

VENUS

25 • Black • She/Her • Washington, DC

Femme is a declaration. It's a bold statement of ferocity. I consider myself a traveler, so there are many definitions of Femme that I have come across. And being a transplant here to this city, Femme isn't really something that's uplifted as much. DC is very gay centric but it's not queer at all. The communities that are queer communities and people of color communities and Femme communities, which all intersect, they're very minuscule. So for me it's being fierce, it's declaring that I'm fierce, that I exist. But I always come across other Femmes of color, whether they be cis or trans or nonbinary, who exhibit their femmeness through not just presentation, but through speech and through attitude and it's a glorious thing. **There definitely isn't a concrete definition or there isn't a concrete conformity to Femme.**

I enjoy Femme because it can mean so many different things. When people think Femme, they think glamorous, they think diva, they think makeup, glitz. For me, it isn't that all the time. The thing about my Femme is that it can change up, it's very flexible and tangible. What I enjoy about it is I can decide whether I want to wear my hair out or not, if I want to wear a hat, or a headwrap. I can decide what nail color I want today or if I don't want to wear any nail color, I can decide if I want to wear my lipgloss today or if I don't want to wear my lip gloss, I can decide if I want to put on these earrings or not these, if I want to put foundation on. Or if I want to present with the kinds of clothes I want to wear. I don't believe in the definition of "boy" clothes or "girl" clothes, they're clothes why do we have to gender everything? **It's a more liberating feeling when I decide to put on my femmeness,** whatever femmeness that is. It can be glamorous, bohemian or just whatever I feel like doing that day. I feel happier doing it. Compared to back home if I'm getting ready to go out and I'm displaying this femmeness I feel like back home I would feel like I'm going to get caught.

I shouldn't have to think walking outside of my house that today could be the last day that I live, and sometimes I do think that. I don't like to think that but it could be. I say this for Femmes that identify as Trans and people that get misgendered as male, and it is so dangerous. Sometimes it just gets too much. Being here it's caused me to create a safety net. I have to carry a weapon now. I don't like carrying a weapon. But I have to now.

My primary responsibility, and the primary responsibility for other Femmes, is to always make sure that they are cared for first. **It's not our responsibility to educate** to a certain extent. I do believe in the power of an education but we can only go so far to lead you to the water. Lead yourself to the water. That's how I feel about it. We are not obligated or under contract to satisfy you or to make you comfortable or to adhere to any of your demands. Everything isn't gold. **It is difficult to put on Femmeness everyday.** So what non-femmes need to understand is that we are the owners of ourselves. We don't belong to anybody but ourselves and they don't have automatic access to us whenever they feel like it. You don't have access to me, my body, my mind so take your power somewhere else.

Femme energy is very powerful and when that exchanges it's a wonderful feeling. One thing I don't hear, I don't open up the internet and see Femmes killing other Femmes. **I don't see Femmes violating other Femmes.** I don't see Femmes stealing from other Femmes. You may scalp each other's edges in a shade down, you may get read to death but we aren't killing each other. We aren't causing harm to each other. I think that being in each other's presence is very ceremonial. It's a ceremony of Femme and when that happens it encourages us to go forward.