

Babette ([00:00](#)):

So, Ally, I kind of have a gender problem.

Ally ([00:06](#)):

Well, what do you mean?

Babette ([00:07](#)):

I've identified as non-binary for about six years now, but I'm not sure if I have anything to show for it, if that makes sense.

Ally ([00:15](#)):

Whoa.

Babette ([00:15](#)):

I don't know.

Ally ([00:21](#)):

Whoa, yeah.

Babette ([00:23](#)):

Nothing's really changed in terms of my reality, my appearance over this time, because in that sense, I haven't really taken any steps, particularly towards transition.

Ally ([00:32](#)):

Wow.

Babette ([00:34](#)):

I started T and I stopped it because I was lazy. I was bad at injections. I'm scared of needles. And then, the gel, half the time I'm just like, "Eh, I'm kind of tired. I don't really feel like putting it on." I can't really commit to breast reduction because insurance is ass and it's exhausting, and I feel like half the time my gender is nothing and doesn't fit into language at all. And then, the other half of the time I'm thrown into this crisis of if I'm trans at all. But obviously, cis people don't think about this much, about their gender.

Ally ([01:06](#)):

Yeah. Literal autopilot. Yes. Oh, my God, that's so interesting.

Babette ([01:13](#)):

Yeah. So, it's just these cycles and these spirals that kind of happen year after year. I would very much describe my gender experience as one big spiral, and I guess I feel just a little envious of folks who maybe have a more, quote unquote, linear transition.

([01:28](#)):

I know that this isn't my experience, but it does feel kind of weird to be in this third non-binary space. I'm not going in any direction in particular, and in that sense, my gender feels very boundless, but also maybe a little bit untethered. Does that make sense?

Ally ([01:46](#)):

Yes. I feel the same way. I feel very envious of people who transition, take T and turn into a fucking quarterback. They're just... Found it.

Babette ([01:59](#)):

Right. Exactly.

Ally ([02:00](#)):

Wow. I love what you said about I have nothing to show for it. You're like, "No interest was paid out. I have spent six years." Oh my God.

Babette ([02:09](#)):

Just being here. You can have these thoughts about yourself and you can go through these deep interrogations about yourself and gender, but on the outside I look exactly the same.

Ally ([02:17](#)):

Oh, my God. Yes.

Babette ([02:18](#)):

Nothing has changed. Nothing has happened, really. And so, it's kind of this weird place of that I'm dating people who are transitioning and friends with folks who are transitioning, and it almost feels like, "Okay, let me just shut up because your experience is so much more bigger and important than mine in some ways." You know what I mean?

Ally ([02:36](#)):

Yes. Totally. Totally.

Babette ([02:37](#)):

You are actively going through something. I am not going through anything. I'm kind of staying the same. I'm staying here, which is tough. It feels important to also not take up space from folks who are going to be made more vulnerable because they're changing their appearance, but then I'm just in this place of... I even feel uncomfortable talking about it now. I'm like, "Oh, I'm spiraling about nothing... Kind of." I don't know.

Ally ([02:58](#)):

No, totally, but it's not nothing. It is wondering if you're trans enough to say that you're trans or something like that.

Babette ([03:06](#)):

No, exactly.

Ally ([03:07](#)):

It's fake. You're definitely valid, but there's just no models for this really fun, swirly middle ground that's extremely real, and I think the experience of so many people.

Babette ([03:21](#)):

Exactly. That's exactly how I feel, and I feel like in many ways this show is just kind of a selfish venture for me to talk to those kinds of people. You know what I mean? I want to talk to people who have a similar experience, specifically Black folks who know and understand that these colonial ideas about the gender binary were never made for us. And so, unpacking that is going to look very complicated and finding your own understanding of gender is very complicated.

maya ([03:53](#)):

Am I even queer?

Speaker 4 ([03:54](#)):

I think I want to take testosterone.

Speaker 5 ([03:56](#)):

I'm wearing men's underwear right now.

Speaker 6 ([03:57](#)):

Is that a boy? Is that a girl?

Speaker 5 ([03:59](#)):

Man, woman, cisgender, transgender, we're born into language.

maya ([04:03](#)):

Butch, femme, T girl.

Speaker 8 ([04:04](#)):

Decolonized.

maya ([04:05](#)):

Queer, trans, BIPOC.

Speaker 8 ([04:06](#)):

Neurodivergent.

Speaker 4 ([04:08](#)):

Cisgender, hetero, patriarchal, capitalist, girl boss.

maya (04:10):

Queer femme, lipstick every day.

Ally (04:12):

T for T, fag boy relationship.

Speaker 4 (04:14):

Butch.

Speaker 5 (04:15):

Boyish and spritely.

maya (04:17):

The softer, more fake.

Speaker 4 (04:19):

Oh, but you're so feminine. You're so feminine.

Speaker 8 (04:21):

Attraction to a hot T boy.

Speaker 4 (04:23):

I used sexuality to try to understand my gender.

Babette (04:26):

What does it look like for non-binary people to quote unquote transition?

Speaker 9 (04:30):

I was a boy. If I was looking down at the memory, I was a boy.

Babette (04:33):

It's really difficult to look at gender identity head on.

Speaker 8 (04:38):

Wait, I think I'm trans.

Babette (04:47):

Today we're going to go on a bit of a journey into the intersections of Blackness and gender. So, we decided to call up an old friend of mine who was a huge role model for me in my own exploration of gender.

maya (05:02):

My name is Maya Fino. I usually them pronouns. I am a Black, queer, non-binary fat culture worker based in Brooklyn, New York. Born and raised in Durham, North Carolina. Prison abolitionist, Black, queer, feminist, Black anarchist.

Babette ([05:19](#)):

Period. Just to give a little bit of background to our listeners, we went to college together around the same time. You were a few years older than me, but I really wanted to reach out to you and talk to you for this podcast because I was just saying you played such a large role in my political education, even if it was just observing you from afar, just being great, especially as a more femme-presenting non-binary person. And I've kind of had my own journey as a non-binary person, of being "Am I trans mask, am I not?" Because it feels like those are really the only terms that are available. It's like, "Oh, are you trans mask? Are you not trans mask? Are you trans femme?" What does that look like? But the making of this podcast has really been a process of me understanding that my gender is maybe something that exists outside of language that we might have access to, and I feel like you are somebody that embodies that really well. With that being said, what words do you use to describe your gender? And the second part of that question is if Western and colonial language surrounding gender didn't exist, how would you describe your gender? How do you describe your gender on your own terms, I guess.

maya ([06:20](#)):

I think for me, I often use non-binary, and I think that that's because of some of the Western constraints of English. But I think in terms of my gender identity, it's interesting that you say femme presenting because I myself, I don't identify as femme. I think that I...

Babette ([06:36](#)):

Wow.

maya ([06:36](#)):

Yeah, I don't.

Babette ([06:37](#)):

I just put that on you. I'm sorry.

maya ([06:39](#)):

No, I think that for a while I definitely did identify as the non-binary femme, but I think of some of what you got at, the binary between masc and femme, and often how it's forced and attached to people without their permission or without checking in on them first, in some ways, I feel really replicates the two gender binary. And so if I don't identify as femme, I think that I have experienced Black girlhood, I'm aligned with Black girlhood, or I have a Black feminist praxis. I think that I'm dedicated to the liberation of Black people who are oppressed because of their genders, but I think myself, I feel like if I were to think about my gender in my head, it just feels kind of like the cosmos. Just fully unknowable even to myself. Deep, deep expansiveness. I guess how I would or wish I could really speak to my gender outside of the Western colonial constraints and binaries would probably be just like, I'm gender expansive.

([07:35](#)):

I can't really see myself as fully within the constraints of femme, masc, woman, man, and I don't really want to. Because I think in so many ways gender is inherently tied, as it's constructed today in 2023, it's tied a lot to western European colonialism, white supremacy, upholding and meeting standards of womanhood or manhood that I don't want to and I don't feel beholden to. I also think if you deviate from those by being non-binary or trans or gender queer or even gender-nonconforming, you see so much backlash. And I think that that is clear because genders and gender roles... Well, not necessarily gender roles, but gender as it's forced upon people is very much so tied to dominance and oppression. Because otherwise I don't think there'd be so much anger and backlash against trans youth, against trans women in particular, trans Black women in particular, but yeah, I guess gender expansive.

Babette (08:35):

I mean, you're highlighting exactly what I'm thinking about. Almost femme and masc, I know those terms obviously can feel very affirming for folks, and I think that's sometimes why I'm like, "Oh, maybe this person identifies as femme," but I think you're highlighting that's kind of another trap. I think in some ways, and I think it's my own projection because I'm going through that in my head over myself. Like, "Am I masc? Am I femme?" No. It's a trap that you almost have to exit, and I feel like I'm now starting to understand, trying to understand the process of exiting out of that completely. But yeah, it just feels like another trap, and so I feel very grateful for you thinking about it in terms of expansiveness feels like really useful.

maya (09:13):

No, I appreciate it. And I also don't blame you because I think in so many ways gender is tied to our expression. And I think that there are so many ways in which when people see you and attribute things to your gender or attribute a gender onto you, it can mean precarity, it can mean getting benefits. The reality is I don't experience trans misogyny, and I think that that's, even if someone doesn't... A trans femme person doesn't identify as a trans woman, there's still a different experience and a different level of violence they would experience, to me as someone who is often regarded as femme.

Babette (09:46):

Right. Could you talk about what your journey has been like and kind of understanding yourself as a gender expansive person? How did you come to understand yourself in your own language, on your own terms?

maya (09:56):

Because I spent, I guess a decent amount of my life thinking that I was cis. I didn't really think about my gender because reality is cis people don't usually have to think or really interrogate their gender, even though they should. Also, the fact that I am from the south. From, I guess not necessarily conservative, but rather Christian Black community in Durham, North Carolina. I think in some ways there just wasn't that space to really even question gender or question gender roles was very much so girl, boy, and that's just it. So, I honestly didn't really feel or think that there was any possibilities of not having to abide by a two-gender binary until maybe college. Meeting I think specifically people of color broadly who were thinking about their gender or being explicitly like, "I'm non-binary, or I'm trans femme, trans masc." And seeing, I guess, the freedom I would say that these friends were claiming for themselves in self-determining their gender.

[\(10:58\)](#):

I didn't know if I necessarily in college thought all the time about, "Oh, maybe I'm not cis," and probably not until my junior or senior year of college, probably senior year is when I seriously started to think, "Oh, I don't know if womanhood is necessarily right for me or I don't think that's the way to describe my gender. I think for me, what I also feel like is an element of my gender, it's something that I haven't really been able to articulate until recent years, or honestly the last year or two, is as a fat Black person, I've always felt or realized, I've always felt like I failed womanhood, or I could never reach those standards because so much of womanhood is tied to whiteness, is tied to thinness. And those are just standards that I don't want to reach and never will. I found, I guess, so much freedom and self-determining as a non-binary person and getting to view all parts of myself without shame.

[\(11:54\)](#):

Because I think really once I really started thinking about what cis womanhood means, I started to really feel like, "Oh, this has always been stifling." It's always felt like squeezing into a shoe, I guess, that's a little too small, and just no matter what, it's always going to be uncomfortable. Really, it was seeing people free themselves from a gender binary, seeing friends do that that gave me the permission within myself to finally start questioning why I felt tied to cisgender, or I guess masking as cisgender.

Babette [\(12:23\)](#):

I think a theme that's been coming up in talking to folks, especially Black folks, is yeah, what happened after you kind of fail at a certain gender? I felt like I failed at Black girlhood in certain ways. I just felt like, "Oh, I'm not performing what it means to be a girl in some ways." And then what happens after gender failure? What are the things, what are ways that you should try to figure out and navigate yourself?

[\(12:48\)](#):

Yeah. I feel like through my childhood, I probably identified as non-binary, but just didn't have that language for it, but I was, "Oh, I'm not really doing a good job at this. None of these boys have crushes on me." That kind of rejection. Right?

maya [\(13:01\)](#):

No, that's a really good point. I feel like those markers of cis girlhood, definitely didn't reach them or didn't necessarily want them or kind of was always just a weird, nerdy kid. Always had crafted my own space. Now you're expecting me to think like, "Oh, that was the inkling of non-binaryness."

Babette [\(13:16\)](#):

No, that was there, trying to figure out, "Okay, I don't with this, so what am I going to do? Maybe that makes me a weirdo. Maybe that makes me like the other kids don't want to hang out with me very much, but we're here."

maya [\(13:27\)](#):

We're here.

Babette [\(13:29\)](#):

Could you tell me a little bit about your work as a model? What criteria do your favorite photographers to work with all have in common that make you feel affirmed as a Black non-binary person and model?

maya ([13:41](#)):

I think that probably my favorite photographer as a model so far has actually been one of my closest friends here in New York. Her name is Lexi Webster, and she's a brilliant Black trans femme photographer. I think what I love about her in particular is the constant affirming of me as a non-binary person. And not only that, I think it's not only the simple making sure that I'm not misgendered on set or just affirming my name, my pronouns, which I think are just the little things, the bare minimum, really, in life... But also I think whatever vision I have on set is allowed in that space. I also think that it's really, really good to have a photographer who thinks about accessibility or thinks about what poses or what movement you may or may not want to do and making sure that you feel good on set.

([14:30](#)):

I think especially a fat person or visibly fat person, it feels good to have a fat-friendly set or just the willingness to listen when I say, "Hey, that seating may not be accessible," or mentioning those moments in the built environment where I need accessibility and having that listened to is very good. And definitely not all photographers do that. I always feel very seen when I'm captured by her, not only as a darker skinned Black person and making sure that my skin actually looks well photographed, but also as a fat person having a stylist on set, a hair person on set because I have locks. And it's not even necessarily my identity, it's just who I am. It's just when I walk into a room, my existence, I think that so many times as a model, there's either I need to bring my own clothes to set because I'm over a size 18, or hairstylists just look at my hair, spritz something on it and say, "Okay, you're done."

([15:22](#)):

So, it's just the lack of care there. Or a makeup artist who isn't great on Black skin, or a photographer who might be fat-phobic and wants me to hide my double chin. There are those elements that I actually think are intrinsically tied to my non-binaryness that always feel affirmed by Lexi. And I think that to be honest, it's very, very, very far and few photographers that really grasp that, or are really respectful of trans fat disabled Black models.

([15:52](#)):

It's still very much so an uphill battle in the modeling industry because in so many ways it's an industry. It just is a reflection of all of the isms, all of the systems of dominance and oppression that affect every other part of everyday lives. There's nothing immune to that within the modeling world. It feels really good to know that there are few photographers where I'm just... Okay, I know that when I walk into a room with you, it's going to be an experience that doesn't feel painful or pulling teeth or me gritting my teeth and waiting to be done with it.

Babette ([16:22](#)):

You just mentioned maybe some photographers want you to hide your double chin. You don't see double chins in editorial photographs, and it's like, I have a double chin from most angles. What would that be like if you did see that? Maybe I wouldn't cringe on a photo so much of like, "Oh, I have a double chin." I'd like to see some more double chins. I'm just, it's here. I have one. A lot of people have them.

maya ([16:43](#)):

Absolutely.

Babette ([16:44](#)):

Damn.

maya ([16:45](#)):

No, I feel you.

Babette ([16:47](#)):

Yeah, so I'm curious, do you have any traditions or rituals or practices that you do to help you feel connected to your body?

maya ([16:56](#)):

Modeling is a part of it, but I would say fashion broadly, the act of adoring myself in clothes that I like. If you're a fat Black person, so much of your life is being told that you shouldn't exist or that your body as it currently is something deviant or wrong. For me, there's something very beautiful about wearing super bright colors, or wearing clothes with a lot of texture or structure... pieces that are not quiet. I love it because I feel like it just allows myself to take up public space, or just remind myself that I do have a place and a right to exist in the public sphere. It's frustrating that I feel like that reminder has to be given, but just looking at how much fat phobia and transphobia and anti-Blackness and misogyny that exists in our world, it's so, so critical for Black, non-binary, and trans people to exist in this world.

([17:53](#)):

I know there's a lot of critiques of representation and how it fails and can be very liberal, and I don't necessarily disagree, but I think also there's an overcorrection with that. I do think representation does matter in that media and culture, absolutely, we consume so much in our everyday lives. There's rarely anybody who doesn't consume some form of culture. It's important when I go out, or just when I engage in modeling, that photograph leaves evidence for other fat people. My double chin leads. I think also body modification. I love a good tattoo, have a little partial sleeve at this point. Love my little gold septum. I love a little gold jewelry, body jewelry moment. It looks good. I love it.

([18:37](#)):

I think also some things like reading, I don't get to do it as often, but that does make me feel very much so in my body. Getting to sit down, I guess, comprehend, critique, intellectualize. Reading, film, engaging in media or film critique or written critique is something that I actually really enjoy. It's affirming for the self. I think also having good food and being around community like friends, those are other ways that I feel like I can, I guess, affirm or be present in my body.

Babette ([19:10](#)):

I'm wondering maybe for the listeners, you can talk about what it means to be a cultural worker, because I think that's a very specific kind of title that you're giving yourself. Because I think give you so many things. You're a theorist, you're a scholar, you're all of these things, but I think you are specifically choosing the title cultural worker?

maya ([19:25](#)):

Yeah. I, for the longest time, struggled to, I guess, find a way to identify myself that I think encapsulated all the things that I do. I do feel like I'm kind of multidisciplinary. Nothing felt exactly right, and then I read an article, I think it's called "Culture Worker, Not A Creator," and I really appreciated it because it

pushed back on the idea of simply identifying as a content creator, or as a creative, terms that focus on the individual, on just a self. And I think I really like cultural worker because it's a term that really does imply a political responsibility and duty to making culture, media, art, modeling, whatever have you, that is in service, I would say, of creating a more revolutionary culture. Toni Cade Bambara said, "Cultural work is meant to make revolution irresistible." Identifying as a cultural worker, to me, positions myself very clearly within that tradition of I would say predominantly Black radical thinkers and organizers, Black feminists, scholars, intellectuals, who've created, written, spoke, made art that have all been in service of I think furthering a revolutionary ideology, revolutionary movement in the United States, but also globally.

[\(20:45\)](#):

So yeah, I guess for me it encapsulates the political education, the writing, the research, the modeling, all the aspects of my work as something that's not done solely for my own pleasure, though part of it is. Part of it is definitely a part of my interest and my pleasure, but it really, really is that ultimately I'm not just an individual, I'm connected to a community. I'm connected to movements who are dedicated in seeing a world free of the hook said white supremacist, imperialist, cis-hetero patriarchy.

Babette [\(21:18\)](#):

Exactly.

[\(21:20\)](#):

Along that same note, what does a liberated Black and trans future look like to you?

maya [\(21:27\)](#):

I would say a liberated Black and trans future for me is a future in which every single person, of course, primarily Black and trans people, can self determine their gender. Be autonomous human beings with freedom from persecution, violence, fear, getting pathologized, all of that, everything that stigmatized... Everything, all the elements that currently limit the livelihoods of Black and trans people in our current, I guess, world order would no longer exist.

[\(22:02\)](#):

I think that we would be able to see Black trans people live into their eighties instead of the statistics that say that a Black trans woman's life expectancy is what, 35? Which is disgusting and horrible. I really see a world that's liberated or a future that's liberated where Black and trans people in particular are free from premature death and not only are surviving, but also thriving to live and experience the world to their fullest capacity and their wildest dreams.

[\(22:36\)](#):

And I see a world in which Black and trans people's needs are met, and where there is no need for mutual aid because capitalism has been abolished. At that point, or if there is a need or needs to be met, there's already structures in place to meet those needs in ways that aren't extractive or exploitative of other parts of the world or other communities and groups.

[\(22:59\)](#):

A liberated Black and trans future, honestly, requires liberation from all of the racist, transphobic, fat, phobic, ableist, capitalist... All of those things, all the things, policies, laws, that affect the lives of us today. I think that fundamentally in this world, the ability to self determine one's gender is not only

incredible for trans people, but also for all Black people, all people broadly. When cis women and cis feminism forget, when trans people get to live free and be free, that freedom spills outward and benefits everyone.

(23:35):

I just want to see everybody, all Black trans people's needs met, material conditions that are abundant financially, economically, socially.

Babette (23:45):

My next question is when do you think the United States will fall?

(23:48):

Joking.

(23:49):

That's what needs to happen. It needs to happen, right?

maya (23:52):

Yeah, I was about to answer that seriously.

Babette (23:53):

Please do, honestly.

maya (23:55):

You're right. It just has to happen. Quite literally, this country is the heart of darkness. It's really just like this country is hell, and the world deserves so much more. I'm constantly thinking about Black trans people under the diaspora who are suffering not only the bullshit of violence, of transphobia in their locations, that are, let's be real, exports of usually white Christian fascists and missionaries who brought this, the foolishness of white patriarchy into the global south.

(24:28):

But also the exploitation and extraction of colonialism, of US militarism. If I had to wrap this up, it's just to be pro-trans liberation is also to be anti imperialist. Fundamentally. Because we cannot have a liberated future for Black and trans people in which the United States still exists.

Babette (24:47):

This is a little bit of an aside, but do you still have folks in Sierra Leone?

maya (24:50):

Oh, most of my extended family, yeah, lives over there.

Babette (24:53):

Wow. I wonder if you have any thoughts on your ancestry also at the intersection of gender. Is that something that you think about at all as someone whose family was ripped away from Africa, West Africa, many, many, many years ago? I think sometimes folks with the diaspora can have a little bit of a

fantasy of, I mean, it's true, but it's sometimes being like, "Oh, our ancestors didn't know these colonial conceptions of gender," which is absolutely true.

[\(25:20\)](#):

So, I wonder for you, is there a tangible way in which you were able to kind of connect to your ancestry and be like, "Oh, no, I know my ancestors had different ways of living and being."

maya [\(25:30\)](#):

For me, it just kind of feels like body wisdom. I just know that Christian missionaries came and suddenly white cis hetero-patriarchy became this thing that is seen... It's really a revisionist history. It's seen that's something that's new, but I know, inherently I know, bare minimum, gender-expansive people did exist and still exists, of course, because there are queer and trans people in Sierra Leone, although there's a lot of persecution. But that's absolutely there. I know that historically, there were definitely gender roles, but not in the way in which men own all the property, or a man is inherently better or inherently more human than a woman. That's most western European. I feel like societies have developed their gender or come to terms with their gender formations. I think that there's much more examples of women owning property or women having financial and social and economic independence. Even just the nation state idea is something that was imposed upon during colonialism.

[\(26:33\)](#):

My family is from the land that's currently known as Sierra Leone, but the reality is my dad's tribe definitely did some migration, probably from the Malian Empire, 700, 800 years ago. But I think that culturally, the tribes of my family are from, because my mom and dad are from different tribes. Ancestral veneration is one of the biggest things, probably one of the biggest parts of my life. I know that there are many examples across different pantheons across West Africa. I think the Yoruba is a really good example, actually being trans deities, or deities that are gender-fluid, gender expressive. And I just think that that's important for people to remember that none of this is new. The African continent is quite literally the birthplace of humanity, so queerness is indigenous to Africa. Trans is indigenous to Africa.

[\(27:21\)](#):

I read recently, I think, some article, and it was speaking about pre-colonial examples of gender expansiveness on the African continent, but also when Europeans, I guess, had contact with other various societies and how in the 1400s when Europeans arrived, and I'm not sure the country currently is, it might be Honduras. It might be Belize. But just one of the first groups of people that were murdered by the conquistadors were what we would probably consider us trans women, but probably gender-expansive people. Trans people were often the first to be taken from us with the brutality of these regimes, which is also, of course, connects to current attacks on trans people and how... Attacks on trans people have always been the hard bringer of fascism and white supremacy and colonialism.

Babette [\(28:12\)](#):

Exactly.

maya [\(28:13\)](#):

There's also an account that I saw, maybe from the 1530s, of this Black person who was taken from Angola and they were enslaved, I believe, in Europe. They refused to be forced into the clothing that'd

be considered, I guess, traditional European men's clothing. They were just like, "No, I'm going to wear the clothes that I feel comfortable in, which is I guess more feminine clothing that I've been wearing in my community, in my tribe."

[\(28:35\)](#):

Some of the work that I've been doing at my job at the Center for Constitutional Rights has been being in solidarity with Ugandan activists, because Uganda, as a nation, has really cracked down on queerness. I guess homosexuality bills have been introduced that have really, really intense sentences. Most of the language from these bills are written by white evangelicals here in the United States, which is another form of colonialism. It's like Christian fascism.

[\(29:01\)](#):

Also part of our struggle as Black, queer, and trans people of the African diaspora refusing to let white Christians tell our stories and our histories and our truths.

Babette [\(29:13\)](#):

Yeah.

maya [\(29:14\)](#):

They're recognizing that it's harder to push some of the really horrible, I guess I would say, laws and policies that have rooted in Christian evangelical thought here in the US and so they're starting to export it to the African continent, Asia, other parts of the world.

Babette [\(29:28\)](#):

Wow. I didn't know that at all. That's crazy.

maya [\(29:30\)](#):

Yeah. I would look up Uganda recently. I'm pretty sure that recent homosexuality bill was written in Denver, Colorado.

Babette [\(29:38\)](#):

Oh my God.

maya [\(29:38\)](#):

That's what I'm saying. These white Christians are doing everything possible to remake the world, or continue to try and remake the world in their image since 1492. White supremacy, white patriarchy has tried so hard to disconnect us from our traditions, and I think all Black people have a right to reconnect. Even though I think it can be difficult or much harder due to the violence of the transatlantic slave trade and just how much memory was destroyed and genealogies were destroyed, but I think that every Black person has a birthright to the African continent. I think that that also means that we have a right to tell the truth about our histories, and that there are hella trans.

Ally [\(30:27\)](#):

Oh my God, Babette, I loved listening to that conversation. I feel like-

Babette ([30:32](#)):

Me, too.

Ally ([30:33](#)):

... pointing out how US imperialism has so much to do with violence against gender variant folks, not just in the US, but around the world, is super important.

Babette ([30:43](#)):

Yeah. Maya is just one of those people where anytime you speak to them, you end up learning so much. They're probably one of the smartest people that I know. I'm so glad that I got to catch up with them and hear about the person that they've become post-college. It's amazing to see all of the Black trans joy that we both get to feel and celebrate now.

([31:02](#)):

I guess on to now reflecting on how freeing it is to release yourself from all of these binary definitions of gender that we grew up with. It's so special and radical to do the work of unlearning those ideas of gender and the gender binary and reconnecting with yourself outside of all that bullshit.

Ally ([31:23](#)):

Totally. I think this self-reflection that's so important to everybody. I think trans people very unfairly have to do all of that work and healing because it just feels so wrong. But, on the other side, it's almost like a purgatory to not have it feel that bad and have to do something about it. I feel like especially cis people, if they prioritize this work around their gender and what really feels true to them, I just feel like we'd find a lot more common ground if we were all able to think outside of this binary.

Babette ([31:56](#)):

Yeah, 100%. I think maybe that's the thing that I'm learning about my own gender. At the top of this episode, I was talking about how I've been non-binary for six years, I have nothing to show for it, I have nothing... I don't have a medal. But for me, that embodied knowledge is the takeaway, and sometimes it's hard to remember that because it's not super tangible. It's not something I can hold. It's not something I can feel all the time, but it's something that I keep learning and embodying every day, and I think that's what I'm learning is the important work for me.

Ally ([32:29](#)):

Oh my God, totally. I just had this visual of trans people getting almost like AA chips. It's like your 60-day chip.

Babette ([32:38](#)):

No, exactly. Okay. I think I would feel a little better if I got something like that.

Ally ([32:44](#)):

Oh my God. Literally.

Babette ([32:46](#)):

Just a tiny bit. Just like-

Ally ([32:46](#)):

What do we get instead of that? We get party bracelets. Wristbands.

Babette ([32:51](#)):

No, exactly.

Ally ([32:52](#)):

Yeah. Honestly, I would encourage anyone listening to this who doesn't necessarily consider themselves trans or non-binary to do a little bit of homework or a very fearless inventory of their own gender experience. What is working for them? What is not working for them?

([33:09](#)):

I remember early on, I think lesbianism for me was a really fun playground to start trying new gender roles on because you're like, "Wow, there isn't just a man and a woman. It's actually two women in this relationship." It felt so freeing, and I don't identify with that anymore, but it was a very fun, blue skies, anything goes kind of period to be, "What really works for me? What am I just doing out of rote responsibility or what do I feel like I owe this person?" I don't know. It just feels fun to release yourself from that automaton existence.

Babette ([33:45](#)):

Absolutely. I guess the thing that I kind of go through is that when I'm not dating anybody or hooking up with anybody, I've been really single the past two years because I moved to a new city. And I think those are the moments that I just kind of forget that I have a body, if that makes sense? When you're just by yourself every day for two years. But recently I've started very casually seeing someone, and I get so gendery in relation to other people when I'm hooking up with someone. I cannot think about my body for two years, and then as soon as I hook up with someone, I'm like, "Oh, I'm a boy." Oh, great. It's very funny. It's very funny, and so...

Ally ([34:25](#)):

Oh, that's so interesting.

Babette ([34:27](#)):

Yeah. I don't know. It's very performative of me. I'm like, I don't know. The world is my stage.

Ally ([34:33](#)):

Yeah. No, I think that that's extremely important because you might be like, "LOL, this is so performative," but you're like, "No, I'm actually finding a groove that feels amazing and fun." Or playful, I guess, even.

Babette ([34:45](#)):

Totally.

Ally ([34:46](#)):

I know a lot of my stuff is very in the D and D fantasy world, so it's very fun for me to be able to start with an actual blank piece of paper that I'm filling in with a name and stats about this character, and I just played a trans guy before I was ever trans because I just think it's interesting.

Babette ([35:05](#)):

Right, that's how it starts. I just think, right. I'm just a little extra fascinated. I'm like, hmm. What's going on there.

Ally ([35:12](#)):

I'm just a little fascinated. All my tabs are open about this particular subject.

Babette ([35:21](#)):

So fucking funny.

([35:28](#)):

Next week, we're continuing this journey of figuring out what gender looks like outside of the Western colonial binary, and we're going to be diving into what it means to transition as a non-binary person with tattoo artist Jalen Hamilton.

Jalen Hamilton ([35:41](#)):

I was interested in taking testosterone, but there was a whole thing where it was almost kind of this unspoken rule, only if you want to be a man, you take testosterone. And I was just like, "I don't want to be a man. I just want to have facial hair and, I don't know, a deeper voice, but I don't think that necessarily would make me a man."

Ally ([36:09](#)):

Gender Spiral is an original podcast from Audiation. This episode was mixed by Matt Noble. Music is composed by Chanel Critchlow. Art is by Joey Hahn, with Graphics by Honey Hodges. The executive producers are Ireland Mitcham, myself, Allie Beardsley, my co-host, Babette Thomas, who's also our story editor, and Sandy Smolins.

Babette ([36:30](#)):

Huge thank you to our guest, Maya Fino. You'll find a link to their Instagram in the show notes. If you like, the show, please head over to patreon.com/genderspiralpodcast to support us and get access to fun stuff like our Discord server, bonus content, and complimentary merch. You might even find Ally's, personal Only Fans.

Ally ([36:49](#)):

It's just pictures of my dog's paws, everybody calm down.

([36:53](#)):

You can also check us out at genderspiralpod.com where you'll find a link to leave us a voicemail and ask us questions. Please tell us who you want to hear from, what you want to hear about. Tell us stuff about



your life. We might even use it on the show. And follow us at Gender Spiral. Subscribe wherever you get your podcasts and stay tuned. We're releasing a brand new episode every single week this summer.

Babette ([37:16](#)):

Tune in next week to Gender Spiral.

Ally ([37:18](#)):

Where you never have to spiral alone.