

Boom! Lawyered 104: Beckett Lansbury and Ally Sheedy on How to Be a Better Ally to Trans People

Imani Gandy: Welcome to another episode of Boom! Lawyered a Rewire Radio podcast hosted by the legal journalism team who would never launder money through multiple shell corporations in order to rig an election and then lie to the FBI about it. I'm Imani Gandy.

Jess Pieklo: And I'm Jess Pieklo.

Rewire.news is dedicated to bringing you listeners, the best reproductive rights and social justice commentary analysis news on the web. This Team Legal podcast is part of that mission. First, a big thanks to our subscribers and a welcome to our new listeners. Sit back, enjoy our legal nerdery and please, if you haven't already, subscribe and leave us a review. We love to read the five star ones on air.

Imani Gandy: We really do. This episode we are talking about the Trump administration's attacks on transgender people. After a disastrous confirmation hearing which heard a lot of talk about bears and guns and schools for some inexplicable reason, Betsy DeVos oozed her way into Trump's cabinet as his Secretary of Education. Almost immediately she tried to roll back legal protections in Title 9, attacking trans kids' rights to have equal access to facilities at schools that align with their gender. Bathrooms, locker rooms and such. Conservative state legislatures have been ramping up their quote unquote bathroom bills, which are merely bathroom discrimination bills, which mandate that transgender people use bathrooms that match their biological sex rather than their gender identity and there's no sign that these Conservatives are relenting. They're actually and literally the potty police.

Jess Pieklo: Sincerely. We can't even get into how they would actually enforce that. Meanwhile, conservatives are trying to get religious exemptions from even having to provide transgender patients medical care, for example, on the basis that their religious beliefs don't even recognize that people can be transgender or gender nonconforming.

Imani Gandy: In other words, they are saying out loud and in public that their religious beliefs do not recognize transgender and gender nonconforming people as actual real live human beings.

Jess Pieklo: They are just terrible, but our guests on this episode are not. They talk with us about their experiences being transgender and parenting a transgender child in the Trump years.

Imani Gandy: We are very excited about today's episode because we have two very special guests. Ally Sheedy is an actor, a teacher and an all around amazing woman. You probably remember her from such awesome movies as The Breakfast Club and if you're a fan of Psych, which is one of my favorite shows, she does an amazing guest spot on that show as well. Her son Beckett is a student and a Title IX activist and he's also transgender. We are very, very excited to have them here today to talk to us and we want to say thank you for joining us today.

Ally Sheedy : Thank you. We are thrilled to be here. I'm speaking for you Beckett.

Beckett Lansbury: Yes, thank you so much.

Ally Sheedy : We're thrilled.

Beckett Lansbury: That's totally fine, absolutely. Very happy to be here.

Imani Gandy: First we wanted to to start off by asking Beckett, we know that you prefer he and him pronouns because I read your Tumblr and your Tumblr's amazing.

Beckett Lansbury: Thank you.

Imani Gandy: But I wanted to ask you why it's important for people to ask that question of transgender people at the outset and why it's so important for transgender people to be able claim their own pronouns?

Beckett Lansbury: Absolutely. I definitely see there's a more pronoun awareness movement that's happening right now is that it's very important for trans people and also gender nonconforming and gender queer to be able to proclaim their own pronouns just because pronouns have a lot to do with how people are viewed in society by the world. If you're not in the room and you're introduced as he, people are going to have a certain expectation or something like that. A lot of the times pronouns are linked very, very closely to how a person is or wants to be viewed or portrayed in the world. Also they have a lot of social connotations, as I just said, that goes with them as if somebody's not in the room and they're introduced as he, somebody who hears that is going to have a very specific view about what that person is who they are.

It gets a little bit dicey when people are not able to self proclaim how they would like to be introduced, be it for being self identified or having people help proclaim their identity. And also just in general it's nice to be able to have a word that refers to you and states a claim about how you see yourself and self identify. In general, pronouns are something that people just usually take for granted. You never really think about it since the baby's born. They're a boy then there's no question about how are we going to refer to the child. It's really, really nice, for one thing to be able to have that power to preplan how you're identified and how other people are going to see you and identify you.

But then also it's nice to start talking about how you actually cannot just look at somebody and assume what their pronoun is. That large issue of pronouns is going right now instead of just having people who are trans only proclaiming what their pronouns are. For example, in a college setting a lot of the times in my undergrad it was only the trans people in the room that would say my pronouns are he, him, his, she, her, hers, they, them, theirs et cetera. But now what's happening is that professors in that large cross campuses and also just in schools and just in different organizations in meetings, people at large are being encouraged to proclaim their

pronouns just to show the variation, make it not as obvious or not make trans people feel like they have to be the one that are singled out or somebody could be, yeah, you know what I mean.

Imani Gandy: I really like the term pronoun awareness, that's a really great term. I also really like the fact that you said that more people should claim their pronouns. Cisgender people as well not just trans people because that was one of the questions that I had. I see a lot of people who sign off their emails for example, with their preferred pronouns and these are people that I know are cisgender. In my mind I was thinking, well is that something that is that an appropriation of some way or is that a way to support trans people. Now I know, I might add my pronouns to my email signature.

Beckett Lansbury: Yeah, exactly. It's really nice way to way to let people know, for one, that your general awareness of this is something that you have. I'm telling you that this is how I would like to be referred to in the third person, when I'm not referring to myself. Also it's just nice because again, makes it really nice for transgender, nonconforming and gender queer people to not be the only ones who are proclaiming their pronouns and then making it be like if you've proclaimed what your pronouns are then you're trans. More normalizes it.

Jess Pieklo: I really appreciate the normalizing point too because as we've seen in litigation around transgender rights the right has made it a point to mis-gender plaintiffs and that's a very intentional strategy to dehumanize and try to normalize the idea that gender nonconforming people, that gender nonconforming behavior and that transgender people in particular are quote unquote not normal, right?

Beckett Lansbury: Completely.

Jess Pieklo: That they are somehow different and we see them make those specific arguments that sex and gender are basically the same and that your biological sex determines completely who you are. The framing is very helpful and important for our listeners as well.

Beckett Lansbury: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Exactly what you touched on is the specific point of having it be like something you have absolutely no control over. No matter how you feel, no matter how you want to express yourself, no matter how you'd like to be in the world, something you had absolutely no control over is actually is actually going to dictate your entire existence and that exactly where the main point is. It's a very, very small, it's a very small favor to ask to be able to proclaim what you would like to be referred to as. The incessant need to not respect that from a lot of right wing and more conservative people in general. It's not really a grant stance to have.

Jess Pieklo: Right. I even see that playing out in culture generally when you think of, if cis men are going to disrespect each other in certain areas then they'll say something like "stop being such a pussy, right?"

Beckett Lansbury: Exactly.

Jess Pieklo: What's the connotation here?

Beckett Lansbury: Exactly. That touches onto a whole other branch which is the differences between how trans masculine people and trans feminine people are viewed in the world where at large there's a discrimination against trans people, gender nonconforming and gender queer people at large but when you get down to specifics, the more insults are geared towards femininity or proclaim femininity or anything on the femme spectrum. Even you can think of more insults that are more geared towards men being deprecated as female or as more womanly or girlish.

Definitely, a lot of the time where trans woman of color are by far the most marginalized and discriminated against group of people and they in media incessantly victimize the abuser of those women because the woman was planning themselves as a trans woman and living as a woman and didn't let the person know that they were trans. It's been the whole media another thing, places the victim on the actual abuser and murderer of the woman.

It leads into a whole other conversation really. Just the disrespect of just in the media just if, if you talk about Ash Whitaker or any case right now that's in the media. Just referring to the person as a pronoun that they're not self proclaiming as their own basically almost undermines the entire basis of that person's argument.

Imani Gandy: Ally, as a parent, what was your thought process?

Ally Sheedy : You hear how brilliant my kid is? My kid is brilliant.

Imani Gandy: Absolutely brilliant.

Ally Sheedy : My kid should be pleading the court cases. He should be a lawyer.

Imani Gandy: We always try to discourage people from going to law school but if anyone sounds like they should go to law school, it's Beckett for sure.

Jess Pieklo: I would support this statement for sure.

Imani Gandy: Definitely support this. As a parent, when Beck came out or told you that he was trans did you have any sort of reaction? Were you like, okay, great my kid is trans now, what can I do to help? Or did you have any stronger feelings? I would just want to know how you felt about it and maybe something that you share might be about to help any parents out there who might be trying to figure out how to respond or how to help their trans kid.

Ally Sheedy : At first I was scared about being left behind in the entire road here, on the road because Beck -- look, I still, this is years now and I still sometimes err. I make a mistake and start going Reb instead of Beck. It's not out of any kind of a judgment on Beck it takes a certain amount of practice especially if you're the parent to

change the name. I'm really good with the pronouns but sometimes the name because the name doesn't have much attachment to me except that it's the name that I knew. The name isn't female or male to me. Sometimes I make a mistake with Reb and with Beck.

But, when Beck told me and I was away working and he said that he found a clinic and he wanted to start taking hormones and I was really, really scared. I just thought, well first of all, I know nothing about this. I don't know about hormones, I don't know what they do, I don't know what's going on and Beck was adamant that he really needed to start the hormones and get this process. He had been identifying as gender queer and gender fluid and now he was saying he really feels that he identifies with being male and that the hormones were going to help him on his journey. I just got, I didn't have a judgment call on Beck himself I was just afraid. I was really afraid of the whole process.

I needed two things. I needed him to educate me in a very patient, loving way, not feel like I was making judgements just because I didn't understand. And also I needed to understand, I had to educate myself about what the hell the hormones were and what was going to happen. Also the first clinic, I have to say, that we went to, they were assuming that if a parent comes in and I was very emotional, granted, I went into to see the social worker and Beck had to sign a piece of paper saying it's okay for me to speak to that person. We were there together. I went in and I was really upset and saying I'm confused and I don't get it and I this and I that. They were not, the woman I was speaking to was not open to my side of things. She was just saying, "We're not here to serve you. We're only here to serve Beck."

Then, for various reasons that clinic also flipped me out a little bit. I just thought this is not, I think we can do it better. I made a phone call to friends that I knew because I've done work with the Ali Forney Center and got an in at Callen-Lorde which is an amazing place here in New York and they were great. We went down and Beck seemed happy there and liked his doctor and I felt, all right, I trust these people to dispense hormones, whatever that means. I did get a chance to speak to somebody who was a trans man, right Beck? Wasn't it?

Beckett Lansbury: He was ...

Ally Sheedy : Female to male. Female to male.

Beckett Lansbury: Yes.

Ally Sheedy : Remember?

Beckett Lansbury: Yes.

Ally Sheedy : What was his name? Finn. Finn, right?

Beckett Lansbury: Yes.

Ally Sheedy : Finn was great and sat down and just sat there. Crying through, my god, is my kid gonna change? I don't understand what's going to happen, blah, blah, blah. But listened really carefully. Didn't make me feel like I was critical or a problem or anything else and that was the first thing that was really helpful to me 'cause I needed a third party that was knowledgeable to go through this with me. Then after that, I just love Beck, so I wanted to support, I've always wanted to support Beck on whatever the particular journey is. The hormones have not been scary although some of the changes, I think, happen really fast only 'cause I don't see Beck for weeks at a time 'cause he's up in school or working or whatever.

I also needed a crash course education on all of the terms. On all of the issues. On everything that was going on because up at Bard College where Beck went, they're really, really as far as I'm concerned, really progressive and really proactive. That comes from the students more than it does from faculty. There was all sorts of ways of speaking and ways of understanding the world and ways of understanding gender that were brand new to me and I needed to educate myself, quite frankly. That's pretty much the answer to your question, was no. I didn't feel, I didn't have any feeling of I reject my child or how could you do this to me or blah, blah, blah. I had fear of what I didn't know or understand.

Imani Gandy: That's makes absolute sense because when it comes to people who are progressive and especially parents who are progressive who want to support their kid in whatever they do, whether it's a trans journey or coming out as lesbian, gay or bi, or deciding to go law school instead of become a musician, which is what I did.

Ally Sheedy : Right.

Imani Gandy: I'm happy that that's not nearly on the same level. But just that for whatever, seems to me that whatever choice your child makes, it's a matter of trying to understand that choice and support them if you're a good parent. Which you obviously are. As opposed to judgment or criticism but it seems to me just the public at large probably expects judgment and criticism from the parents of trans kids so it's nice to hear that there was none of that at the outset but what there was is that there was fear and confusion about what was going on.

Ally Sheedy : Fear, fear, fear.

Imani Gandy: Yeah, that seems like it would be normal because it's something you hadn't dealt with before and it was a new experience. It's nice that you found people that were there to talk to you about it but also that there were people who understood that the journey was Beck's to make. You were there to ...

Ally Sheedy : It's Beck's to make that's right. The other thing is the fear around this issue leads those people, specifically I can speak as a parent, leads you to think if you're, for me, if I'm afraid about this, then I therefore must be correct. There must be a problem. I'm not seeing my kid's journey reflected in broader society so I don't understand it. I'm afraid of all the repercussions and what does this mean. I recognized and identified my state as being one of fear. That was what I needed to

address rather than I the parent who was all knowing, and I know which is best for you. I have my own criticisms and my own preconceived issues, notions. That for me had to go right by the wayside and I had to admit first to myself that I knew absolutely nothing about what I was talking about. Nothing.

Jess Pieklo: I have two kids myself and the idea that you just say, "I don't know what the hell I'm doing." Is not the default setting that happens when you have a kid, especially from societal ways. It's I'm supposed to know what I'm doing. There's baby books, there's an entire library that tells me what to do.

Ally Sheedy : We know if the kid is sick they might need to go the doctor and get antibiotics. I know that you need perform certain tasks if you wish to get into college. I know there's a basic parenting things that you know. You get to know your kid but that kind of thing. This whole other field, I was completely ignorant which leads to fear and projection of, "oh my god, what could go wrong here there and the other place." And I still struggle with that. Beck is doing a Bard prison initiative and tutoring, it's inmates, right Beck?

Beckett Lansbury: Incarcerated people. My students.

Ally Sheedy : See.

Beckett Lansbury: You're fine.

Ally Sheedy : Right there. Wrong term. Incarcerated people. I'm anxious because Beck is male now, Beck is in there with men and I just don't want to say anything and I keep thinking, okay, Bard must know what they're doing. Still, I'm worried. Oh my god. Do you know what I mean? Couldn't they have him in with 16 year old girls that are somehow in there? That's what I mean. [Beckett laughs] I'm glad you find that funny! Anyway, it's a constant journey.

Jess Pieklo: I appreciate the honesty and the humanizing of that because good intentions can go awry and that in the parenting context that can happen here. Beck, you've been pretty public about your transition. You've share your experience on your Tumblr and with viewers on YouTube and I'm curious what made you decide to be so public about your journey.

Beckett Lansbury: Growing up I'm definitely part of the generation that flew -- I don't want to say generation, I grew up with computers and with internet access. I pretty quickly through that found Live Journal and MySpace. Different platforms, social media where you're suddenly like, okay, my friends are on here that I know but then also oh look, there's all these other people that I don't know yet I see them on here. It evolved, MySpace goes to Facebook then I got a Tumblr, not live journaling then suddenly I was doing a lot of online. There's fans sections, you meet a lot of people. Art spaces on internet. Suddenly I was like, okay, I'm seeing a lot of people who are in the LBGTQ community and that was ringing true for me so I eventually came out as bi through knowing about the fact that that was a thing through online spaces. I've seen people be public about it.

I was influenced by people who are public about it. Finding out that I was queer, at first that I was bisexual, then it was it was I was lesbian then I was gay then I was queer then I was gender queer, then I was trans. It's just continued -- all of these, all of my different identities have been going have all been very much influenced by the fact that I'm seeing people living these lives online. And sharing their experiences online. When I first, I've had a Tumblr since 2009 or so, been on there basically through almost the entirety of my coming out experience. I've been seeing all these different blogs of people, that was for me, that was a space where you can also live this journey.

Where you're living it in life. Where you're going through life not really not really know what the heck is happening but then you can go back online and be like, okay, here's all these other people. Five months ago you can go back into Tumblr, okay, this is where they were at this stage in their transition or in their journey and you can self relate just have a lot more access to different people. And then going to college, meeting a lot of other people and seeing their own online presences. I had quite a few friends that were very popular on Tumblr and different social media spaces. Honestly, it was always there. Also it was just another way to really document my trans journey for myself, just with photograph instead of having to actually physically take photos and print them. Making a scrapbook. I could just make a scrapbook online really easily. I was able to just everyday I could take a photo and put it on there and track the progress of when I was actually was starting hormones.

It was always there and always a thing for me. Especially so when early when I first started my transition blog. I've steered away from Tumblr. I don't have enough time for it anymore. When I was on it I was a lot of messages I was getting was just thank you for being active. Thank you for sharing your story. Also I was very active on Facebook when I was coming out in terms of the social media bubble at my college. It's always been a thing that I do. In high school I was very, I was the head of our GSA, I was in the pride parades. I went to the gay center in they city. I was just always been active and doing thing. Social media was just another space, I continue to do things.

Ally Sheedy : In other words, there was no shame in there. Do you know what I mean?

Beckett Lansbury: Oh yeah, none.

Ally Sheedy : There's no feeling of that this journey needs to be hidden for any reason. It's really courageous. I don't go on Instagram to check Beck as much as I was because there's a lot of Beck in his underwear and I feel like I shouldn't see it. [Everyone laughs] Tracking the trans. I do think it's in the one hand it's scary so please only let friends that you know or people that you know look at your pictures but at the same time it's important to be able to be out and loud. This is what's happening. This is part of the journey. This is going on with people rather than being trans or the process of it being this secret closeted thing. Then again, here we live in New York.

Imani Gandy: When it comes to discrimination, have you experienced discrimination, Beck? If so, how has that affected you and did that experience compel or impel you to become an activist in this area?

Beckett Lansbury: Yeah, I would definitely say that I have faced some discrimination but by far it's not even comparable to what a lot of people have faced. I'm extremely lucky. I've always had a support system. I can't think of one time basically throughout my entire identity, and also before that. It's always been something that's just been there. I've never really had any close person to me reject me in that way, which is very fortunate, but also, that also just helped me come out anyway. The fact that I was able to come out so strongly I feel is that the fact that I had this support system of people that were not deterred by the idea of somebody being trans or queer or gay or with any of it. Which is very fortunate.

The discrimination I have faced has been people either who don't understand and are asking questions but I don't really see it as discrimination, that's just somebody asking a question. Then just people who just don't really know how to react to me. Before I was medically transitioning I had shaggy hair and I was wearing binders so I didn't have a chest. You couldn't see my chest and I was dressing, I've always dressed in clothes in the guys' section of any store really. There's been times where in the women's room I've been grabbed by a woman and been like, "what are you doing in here?" It's been like, "going to the bathroom. I'm in here for real, I promise you I'm not encroaching." There's been that. There's been online attacks but that's everybody has access to everything online. That's just whatever.

There's been people who've said I'm not going to respect -- when I went by gender neutral pronouns, they, them, their, people who were like, I'm not going to use your pronouns because it's not grammatically correct. There's been things like that but I've been honestly, very fortunate in terms of personal attacks. I definitely more so face discrimination in the large area but also I'm somebody who has always been pretty loud about being discriminated against. If I ever feel like anything's happening where I'm not being taken seriously, I will speak out. I'm pretty forward with it. Somebody calls me on the phone and asks if my birth name is the she here. That's me and I'm he actually, sorry and we continue the conversation.

I'm not really, also that could be just the fact that I've never really had to deal with a really horrific event in terms of my identity. It could be anything from the fact that I've just been, I don't want to say cushioned, but I haven't really had the fight. I wasn't rejected by any part of my family or friends. This hasn't been a difference and that definitely built me up in my ability to if I am ever discriminated against, speak out against it.

Ally Sheedy : I just hope that will happen in the workplace with this. Do you know what mean? That's where I worry about that a little bit, I have to say. Not being able to get a job or something like that.

Imani Gandy: Can you tell us a little bit about what you do work wise in terms of Title IX and your job?

Beckett Lansbury: Right now I have a few jobs but my one job is I'm one of the program educator's for Bard's Office of Gender Equity which includes the Title IX office. Mostly what I do is -- I only got hired in August so I haven't been hired for too long. Basically what we've been doing is a lot of education campus wide about trans people and trans students, trans faculty, trans staff and gender queer, gender non-conforming people on campus. We were able to change our campus wide policy to include coverage of discrimination based on gender identity or expression which is really wonderful. If a student is continuously being mis-gendered on purpose with intent, with malicious intent, that is a violation of Title IX codes. That can be handled by our office now.

When I was a student there I was the head of our trans group on campus and we worked very, very hard with the queer group on campus and a lot of faculty and staff to get some gender neutral bathrooms installed in the campus center. Right now we're working, that's a work in progress really, continuously trying to update the campus and include gender neutral bathrooms. We have, what else have we done?

Ally Sheedy : The health center, weren't you going to do something with the health center and the way that they help people?

Beckett Lansbury: We did a training with the health center on how to have good conduct with trans patients or trans students in terms of how to address them based on what you might have from their transcript, meaning their name and their legal sex, based on what they would like to be referred to as. We've been working to make it much more easy for students to change their name in the system, so they can -- actually on all the forms that are not legal documents -- they can be referred to as their preferred name or not their preferred name. We're moved toward saying their chosen name.

Imani Gandy: That's all really great to hear because sometimes it's easy to forget the details that go into transitioning. I think of states that still don't allow, for example, changes on birth certificates which makes getting a correct ID difficult which then impact abilities to vote in states that have voter identification laws, in the way that all of this has a ripple effect and now we are trying to survive the Trump years. I'm curious to hear from both of you if the change in administration has changed your activism or your everyday experience, Beckett, for you as a trans person and, Ally, for you as someone parenting a trans person in that protectiveness and fear that comes from that sense of protectiveness as a parent that you have.

Ally Sheedy : I'll just answer quickly 'cause my answer will be short. I am horrified by the entire advent of Trump. I'm worried. Really worried. I don't think during the Obama years, quote unquote, I would've have been quite as scared about Beck going to the south but now I'm dead serious of that because of all those because of everything that's going on with these people with the swastikas showing up in schools. The whole

thing. It's this dark, evil, angry, racist, misogynistic, transphobic force has been unleashed, it feels to me. I'm anxious. Also, I've always been an activist but because of Beck, I've been hyper aware of what the policies are going on in the federal government. When Loretta Lynch came out and said what she said, trans people we see you, we hear you, we'll do everything we can to protect you. I cried. I saw that on television and thought oh my god. My kid is going to be safe. As far as legal protections are concerned.

Now we have Sessions and I don't understand exactly why he just recently went after that hate crime. I don't believe it's because he wants to protect trans people since they're rolling everything back. Not quite sure of the thinking behind that. But that's what -- I'm looking for that all the time. On the news and in the newspaper and whatever the changes are that are happening as far as the legal protections especially what the Justice Department will or won't follow. Will or won't pay attention to. Will or won't bring a case against. Hyper, hyper, hyper aware. And these judges that they're putting – just, the whole thing is a nightmare. I don't understand why Sessions went after. Do you know what I'm talking about? He suddenly said that they were going to go after the murder of a trans person as a hate crime. I just don't trust that. I don't know what he's doing. I don't know why they're doing that. Does it make sense?

Imani Gandy: Oh sure. I have cynical ideas about why he's doing that. One, they're obligated. Two, an investigation doesn't mean anything other than people are showing up. We'll see what comes of it. Maybe some of the immediate public backlash is PR on this particular thing.

Ally Sheedy : Yeah. I agree. Scared. Very scared.

Beckett Lansbury: Yeah. It's absolutely horrific. Right now it's like more so than ever trans people have never really been protected very much. Now they're doing even more rollbacks now, it's even more so. I really shouldn't say that transgender haven't been protected 'cause they have but we're fighting for the fact, we're fighting for nondiscrimination policies. That's very low. That's the fact that we're fighting to see whether or not it's okay to discriminate against somebody based on their gender is completely, it's a little bit down to, it's bull crap. That's pretty abhorrent. I'm trying very hard to focus on local government right now. I'm trying very hard to keep in mind the horrible, absolute, the state of the country right now and how many lives are in peril right now because of the administration.

Then also it's also this is very much a time that a lot of private companies, things that aren't necessarily related to government are doing a lot of advocacy, pro the LGBTQ community. It's a very weird time right now to have the overarching state of the country be this monstrosity of hate against people of color and Muslims and trans people and gay people. It's an onslaught of women, of everything. But then it's also there's a lot of little, small nice things that are happening. It's like, it's very, very hard to find the positivity but I'm very much of the mindset of you have find something. There has to be something that there's, it's horrific and horrendous and it's tearing families apart, but has to be the small victories somewhere.

Imani Gandy: That's really inspiring to hear you say because it can be really overwhelming trying to survive as a person of color, a woman, a trans person, a gay person or any of those intersections in between. It is important for us to recognize that it's a terrible time for a lot of us but there's also a lot of community building going on and new activists that are jumping in and wanting to understand various issues and figure out how to help. In that vein, do you have any suggestions for our listeners about what they can do to support trans people, what they can do to get involved to ensure that we can make this country a safe place for trans people?

Beckett Lansbury: Very much so, focusing on the intersections of identities right now is crucial. Not only looking out for how are the ways to help somebody -- trans people yes, definitely, do what you can, help with if there's local things that are happening in terms of trans people trying get healthcare or Planned Parenthood is an amazing supporter of trans people, obviously donating to Planned Parenthood. Things like that. Also focusing very much on the intersections of identities and just general minority communities and the fact that within each minority community there's people that still are part of that community that aren't being heard because of their cross identity with another minority community of some sort for whatever reason. Making sure to -- as hard as it might be, but be a voice for trans people even if you're not trans. Being a voice for people of color even if -- especially so if you're white, by god, educate other white people, that's your place. Please do that. My god.

Imani Gandy: Absolutely.

Beckett Lansbury: That's if you want to find a place for yourself, go educate others. Do that please because we need that right now. Just that. If you're not part of a minority community but you want support that community then educate people who are also not part of that community as to why they should also support that community or not be hateful to that community at least. That's a good start.

Imani Gandy: Right, at a minimum not be hateful.

Beckett Lansbury: Yes. Bare minimum leave people to do whatever non harmful practices they set for themselves. Let's just not, don't deal with it, just ignore it.

Jess Pieklo: Just don't be an asshole.

Beckett Lansbury: Exactly.

Imani Gandy: But don't be an asshole. Seems like the best. And Ally for you, do you have any advice for parents of trans kids about how to deal with the fear that you experience or do to deal with any sort of fearful or negative or feeling that parents of trans kids may have or that do you have any advice for our listeners, just generally?

Ally Sheedy : First of all, I'm trying to coin my own term. Don't mansplain. We understand that. Don't whitesplain, we understand that. I feel like, don't "non-transplain."

Imani Gandy: Right.

Ally Sheedy : I feel like if it's not your experience, please don't assume that you know what it should be for somebody else. I'm not trans, I'm not bi, I'm not gender fluid, I'm none of those things, but that doesn't mean I understand Beck's experience whatsoever. I'm trying to have support and have empathy and self-educate and it's the same thing, you know you've seen this. It's the same thing with any group. There's one group that thinks that they know everyone else's experience even though they haven't lived it.

Imani Gandy: It's usually white guys.

Ally Sheedy : You can't. It's usually white guys. It's usually white guys.

Beckett Lansbury: I was about to say.

Ally Sheedy : For sure. You can't. You do have to be careful. We all have to be careful about language and assumptions and checking yourself, all of that. The biggest thing with Beck has been to notice when the fear has stopped me in my tracks. Just say how do I know? Yes, pronouns are important because Beck just told me they are which for a starting. I thought, what difference does it make? "They, them," you're just you. Now I realize no, actually they are really, really important because I've never had to have any issues with my pronouns. It's never come up for me. That doesn't mean it isn't coming up for Beck and that's just one little, tiny example. I don't think the bathroom issue would've been so important to me as it is because of Beck but I've had to educate myself about that -- what is going on?

When we went to, a few years ago went to it was a play up at Bard when Beck was at Bard and we went into the theater and Beck said, "I have to go to the bathroom." And I was like okay. And we're at Bard, progressive, liberal bastion. Beck said, "I can't go to this bathroom, I have to find the," what is it Beck? The unisex bathroom. What is it called?

Beckett Lansbury: There was the gender inclusive room.

Ally Sheedy : Gender, see. Gender inclusive. I was waiting there in the lobby, well I don't know where the gender inclusive bathroom, what difference does it make? It's a bathroom. No. But it was really important to him so after that I started to get much more aware of how important it is to be able to go to a gender inclusive bathroom if there's going to be all of this drama and screaming around -- for people who are gender conforming around who is in their bathroom. Do you know what I'm saying? Because of, I started to get aware of that. That there was this frenzy going on, but also on the other side of it how much a trans kids or a gender fluid kid or person would want to be in the safer gender inclusive bathroom. Does that make sense?

Imani Gandy: Absolutely yes.

Jess Pieklo: Absolutely makes sense.

Ally Sheedy : It just little thing like that. Just a little thing like that. It's that. It's okay, I don't understand it 'cause I haven't lived it but my child is or my friend is or my whoever is. I just need to open up my mind and hear from them and shut up, basically. Just to hear what it is and then conform myself because I don't have a clue what I'm talking about.

Imani Gandy: Yeah. That's a really important point. There's so many of us in whatever lanes we're in, whatever activism lanes we're in, could benefit from shutting up when we don't understand something. Or asking, I don't understand this and first, if you are close to someone who's willing to educate you and to share their knowledge with you, fantastic. But if not, Google.

Ally Sheedy : Right.

Beckett Lansbury: Exactly.

Imani Gandy: Go to Google and ask Google a question. I've had people say, "Well what I can do to fight against anti racism?" And I say to them, "I'm not being flippant, or glib, but literally you can Google that." Because there are people who have been, people like Beck, people who have been writing about these issues, about racism, about transphobia, on Tumblr and they have literal guides about what you can do to help.

Ally Sheedy : Yes.

Imani Gandy: Shutting and listening is really probably some of the best advice that I've heard.

Ally Sheedy : That's right. Just open up and think, okay, can you, I have a lot of empathy but even for people who -- just ask yourself, do you have even an inch of empathy? Do you have an ounce of empathy? Is there anything that you could find in there, in yourself, that could be empathetic to somebody else just for one second? It opens up so much to put yourself in the other person's shoes and to try even if you can't understand it intellectually.

Imani Gandy: Right.

Ally Sheedy : Even if you think you understand. Even if you think that you read every book written about racial episodes, racist episodes or the women's movement or I've read about this or I've read about that, I know everything. No, actually you don't. If you haven't lived one day in that person's shoes, you don't know everything.

Imani Gandy: Right.

Ally Sheedy : You don't.

Imani Gandy: Yep.

Ally Sheedy : It's that. As a parent it's the same thing as anything else but with a parent it's really important because I know Beck can tell when I'm really listening and I'm really present and I'm really trying to understand it or I get it, or if I'm just still in the fuzzy place. I don't mean loving fuzzy, I mean in the not understanding place.

Imani Gandy: The sunken place as we black folks like to call it.

Ally Sheedy : Exactly. There you go. Exactly.

Beckett Lansbury: Exactly.

Imani Gandy: That's all of the questions that we have. If there's anything else that you two have to say -- this has been such an amazing interview and I'd like to thank you literally from the bottom of my heart for agreeing to come on our show.

Ally Sheedy : I'm so glad.

Beckett Lansbury: Absolutely.

Imani Gandy: This is going to help our listeners. Our listeners are going to be so excited to hear this episode.

Ally Sheedy : Good.

Beckett Lansbury: Great.

Imani Gandy: Again, thank you so much. If you have any closing words we'd love to hear them. Otherwise, we don't want to take up too much more of your time. It's already been over an hour.

Beckett Lansbury: No problem.

Ally Sheedy : Beck what do you have to say? Because I just made a whole thing about shutting up and listening so that's what I'm going to do.

Beckett Lansbury: It's also important, I don't want to end with putting the burden of self-identifying back on trans people but I will say that a lot of good education can come from just - - as hard as it is as a trans person, to know yourself and know your identity and not want to be wait around for someone to understand. 'Cause this is I'm living it right now. You don't need, there's no reason for me right now for me to be waiting for you to understand because I'm living in I need support now. I completely, that is very, very true. One of the things that was most beneficial for me was also learning to shut up and listen and be like okay, I'm trans but I'm also not, I'm not a parent.

I have no idea what it's like to not be trans and to hear somebody be like, I want to start hormone therapy and actually have a parental claim over the person and have anything like that. I've had a lot of friends that were, youk now, "okay, I support you but I don't, I need to hear more about why gender neutral pronouns are

important to you.” I have other friends being like, “okay, I thought you did not identify as a guy specifically. What about that identity is something that is true?” As hard as it is to sometimes answer those questions, even just being able to sit down with a person, be like “honestly, I don't know. Because just as you don't know why you identify as X, Y, Z, I don't know why I identify this way.” Just creating the space for somebody to not know is very, very beneficial as hard as it can be. And as frustrating as it, not that mom was frustrating, mom was not, I'm just saying in general.

Ally Sheedy : I've been frustrating. I have for sure.

Beckett Lansbury: So have I. I'm sorry too.

Creating that space for the education to happen because as it should not be on the burden of marginalized communities to educate other people and that could be said for gay people, for people of color, the education, the burden of educating should not be on those people. But at the same time, a huge amount of education can come if you are part of a community that is discriminated against and somebody's asking questions, you have the ability to sit and be like, “I can have those conversations,” as vulnerable as it might be. It just creates a lot of space for really, really good conversation and changes a lot of minds. I've changed a lot of people. I've had open conversations about trans people. I've tried to have open conversations about white privilege, just that's a little harder. I've tried.

I know that I personally am in a space where I can sit down and I know that I'm trans, I know that I'm a guy, I feel a certain way. I have the support and I have tons of all these people also supporting me so I can sit down right now and have this conversation with somebody who does not understand.

Imani Gandy: You're just my favorite, Beckett. I'm just going to come out and say it.

Jess Pieklo: Yeah, you both have been just amazing. This has been ...

Imani Gandy: Ally already knows she's my favorite but this is the first time I've gotten the chance to talk to Beckett and it's just been really wonderful.

Ally Sheedy : I know.

Imani Gandy: I honestly cannot thank you enough.

Beckett Lansbury: Absolutely.

Imani Gandy: This is going to be super helpful for our listeners.

Ally Sheedy : Imani, you have to come back to New York because you have to meet Beckett.

Imani Gandy: I am. Absolutely. The next time, I come about once a year. I haven't been this year because I did something else.

Beckett Lansbury: Are you in San Francisco? Where are you?

Imani Gandy: I'm in Oakland. If you're ever in the Bay.

Beckett Lansbury: I might be visiting in December or January.

Jess Pieklo: Can I crash? Please? Can I crash?

Beckett Lansbury: Absolutely.

Imani Gandy: Please do.

Beckett Lansbury: Yes.

Imani Gandy: Absolutely. Absolutely. We're going to wrap this up. Again, I really am, I feel like I'm gushing but really this has been amazing. Thank you so much.

Ally Sheedy : I'm so glad. Thank you, thank you both.

Beckett Lansbury: No problem.

Ally Sheedy : Thank you, thank you so much.

Beckett Lansbury: Yes. Thank you so much.

Imani Gandy: That's it for us. You can find us on Twitter on angryblacklady and @hegemommy. And don't forget @rewire_news! Please be sure to share your thoughts with us or pepper us with questions using the #teamlegal. If you're not on Twitter and you have a question, get a Twitter account and then ask us a question. We also have Facebook group which you can join by searching Boom! Lawyered on Facebook.

Jess Pieklo: Boom! Lawyered is created and hosted by Imani Gandy and Jessica Mason Pieklo. The show is produced by Nora Hurley. Our executive producer is Marc Faletti and Rewire's editor-in-chief is Jodi Jacobson.