

SHARMIN

23 • Bangladeshi • She/Her • Queens

Femme is a political identity of people who are engendering and encompassing a liberatory sexual identity challenging heteropatriarchy. It's an intimate identity of Femme worship and emotional labor for the liberation of our people. **I think Femme is a vibrant, beautiful, colorful, loud thing.** It's a noun, it's an adjective. Femme is a social and political category of understanding the way that we engender our spirit. Femme is also a way to describe how we are navigating the world, our intimacy, our bodies. Femme is a liberating understanding of our bodies as whole selves and as fearlessly intimate sexual beings.

I'm a hard Femme with deep roots in the mothers that have raised me. I understood early on that femmes would save me: there are things in this world of political and social existence that are divided along labor, masculine and feminine lines and it's a patriarchal tool of colonization. In this white supremacist casteist society, Femmes are killed the most, Femmes are hurt the most; fathers, brothers, homeboys and homegirls hurt and murder Femmes. Especially trans-feminine people, who are the largest group of victims of state and interpersonal violence. Femme encompasses this violence that we face for being feminine. Femmes have always meant resistance for me. The queer and gender non-conforming Femmes and the women in my life are the most resistant to oppression. They are the witches they burned at the stake. **They are the people providing emotional and physical labor to support the livelihoods of other Femmes.** Femmes are the people that I have the longest friendships with, they are the people that teach me the most. They've been my mentors. They've been my teachers. I just get along with Femmes a lot better in the world.

Heteropatriarchy, caste domination and sexual violence is so deeply rooted in Femme's everyday life. It's hard to get into taxi cabs sometimes. It's hard to walk fast all the time, your heart racing looking behind you everywhere you go. It's really difficult to see other Femme folks go through violence in front of you and not having the collective power to eradicate this violence. It's hard that Femme folks must protect each other when experiencing patriarchal violence because the dominant society does not address this socio-economic violence. Everywhere you go, whether it be a bar or train, a rural or suburban area, you just notice that patriarchal violence is perpetuated by the same tropes of economic, sexual and political control. In Bangladesh, Femmes get acid thrown on their faces. In New York, Femmes are assaulted on the dance floor because they decided to take up space in this world. **I exist as Femme knowing that being Femme is being dangerous.**

Femmes do all the emotional labor. We do all the beautiful cultural work. We are the bloodline of the story that is going to be told for generations to come. I would like to see a collective struggle against patriarchy that is rooted in creating spaces for ourselves and claiming that space, making it a ritual and habit to organize healing spaces and political struggles. I want masculine of center folks to challenge and destroy heteropatriarchy.

For me, you can wear all the nail polish you want, all the dresses you want, but if you're not struggling against the political, social, heteropatriarchal, and casteist hierarchies in our society, I could give a fuck if you're Femme. I don't want Femme to be like a fucking aesthetic. I'm here for that fucking intenseness ride or die emotional labor life cause that's what Femme is. I'm not here for Femme to be a violent aesthetic that ends up perpetuating class oppression. I want a Femme that doesn't focus on how many outfits you wear and that makes you fly, but actually understanding that we can use Femme practices of abolishing patriarchy to work towards a society that is grounded in liberatory values. One of the most fucked up things I've seen in Femme spaces is the classism that plays out. **I don't want Femme to become a capitalist aesthetic. Femme is liberatory.**