I’ve seen youth that come in and they’re like, “I don’t understand why this is important/ like don’t you know I’m homeless/ Like what the fuck is this gonna do for me, I don’t get it” going from like that to, “This is really awesome, thank you so much” and coming every single week, you know. When youth want something that’s more expensive, like color or dreadlock work or braids, they have to stack up their currency. So this isn’t only teaching them how to be part of a community, and interact with a community, but it also teaches them, y’know, some type of fiscal responsibility. Even if that financial aspect isn’t necessarily within the currency that can buy you a sandwich. Like, you actually are worth something regardless of if you can use what you’re worth to purchase things, you know. In the world that we have, you can use it to purchase things in this world.

**Molly**: That’s incredible, I love that so much. Did you take that-this from somewhere else or did you just make that up? It’s really amazing.

**Madin**: I just kind of made it up? It started off as being a way to set the tone for the space, because you know, we were working in shelters and uh, most folks can tend to feel a little bit discouraged, obviously, when being in that space and leaving them in that mind state makes our job harder because you know, they will talk. They will speak. They will be a part of conversations with each other, and it will usually end in an argument if it’s not based on something positive. And so, it was kind of a way that we decided to not just set the tone but also to let new people know how important what they were doing was. And what kind of energy we wanted to have instilled. And later, having read things like The *Undercommons* and *Emergent Strategy*, like these are things that were used years ago. This is not new, I did not invent this, but I-uh, I thought I did! [laughter] Um, yeah. It’s not— it wasn’t from—it wasn’t my own mind’s child, but anytime that I read something new that tells me that’s what’s going on in other communities, it just reinforces the fact that we’re on the right path.

**Molly**: Yeah, absolutely… you do a lot of work with queer and trans youth of color, and that’s a population that I think a lot about, I and like… worry a lot about, and don’t actually do enough with, and so like I am wondering what we should know about that population that most folks might not know unless we were working with them everyday.

**Madin**: So many things, uh, [laughs] you know, I think the number one thing to remember is that they just really want representation. They just want someone that know— that can see them, you know? Like, going back kind-of to your question, “Why hair?” It’s not that it was hair, like, “Oh, that’s what I’m going to use!” It’s like, that’s what I have. You know, I didn’t have any other skill that I knew of at that time. But you know actually working with them and learning from them, I’ve realized that another skill that I have is looking like them. And, being able toto identify their issues without them having to speak on it, because they’re issues that I’ve also had to deal with, and not— not just specifically around homelessness but around being, y’know— what we were talking about earlier, being a non-binary Black person in America. That’s just a reality. That there— there shouldn’t have to be emotional labor done around for this specific group, and understanding their lived experience as opposed to understanding them as just simply a demographic.

You know, one of my favorite quotes is from this young woman named Carmen, she’s a young trans woman, and she was talking about, uh, bathroom laws right around the time they were trying to bring them back around and what she said is, “I can go to the bathroom easy, but if you go into a bathroom that someone perceives as the ‘wrong’ bathroom, then as a Black person that’s three different calls to the cops.” And as we know, calls to cops have been made on Black people many-a-time—more recently, in a very obvious and public way over things that cops did not need to be involved for. And so, just understanding the actual intersectionalities of the folks and their lived experience just makes a lot more sense to be able to help them but you know, I like to say that hair is like, I use it like the “Little Drummer Boy” used his drum, like it was just all I have, you know? That’s it. That’s just all I have, so. You know, with out workshops I often, it’s usually just like, “Hey, what do you do?” People are like, “I wanna help!” Cool. Well what do you do? “I don’t do anything” Yeah you do. What do you do? Like, do you sleep? Cool! Wanna have like, a sleeping group? [Molly laughs] You know? It’s anything, because at the end of the day they need to be around people that they don’t have to uh, put on a different face for, you know, that they can just be themselves. And so, I mean those are the most— the most of it I think is the intersectionality and the lived experience, and taking on the work instead of expecting them to do the emotional labor.

**Molly**: Yeah. You’re taking Project Q on tour this fall, and I was wondering if you could talk a bit about that?

**Madin**: Yeah, so we are taking Project Q on tour, yay! [Molly laughs] and we are going through the south. We’re doing New Orleans, Atlanta, Colorado, Utah, Kansas City, Topeka, Kansas, just going around a loop— a low loop around America. Some of these places happen to be— not happen— they’re definitely on purpose— the places where the Jim Crow laws were released most recently. You know, these are places Black people have had the least amount of opportunities to grow because of these laws. And then to go into the queer spaces within those spaces. And then finding the Black queer folks within the queer folks within the spaces where our rights have not had the opportunity to flourish, and so umm— you know we’re very, very excited. There are many other places that I want— that I would love to go to. I want to be able to go to Detroit. I want to be able to go to Philly, you know, that’s maybe 2019/2020.

 That’s the goal is to go and give what we give here but abroad. It’s kind of what keeps me up at night. Figuratively and physically, I actually get emails all the time, and Instagram DMs about like, “Hey, I’m a supportive parent of my kid, and we would love to like, see you, how can we do that?”. Just all of the time. And youth just being like, “Hey I was so close to hurting myself or ending it all right now, but then I like, listened to a podcast you were on or watched a video that you were on or watched some of your livestreams and decided that that wasn’t gonna be the case for me.” Which is, I’m super thankful that we have the opportunity at this point in time to be able to access people on that level, it’s not something that I had growing up with heroes that I saw from afar. But, something different happens when you actually get to be there in physicality for someone in an accessible, in meat (M-E-A-T) space, um, something switches. It’s just a different feeling, and I’ve seen it happen for youth here in California when I did our tour in 2017, uh going up the coast to the different trans prides here in California, and you know, seeing youth kind of freak out— and be like, “Oh my god! It’s you! You’re here! I knew that you were on TV and I knew that you were on this thing but I didn’t know that you would ever be in my space,” and be able to grow from that point on. It’s a very cool thing that we have available and I want to be able to utilize it in the best way to further our mission— which is to try and eliminate queer youth homelessness.

**Molly**: Yeah, how does it feel to be able to be so impactful and such a role model for so many of these kids? It sounds like it’s like it’s a really powerful relationship that ya’ll have.

**Madin**: It is. It’s a really cool and powerful relationship. The ones that I have been able to grow over the past five years, six years… you know, it’s just wonderful. It’s really, really great. Being able to be like, sometimes the only stable person in their life, because the shelters have— they’re usually nonprofits, so they have very high turnover— just a revolving door of employees .And y’know, at the youth center that I worked at most recently, the youth tell me all the time that like, okay now there’s a whole n’other set of people— every time I go there there’s just a whole n’other set of people and I don’t— y’know, they can identify with a certain person and really, really love them and it switches to somebody else. It actually has helped me create my own type of stability and grow in my own way. They teach me way more than I teach them [laughs] which is, you know, I’m sure is par for the course when I’m working uh, on something that uh, is where I feel my life took a turn.

Y’know, I feel that anything that we’re doing as adults we should be trying to change whatever we didn’t have—and that’s, that’s exactly what Project Q is— is trying to be a representation. I get asked this question all the time, in interviews, on podcasts, I always get asked, “Who were your role models growing up? Who did you look up to?” And, I’ve had a few. But, I actually had to just say none, because at this—at this point in time, it’s just— it’s just been so fucking long since I’ve had a hero that didn’t disappoint me or die. It’s just where we’re at in this time. You know, looking at RuPaul, who is like, someone that I REALLY admired growing up, and the first time that I saw Black queerness and non-binary identity in any type of like “regular media”, and seeing that she is at a point in time— sorry that he is at a point in time—that he is not only excluding trans people from his platform, but also expecting the Black queens that he has on his platform to just subside to racist white bullshit [laughs] y’know and it’s just not okay [laughs] like that actually, that is not something that I want to be taught from my hero, you know. So, that has happened over and over and over again because, once again, because our older generation has has to assimilate to some degree. That’s not what I wanna pass on. That’s not the legacy that I wanna leave.

 Assimilation has nothing to do with it, and accessibility is the way to fix that, so. You know, one reason that I enjoy having this, this uh, with the tour being able to be accessible is because then it’s keeping my feet on the ground. Yes, you know, I know a lot of these youth look at me as a certain type of hero figure, and it’s something that I never want to lose. You know, and the way that you hold on to that is by actually listening to what their needs are, and seeing how things are growing and changing— because things change all of the time. When I first started Project Q, I was part of, it was called the “Queer People of Color Project”, Q-POC— and now that has changed in the past two years to include trans identities, not just queer identities. And so, now it’s QT-POC. And it’s something that I never would have known if it wasn’t speaking to one of the youth and I asked him, I said, “So, like, is it different now?” And he was like, “I’m sorry, I don’t understand the question, this is all I’ve ever known.” You know, that’s what change looks like on the front line. There’s no question of what It might have been in the past, because they’re only dealing with what they have in their faces and so, it’s-it’s- helping me grow at the same time— which is really nice.

**Molly**: Yeah— you said that you’ve learned a lot from these kids, I’m wondering because this show is about gender, do you feel like you’ve learned about gender/sexual orientation at all from these kids?

**Madin**: Absolutely, you know, when I started volunteering, you know, my- the amount of queer folks that I knew was very limited to the queer elders that I looked up to. And I had some contemporary, but none that I felt were actual contemporary like on a spiritual level or an emotional level, you know so, and also because I am a part of you know just, I- I come from their same space so I just identify with them so much more. So, when— hearing things like, “You know, I’m just going to be a really feminine man and that’s alright with me” You know, that-that changes the way that I see masculinity, you know, in that moment just hearing that and seeing how they own it, that changes my perception of it, which is really beautiful.

I’ve definitely seen the youth just own who they are, and own their bodies in this totally different way… and it’s also you know, that’s also the space that I get the most um, validation for not wanting to take hormones or… um, have top surgery or— it’s taken me this long to feel okay in my body [laughs] so it’s not something I really wanna change in this moment and give myself another thirty two years to figure that part out.

I’m just— I’m happy with what I have, and so are they. And so, being able to see that and being around that and the— when I said earlier that I can be around youth and say I don’t want any HRT and then get a round of applause, that’s something that’s actually happened [laughs] you know, and that was an actual experience that just felt so nice to be a part of because it was something that I was kind of struggling with you know, and it’s kind of like doing— being around these youth and speaking to them is very similar to doing stand up. I feel like comedians go in and they do these stand up routines and try and figure out you know, they’re pretty much therapy for them [laughs] that’s kind of what being around these youth are— it’s kind of like therapy for me. So, when I say things out loud that have just been like stewing in me and I’m like I don’t know, I don’t know how they’re gonna feel about it but I’m just going to be myself and be candid—uh ‘cause most folks are not around kids, they treat them like children— and to see them have this uproaral of like, that is exactly how I feel. You know, it feels very nice.

 It’s really great to see, and also, you know, it’s not coming from a space of, “This is shit you want to hear, so I’m going to say it to you like this!” No. This is how I feel, you know, tell me how you feel and— it’s just creating community in a totally different way and yeah. t’s really nice, and the other end of that— here’s the thing. Working with this demographic, most folks have fled from very scary parts of America that we’re going to go visit, and so… their ideas of queerness are very small. Um, and so often times I run across someone that will— someone that doesn’t understand what a non-binary identity means but they’re a trans woman. You know, that doesn’t know how to use my pronouns, but they’ve been taking “T” for the last five months.

**Molly**: Wow.

**Madin**: And it’s very nice to be able to be like, “Okay, well, this is where you also have to respect the in-between,” and coming from a place of innate mentorship and support, they’re able to understand that. So, it definitely goes both ways. Um, but because they are of a younger, queer demographic, often a homeless demographic, it makes it— it makes my way that I speak to them about these things that might feel very personal to me, um, excuse them into being a bit more palatable, and it teaches me to have more patience around that.

**Molly**: I also really appreciate— I’m going to cut this because I’m just talking at you— um, I really appreciate what you said about HRT and surgery also. Because I spent a lot of time thinking that I needed to do those things and then I realized that I just really want society to change, I don’t really want my body to change. [laughs]

**Madin**: Mmhm. Yeah!

**Molly**: It took me a long time to figure that out so I appreciate you—

**Madin**: You don’t need to cut that out! I think your listeners need to know that. [Molly laughs] It doesn’t need to just come from me.

**Molly**: Yeah— so, here’s another thing about me, [Madin laughs] um, I’m non-binary and I generally, like you I think, sort of try to exist outside of strictly masculinity or femininity, um, and so, it took me years to find a haircut that didn’t feel too feminine or too masculine. I like— even now, I’m not one hundred percent sure about it, but it’s O-K, uh, so I’m wondering if you went through that journey or if you interact with other kids, or adults, that are going though that journey and if you have any advice for how the hell to be a person in the world with hair [laughs]

**Madin**: Yeah. [exhales] it’s interesting, because I’ve been doing hair for so long. I’ve been doing hair since I was sixteen, um, so physically half my life next month, and I’ve had multiple different haircuts. I was that person that had a different color hair every week— did dreads, did mohawk, did afro, did all of these things— and then, I was finally able to find one that fit me. Like around, six years ago.

And it feels— sometimes it feels weird and I’m like, “Oh I can try something else— I’m gonna grow it and do this,” and then I’m like, “Nah.” I’ve had flat tops, I’ve had this or that and I think that, you know, especially being a non-binary person of color and realizing how people treated me you know, with a flat top, or with a fade, or with these very masculine looks…kind of changed the way that I was treated. By cops, by security guards, by like all these “people of power” that you know, could take my life away at any moment.

Um, and so it really came down to not just, and I’m sure it does for many queer folks, it came down to not just like how do I feel the best in my gender but how do I also create a space of safety around myself? And so, this was kind of the thing that did that for me. I have this weird side swoop, which is really funny because I think it just confuses people for the most part. But, in that confusion, and not— having it not result in absolute terror, gives them type of comfort in some way. Which is like, a very interesting thing that we’re sitting here trying to figure out how to identify ourselves best, and we have to sometimes look outward—because our experience does change the way we feel about ourselves.

 It’s interesting for myself to have seen that journey and even on facebook, I think I only— I think I started Facebook again. ‘Cause you know we delete it sometimes. I started it again when I had a flat top, so even looking back at pictures of me with a flat top, I’m like, “Wow, this person looks like they’re just trying to figure it out.” You know, [both laugh]

**Molly**: Yes!

**Madin**: and um, you know it’s very funny but, that was— that was part of the figuring it out. I’m thankful for all the stages. I really hope that you get to find one that you don’t just feel like it’s “O-K”. I would love for everyone that I know to be able to have the exact look that they want. One of my youth that I saw yesterday, they’re a trans boy, it’s like the second time that he’s pregnant which really is difficult for many reasons, but— this is the second time that I’ve been like, “Oh, okay, let’s get you a couple of binders, because they’re just going to continue to grow and then let’s like cut your hair and make you feel like you’re yourself again because your body is telling you all these other types of things and people around you are going to want to start touching your belly. It’s incredible what a haircut can do. People can see you with a short hair cut and a big belly and think that it’s a beer gut as opposed to, “That’s a female body that I own because I’m a human man on the planet Earth and I can touch it any time I want””

**Molly**: [laughs] Yep. [Madin laughs] You mentioned how the way that we’re perceived and the way that we’re interacted with sort of influences our identity as well, do you feel that if you lived in a world that wasn’t fearful of Black masculinity do you think that your presentation would be different in any way?

**Madin**: I do. I can remember being very young and, you know, junior high, and dressing in what I thought was drag, and… you know, ending up looking like a very spelt version of Cleo from *Set It Off.* And you know, the first representation of like Black, AFAB masculinity was Queen Latifah playing a bank robber. [Molly laughs] You know, so there’s just like not a— for myself there wasn’t that representation, so I understood too early on that it was going to be a difficult struggle, you know, to be able to find exactly what that was um, and mostly because of outward influences. Like, very little because of how I actually felt about myself, although, those things had morphed because of how other people saw me.

Um, but, even when it comes to that if folks didn’t see Black women, period, as being more masculine or being able to be more masculine, than you know, white men, it would be easier to be feminine on top of that. You know, there’s this whole other layer. I put on a dress and I feel like a football player in a dress, and that’s okay, if that were okay for the way that I was viewed by the world. But, unfortunately it’s not.

**Molly**: Well, I have one or two more questions for you, but is there anything that we have not talked about that you definitely wanna talk about, or that you’re thinking about right now?

**Madin**: What’s been on my mind most recently is trying to change the mind of parents of queer kids of color. That feels like it’s where the disconnect is happening. In a similar way that I see our elders having to assimilate in order to be respected or, for safety reasons, there’s this other level of parents with queer kids— parents of color with queer kids of color, that I really wanted to start to disintegrate.

But, there’s this feeling there around, you know, if they’re a first generation family, around just being normal. There’s a feeling around you know, Blackness where there— the way that black men were emasculated during slave times was my sodomizing. So, there’s this whole feeling around gayness in the Black community that doesn’t need to exist. And so, that’s kind of where my head is right now, is how to we actually start to dismantle the idea that homosexuality is emasculating or taking away— or defeminizing. My own, my own parents, [laughs] you know, see my masculinity as something that takes away— my own father sees that as taking away from his own masculine identity.

**Molly**: Oof.

**Madin**: He would never say it, but it’s something that happens because of the way that we were brought up, and dowries, and all of these things that— like, “No ones gonna want my kid because they’re not feminine enough” and it’s how are we going to— you know, it’s just set in there so deeply that— that’s kind of where my mind has been, and you know, if we can start to dismantle that um, levels of immigrant families and families of color.

Not just white families, because you know I got to these conferences for queer kids that are all under the age of eighteen. The youngest gender-queer kid I met was like four, and they were all white. Most of them were white, I’d say close to ninety-five percent of them were white. And then the families of color—the five percent that were there— I hoard around them. Like, “Let’s talk. What’s up? How do we switch this? Can you talk to your friends that have queer kids? Like, what can we do?” And so, yeah— that’s been my main scape for the moment, and it just sits on my brain just like Project Q did, it sits on my brain just like this tour did of being able to be accessible to youth across the country, it’s the same thing of “This is how we start to change this” again. This is how we start to create conversation.

**Molly:** Yeah! I know that a lot of folks will want to support you, so I was wondering if you could talk about how to become a member of Project Q or any other way that folks can support you remotely.

**Madin:** Yes! So you can go to [ProjectQ.me](http://projectq.me), which is our website, and on there you can see all of the different places that we’ll be in America this coming October— October 2018— and um, either come in person and show your support or go online and show your support by purchasing merchandise, becoming a member, even ten bucks a month—which is honestly what we spend on our run to Starbucks— can really change lives. And we use those funds to keep our community center open, we use those funds to work on the trailer, and we actually have a fundraiser right now on the Facebook, which is [Facebook.com/ProjectQ](http://facebook.com/ProjectQ) we need nine thousand dollars in order to keep home afloat and be okay on the road for a full month’s, and I believe right now we are about two thousand and two hundred dollars in and uh, we have about a month and a half to get the rest and so, you know, folks can go on there and donate.

 It would definitely do us good and you know, just realizing folks for yourself where you’re like, “I don’t— I wanna be able to help, I think about this demographic a lot but I don’t know what to do.” You can know that like, we’re doing the right thing with the dollars that you put into our community. We’re very grassroots. We’re— it’s literally myself, and my wife [laughs] doing the work. We have volunteers, and that’s about it. That’s it. We’re just funneling any dollar we get for the past, you know, seven years, into this worthy cause, so.

**Molly**: The way we always end this show is by asking, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**Madin**: In my ideal world… what would the future of gender look like… they say that feminism is believing in the idea that the sexes should be equal, and being a gender-queer person, I believe that’s exactly what we’re doing, is creating equality amongst the genders by not instituting it in our vernacular, in our language. The same thing I said earlier, about being able to give language to who I was by saying, “This is gender-queer. Wonderful. I identify with that. That sounds great.” [laughs] Is the same thing that is instituted by putting gender on anything, but in the inverse. A woman that you know as “Susie”, you know, anything that you know about a “Susie”, that was a woman, at that age, you’ve already put that baggage on her subconsciously, so— taking that part out of the equation and taking gender out of the equation gives us all a chance to see each other on a level that doesn’t at least have that part of the package. The future of gender would be just that, like an actual equalizing of the genders.

[*Gender Reveal* theme plays in background]

**Molly**: That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. If you had a good time, please send the show to a friend, share it on social media, or help us pay for the show at [Patreon.com/gender](http://patreon.com/gender) or [PayPal.me/MollyWoodstock](http://paypal.me/MollyWoodstock). If you donate five dollars or more, I’ll send you stickers, and maybe some other fun surprises, too!

Thank you so much to everyone who left us thoughtful reviews on iTunes last week, it really really warmed my heart. If you’re listening in the iTunes or Apple podcast app, that’s the one that just called Podcasts and it’s purple, and you haven’t clicked that five star review, maybe you could do that right now? It’d be really wonderful. Or not. Whatever you want.

If you have questions or comments about the show, if you have some questions for future guests, if you have ideas for “This Week In Gender” topics, if you have questions about gender, if you have anything like that, you can reach us on Twitter at @Gendereveal, that’s “gender reveal” with one “r”, you can reach me via email at gendereveal@gmail.com, that’s also with one “r”, or you can reach us via the anonymous Google form in the show notes.

I always love hearing from you so much, even if I don’t respond right away because of like, time, and work, and anxiety, and like general overstimulation and overwhelm. I still really appreciate hearing from you and I love you so much. Thank you so much for being here and for listening.

This show 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.

[theme song ends]