I feel like I can get home from here
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An archive of butch lesbian life and persistence
Designed, produced, and edited by Gabrielle Garcia
Contributors

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First Printing: Fall 2018
Claremont, CA 91711

For a complete collection of photographs and responses go to:
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Photography credit and special thanks to: Mel Gilcrest, Gabrielle Garcia, Kat, Krista, Makaylah, Minna, Phedra, Rae Graden, Susan Spilecki, Taegan Fletcher, and Robin.

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Ch. 5: Megan O’Brien, Taegan Fletcher, Kat, and Gabrielle Garcia.

Title credit: “When It’s Good,” Butch is a Noun (2006), S. Bear Bergman.
To all the butch lesbians, tomboys, gender non-conforming folks, and transmascs who continue to show me the possibilities of love, kinship, strength, and masculinity.
You are home.
WHEN THEY ARE HERE,
THEY ARE HOME.

WHEN THEY ARE HERE,
THERE IS NOWHERE ELSE.

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Massachusetts, USA
Australia
United Kingdom
Philadelphia, PA, USA
Los Angeles, CA, USA
Chesterfield, MA, USA
The Netherlands
Madison, WI, USA
Washington D.C., USA
The United States
Cleveland, OH, USA
What does butch mean to you?

What is your relationship to gender?
Being daring, being brave, being emotionally strong, being bold, being dependable, being reliable.
— Whitney

Butch means a way to embody womanhood unconventionally, to challenge typical, limiting heteronormative understandings of what it means to be a woman.
— Ali

A butch is a masculine lesbian. Nothing more or less.
— Irene

Presenting masculine to strangers and acquaintances in appearance, attitude, and interests.
— Ken

A masculine of center woman, pragmatic and neat, ready to defend those weaker or endangered, or simply lean back and watch the world go by.
— Susan

Not femme.
— Michelle

In the simplest terms, it means a lesbian who embraces her natural masculinity. That can look different for different people, I think, and it’s not purely a question of aesthetics, though I do think that that’s part of it. But there are aspects of my butchness, things like how I sit, how I walk—things that I’ve never thought about and never even considered particularly “butch,” but that other people pointed out to me, that I’m not sure I could change if I tried. Butchness is something intrinsic.
— A. Jones

A rejection of femininity, but not by default absorbing masculinity. It’s non-conformity at its most basic level.
— Tina

Complicated, uncertain and certain. For me personally, it is like being forced to choose between black and white—but there is never a black and white. Only gray.
— Taegan

I have never doubted my connection to womanhood, but often felt disconnected from femininity and conventional female (hetero)sexuality.
— April

I am a woman, but I generally prefer to describe myself as a butch or a lesbian first, since it captures my experience as a “woman outsider” better. I involuntarily and, in the past few years, voluntarily don’t and can’t and won’t conform to western societal expectations placed on women.
— Petri

It hasn’t been a good relationship. For years I felt confused and identified as trans. Now, I’ve come up accept and embrace my butch womanhood.
— Sheldon

I’m politically aligned with women but I identify as non-binary because I feel very alienated from womanhood.
— Tif

Questioning cis.
— Amanda

Butch for me stands in for a non-binary gender identity. It’s also a political identity, because it challenges toxic masculinity every day.
— Lauren

I embrace all my boi, my girl, my woman and my intriguing areas in between all genders.
— Donnie
Butch means interacting with other women and specifically lesbians in a unique way. It means finding myself attractive inasmuch as I attract women and repel men.
— April

Butch to me is the way I can truly connect to womanhood (through lesbianism) without feeling out of place.
— Petri

To me butch means going against society’s standards of how a girl is supposed to dress. Growing up I was told I had to wear a dress or skirt. It’s not my thing. Pants and a suit make me feel 100% more confident than a dress.
— Makaylah

Butch is embracing female masculinity.
— Sheldon

Butch means wanting to protect women but not connecting with womanhood; not being the right type of woman for cis hetero society, never understanding what exactly I’m supposed to do in order to be a woman correctly.
— Tif

Strength (emotional and/or physical), resilience, self-reliance, tenderness.
— Anonymous

Masculine.
— Amanda

Female masculinity.
I’m a masculine woman.
— Lauren

It means being comfortable with who I am, with presenting in a masculine way, with being confident in my identity and rejecting the male gaze.
— Emma

I’m a transgender woman and see my butchness as an expression of my womanhood. Before coming out and beginning transitioning, I was not very masculine as it felt forced, just as forced as performing femininity did when I tried doing that early in transition. Being a butch woman, expressing masculinity for myself and other women makes me feel comfortable and secure in my gender in ways I had not previously felt. While others see my masculinity as evidence I’m not a woman, or personally feel it detaches them from their womanhood, for me it is an anchor.
— Anonymous

I identify as non-binary and my identity as such is entirely tied to my identity as butch.
— Minna

I’m very aware of gender as a social hierarchy, and try to navigate my womanhood in ways that will maximize both my safety and my integrity.
— April

I’m proud to be a woman, proud to subvert the norms of what a woman is. I am a feminist first and foremost and my butchness and my lesbianism are grounded in a love for women and a feeling of sisterhood.
— Emily

Confusing. I think of myself of a trans butch (like Leslie Feinberg), but basically am out as a non-binary person (or, depending on the circumstance, a cis woman).
— Caroline

It’s a hierarchy with women at the bottom. Gender is male supremacy.
— Tina
Strong, confident, capable.
— Donnie

To me, butchness is about a certain and specific type of masculinity that is specifically designed for other women to be attracted to. In my case, this means I wear almost entirely men’s clothing and have very short hair, but don’t identify at all as a man.
— Minna

Butch is a characteristically lesbian way of negotiating gender, as a partial or entire refusal to participate in the aesthetic and labor-division appeasement of men under patriarchy, while still understanding ourselves as women in that system.
— April

‘The perfect combination of softness and strength.’ Being visibly opposed to heteronormative society’s expectations of what a woman looks like.
— Emily

Butch. An awakening, a realization, a community I belong to. Butch is like coming home to a well lit, heated house. Comforting and comfortable. The word is armor to protect me from the people who do not understand. The word is tenderness to present myself to the people who do.
— Taegan

It means rejecting the femininity and heteronormativity that was expected of me from birth.
— Caroline

I am comfortable with my assigned gender, cis-woman, and constantly search for ways to deconstruct and reconstruct it.
— Whitney

In a word, complex. Something I’m sure many butches understand.
— Ali

It’s complicated and antagonistic. Gender is a hierarchy.
— Irene

I don’t bother thinking about it much. I use female pronouns but look very much male, so I’ll respond to either and it affords me the opportunity to not worry about my gender.
— Ken

Just because I am a gentleman doesn’t mean I can’t still be a lifelong girl.
— Susan

Female
— Michelle

Complicated! Like many butches, I never felt fully at home in my identity as a woman, and definitely not in femininity. I went through a period of trying to figure out whether I might be a trans man, which I think is also quite common for butches. But after a lot of reflection, I came to the conclusion that I would be just as uncomfortable (and perhaps more so) as a man as I sometimes am as a woman. I liked Hannah Gadsby’s description of her gender as “incorrectly female.” I don’t think that I could divorce myself from my womanhood if I wanted to (and I don’t particularly want to), but I also feel that society’s concept of womanhood is often too narrow to include me.
— A. Jones

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— A. Jones
What is your understanding of butch lesbian history?

What is your relationship to other butches?
I know very little; I was lucky to be born in a blue state and only experienced microaggressions, but reading Stone Butch Blues really opened my eyes on how bad it was and continues to be. I don’t know much beyond that.
— Sal

Throughout history, we’ve had women who pass as men. We’ve always existed. I learned about butch lesbianism through books and college courses.
— Maggie

Reading, reading, reading. Listening and observing. And being respectful of my elders in the community. The youngest generation of butches think they invented being butch, and they are so very misguided in their belief. Their respect for elders is sorely lacking, and their self-absorption and sense of entitlement very off-putting.
— Anonymous

I love being around other butch lesbians. They’re some of the only people on earth that understand my weird relationship with gender, and having friends you can talk to about that kind of thing is such a relief.
— Payton Vahldick

I’m dating another butch woman and I’m a part of a lot of butch groups on Facebook.
— Cameron

Online it is a lot of uplifting, laughter, and healing from society’s punishment of us incorrect women.
— Marlowe

I am actually a little different than most butches. I prefer and am attracted strongly and strictly to other butches. Always have been always will be.
— Cole B

I wouldn’t say I’m a part of a butch community, but I do love women who refuse to feminize, with short hair, no make up, I just love them out in the world.
— Audrey

They’re my favorite thing on the face of this planet and I love them. I want to be one, I want to marry one, I’ve joined every butch Facebook group I could find, I follow butch tags on Tumblr. Seeing an older butch is special to me, and even more so if I get to talk to them. I have deep respect for them and so much to learn. I could happily spend time exclusively in a colony of all butches for the rest of my life.
— Rae Graden

I support others and acknowledge their individual identity. I enjoy sharing struggles as well as accomplishments.
— Krista
My understanding of butch history could be better but I also recognize how often it has been hindered by mainstream feminism’s rendering of butches as bra-burning pseudo-men, intent on reinstating patriarchal norms within communities of women. My new understanding comes from my friends, like Mik, who work specifically and carefully with primary sources that cannot be obfuscated in their meanings about butchness, from the older butches I have met whose memory often clashes with the representation of lesbians in the 70s and earlier, and from readings recommended by fellow lesbians, oftentimes unfortunately only in response to misinformation that waters down the meaning and intent of lesbian words.

— Zizzy

I had to seek it out and be taught by others. I need to know more. Stonewall, Soni Wolf, police raids, etc.

— H

Through the Internet. Through connecting with butch lesbians and speaking to other lesbians I learned the origins of butch/femme culture. My understanding is that it originated from a 40s/50s working class bar scene.

— Nidaa

I’ve learned about it through reading and speaking with butches older than me. I understand butch history to be very important within the context of the gay rights movement. Butches were the most visible and vocal. Butches were paramount to getting rights for LGBTQ communities.

— Krista Lane

I want to know more!! Not close to any and I feel very alone.

— Phi

I have a nice online community of butches and masculine lesbians, as well as a friend or two IRL, and my girlfriend is butch!

— Nadine Santoro

I don’t have a good relationship with other butches, so I spend my time with other members of my community.

— Anonymous

I live near Northampton, MA and we are everywhere here. I have lots of butch friends both IRL and on Facebook.

— CJ Lammers

I feel solidarity. I want to be a part of a butch community but haven’t made friends with any in person and don’t know how to online besides joining groups.

— Sal

Butch Fashion Club is one of the best things to come into my life. I have so much more confidence in my identity now, being apart of a page where other butches can share our clothes, our identities, our expressions. I have mostly butch friends too. My partner is butch, and that has been the healthiest and happiest relationship I’ve ever had. I have someone who has similar struggles to me, someone who I can go to when I’m struggling with my identity and who will support me and has the resources to help me out because they deal with same issues. So we both have been like growing and learning more about each other and our own butch identities as we grow in our relationship.

— Phedra

I get along well with butches in my non-virtual community.

— Anonymous
I know that we’ve been around for a long time. I also know that in the ‘70s, the ideas around lesbian identity shifted, stopped focusing on being gay and started focusing on hating men. A lot of lesbians started associating butches with men, and that’s why we get the disrespect we do today. I learned a lot of this from books and reading about butch history online, it’s so hard to find other women in your real life who actually know about these things.

— Anonymous

I think the book Stone Butch Blues was the most informative reading I’ve done about the butch identity, but talking to other lesbians was what really opened my eyes to the depth of the history of butch and femme lesbians. I understand them to be the protector and the caretaker respectively.

— Payton Vahldick

My earliest memory of a butch lesbian was a children’s story my Mom read to me about the great French lesbian painter of the 19th century Rosa Bonheur, and also the story of Babe Didrickson. I was immediately drawn to images of those women.

— Audrey

From reading, reading, reading, seeing, knowing others. Mostly within western North American queer culture and history.

— Robin

I learned about it through connecting with lesbian community, especially with other GNC and butch lesbians. Mostly in online communities such as lesbian Facebook groups, and through places like the Lesbian Herstory Archives.

— Nadine Santoro

A lot of my best friends are butches or otherwise-aligned lesbians or trans men, and most of us made these discoveries about our identities within the same span of time, so it was and remains incredibly vital to me to talk with these people about how we are feeling and what we find in common.

— Zizzy

An understanding. A connection. But I often feel insecure that I am not butch enough. Some are transphobic and I won’t tolerate that.

— H

I feel a sense of kinship with other butches. An understanding of our shared struggles and lives is very important to me.

— Nidaa

I like to be in touch with a butch community online. In real life, I don’t have a lot of lesbian friends, so it’s important to hold space with the butch community online.

— Krista Lane

I’ve found wonderful butch community online, but really only know two butches in real life.

— Megan

Unfortunately none.

— Kat

Growing up my experience was largely in person connections to other butches and studs and I have very important butch/stud/transmasculine friendships in my life. I spend a fair amount of time in intentional and by chance online butch/transmasculine spaces.

— Kade
What did you wish you knew growing up about lesbian-ism or butchness?

If your understanding of butch identity changed, how did it and why?
That it’s okay to be a woman and be masculine, these things are normal and okay. Loving women and only women is okay and doesn’t make me restrictive or regressive. Being a lesbian is beautiful and whole and lovely and good. Butchness is not “manly/ugly,” it is strong and soft and powerful.
— Leo

I wish I had a role model, or at least access to information about people feeling the way I felt. Far easier than figuring it out on your own.
— Gabrielle

I wished I’d known at an earlier age that loving women was an option and where to find lesbians.
— Adlai

That there were more people that felt just like me.
— Al

I wish that I knew that this was an option, not that phrasing it like this was an option makes it sound like it was a choice. I firmly don’t believe that me existing this way is a choice. I think this is just how it’s going to be. I think I could’ve gotten here sooner had I had more community growing up.
— Megan O’Brien

I guess that it was like a normal thing and it doesn’t make you any less of a girl. There’s nothing wrong with it, it’s just a way of expressing who you are. That’s something I wish was conveyed to me.
— Nicole

That it was not just like this one stereotype. Also I didn’t know how hard it was. I knew growing up most people aren’t down with it, but how it actually feels on the receiving end.
— Katelyn Skye

I was fearful and ignorant as a youth—I thought it meant I was and other butches were “manly.” Now, I’ve been able to disconnect the butch identity to maleness or manhood.
— Whitney

Alison Bechdel’s work was a turning point. I saw Fun Home and something inside me cracked open. I saw it seven times while it was on Broadway and my hair got shorter every time. I ultimately told Alison at the final performance that her work empowered me to come out and I couldn’t have done it without her.
— Ali

It was scary to me as a child, even though it was something I knew I wanted very badly.
— Tina C.

Someone finally described me as butch and did not mean it as an insult. She showed me that butch was something to be proud of, not ashamed.
— Taegan Fletcher

Yes, I believe it is ok to dress more like a boy then a girl. My dad finally told me to be who I always thought I was.
— Michelle King

I really started to embrace my own butchness a few years ago, even before I came out as a lesbian. It was a combination of factors. One was discovering Rae Tuter’s old blog, the Handsome Butch, and the affirmation that I had the right to be handsome.
— A. Jones

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— Tina C.

I became less concerned over what others think of my presentation over years of being on Tumblr. I learned a lot about self acceptance there in the early 2010s.
— Ken C.

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— Ali

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— Ken C.
I guess it took a while to understand like handsome women. I wish I had known butchness was attractive because it took so long to decouple femininity from attractiveness.
— Isabel

Feeling like you’re supposed to like a man is a big part of the whole thing. I wish I had seen more than just like two very feminine women in media because I feel that’s the only big representation we get.
— Austin

I think this is probably true for a lot of people when you grow up, maybe it’s improving now because acceptance of the LGBTQ community is so strong. That wasn’t the case when I was a kid. There was a lot of us growing up where it’s not something you talked about and didn’t talk about it on TV.
— Rosie Mann-Deibert

I wish I knew everything. I wish that there were folks who were out and who were like, oh ok you like girls cool. I get inspired when I see younger folks take it on and wanting to have these conversations because that was nowhere in sight when I was growing up and it’s so vital.
— Julie Loppacher

I wish I knew that I didn’t need to cater to men, that I didn’t need to be attracted to men. Or that my love for masculinity didn’t necessarily mean that I had to be a boy. I wish I knew how freeing lesbianism is and how much comfort I could find in it. I wish I knew that I didn’t have to be afraid of my truths, to feel guilty for my being. I wish I knew simply that it was not a bad or immoral way to be or feel.
— Gabrielle Garcia

I use to think that women were meant to be feminine. That being masculine meant you must secretly be a man. That butch women were aggressive, intrusive, and disrespectful. Now I know these things are false. Being butch means protecting and loving and caring for women.
— Leo

Yes, I’ve learned that there are many different ways to be butch.
— Adlai

Seeing others embrace their true self was empowering.
— Al

Coming into college and being able to see a much more open community I was able to more comfortably understand that butch is a valid identity.
— Nicole

I feel like my understanding has just deepened if anything. I feel a really transformative, if not cliché, experience was reading Stone Butch Blues, being like, oh this has historically been a lot and something that I’m resonating with. And just realizing that this community does exist. I feel like that just finding other people like me or with similar experiences has just deepened my understanding of what being butch means.
— Megan O’Brien

Like holy shit there’s so much diversity even within my own butch identity from day to day. Just for that it’s worth it. Seeing yourself in little things that are totally not acknowledged in the cis-straight world out there, acknowledged and hated, and then in this community they are loved and treasured.
— Katelyn Skye
That I could stop letting heterosexual beauty standards define me.
— Whitney

I wish I knew it wasn’t a deviant identity—that it’s okay to cut your hair short, that there’s nothing inherently wrong with gender nonconformity.
— Ali

I wish I knew it was possible for me to be gay. I wish I knew I could wear men’s clothes and they’d actually fit.
— Irene Zielinski

That being butch doesn’t make you less of a woman or more of a man, and no one has a right to knock you for being yourself.
— Ken C.

That it was ok to be me.
— Michelle King

I wish that I had understood that I was lovable just as I was. That there was nothing shameful or wrong about the clothes I wanted to wear or about the way I carried myself. That there were people out there who would find me attractive even if I never wore a dress or makeup again.
— A. Jones

I wish I knew I was one growing up. I also wish there was more lesbian content available.
— Tina C.

Absolutely anything. I wish I knew the words, what they meant. Who the terminology belonged to. I wish being a lesbian, being butch, was presented to me at all.
— Taegan Fletcher

It definitely did. I first took on the label as simply a masculine presenting sort of thing and then I used it as a framework to learn more about myself. I did read Stone Butch Blues and while I considered stone butch. I read it and it was like, that’s me.
— Isabel

Definitely learning about more of the role itself rather than just necessarily the fashion of it and what that really means. There’s a lot more softness to it than people initially think. I think that was also very comforting to learn that I don’t have to be protective all the time.
— Austin

I now understand the endless forms that butch can come in and that our overlaps are a sign of community and similar experience. I now understand the joy that butch–butch love can bring.
— Gabrielle Garcia

I’ve realized now that its more complicated and its also not the same for everyone. And it tends to be one piece of a person’s identity that obviously makes it complicated as well when you start tying that gender identity into other aspects of somebody’s identity.
— Rosie Mann-Deibert

Really digging into the literary works of the butches that came before really helped me feel a sense of like satisfaction and like, “Oh yeah all right this is who I am, this is how I embody this,” and that opened all kinds of doors. It made me feel safe enough to like explore what butch meant to me by seeing the folks that came before. And I think it continues to grow.
— Julie Loppacher
Memory
What struggles have you faced in your butch embodiment?

What is your fondest memory in relation to your butchness?
Being disabled, I struggle with seeing myself as physically strong, despite being emotionally nurturing and protective. I struggle with some of the sexual expectations of butchness, as I am not “stone” by any measure.
— April

I have been and still am harassed in the streets, I get called a dyke, I get misgendered, I have been asked to perform femininity to make people more comfortable.
— Petri

I get made fun of a lot for wearing suits or boys clothing. I lost a lot of friends and a lot of my family changed how they acted towards me.
— Makaylah

Just allowing myself to dress masculinely, and then struggling with backlash.
— Tif Stevens

Trying to accept my body isn’t going to be as butch as I would like it to be. As well as getting kicked out of public restrooms.
— Sheldon

As a trans woman, people try to tell me that embodying masculinity either means I’m a man, or just as bad as men, and that only femininity is radical.
— Anonymous

I’m afraid to go into interviews dressed as I want to dress in fear of being passed over because the interviewer is some bigot. My dad doesn’t like the fact I dress more masculine.
— Amanda

As a child, being made fun of (by my parents!). As an adult, being misgendered, always having to be aware of how I might intimidate/alienate others.
— Lauren B.

MICHFEST BUTCH STRUT.
— CJ Lammers

Getting my hair cut with a pair of clippers and finding a men’s shirt that fit me right and finding other butch/transmasculine friendships.
— Kade

When people hand me their babies to hold, knowing that I will protect their child with my life. I love babies, and babies really like me. It’s been a sweet surprise.
— Anonymous

Anything having to do with clothes shopping. I’m like a kid in a candy store around “men’s” finery! And finding a stylist who gave me the haircut I wanted.
— Maggie

Shaving my head.
— Kat

I have two; one being my rugby team’s 40th anniversary. There were SO MANY old butches. As a younger butch I was in absolute awe. The second one is kind of funny; my pal had just moved into their new apartment and bought all this Ikea furniture to furnish it, and the four of us butches were like “time to get to work” and we built all this fucking furniture refusing to accept help because we could do it and we DID it!
— Phedrea

Taking photos with a fellow butch for lesbian day of visibility and the feeling of ownership of our identity we were allowed to share after years together of identities and a femininity that never quite fit.
— Zizzy

Putting on my first custom suit. Being called handsome.
— H
People have made comments about my hairy legs before that made me feel like they were gross. Sometimes I feel scared to go places because I don’t know what people will think of me.
— Emma

I anger people who don’t understand me. I know that my wife is concerned about my safety at times, as I was once attacked. Also she is worried about traveling overseas where they may be “angered” by my trans-look.
— Donnie

Other people assuming that I identify as male, having trouble finding clothes that I like that fit my body type, having family continue to give me feminine clothes and jewelry on holidays, being afraid of violence as a visibly queer person.
— Minna

Fairly constant baiting from men; struggling with a feeling that I may be judged if I “slip” from this one butch expression, then I won’t be taken seriously; the difficulty of affordably dressing in masculine clothing with a female figure!
— April

Being called a dyke and a fag in public. Having people mistake me for a man in public. Homophobic family members. Feeling isolated and othered as the only woman in the room in a suit. Feeling isolated by some queer communities who dislike butches and lesbians in general.
— Caroline

Negative reaction by family has been a pretty big struggle. People, men in particular, sometimes treat me with a lot less respect now that I don’t dress feminine.
— Sal

Falling in love with my femme.
— April

Definitely meeting another butch in real life and just talking to them about being butches, butch icons, lesbian history.
— Petri

My fondest memory is getting my hair cut, putting on my dress clothes, and going to my friends and my Christmas get together.
— Makaylah

I met a religion teacher, an older butch, and for the first time I saw a path for getting old that wasn’t restrictive and terrible. I didn’t have to be pearls and perms. I saw myself in her.
— Tif Stevens

The day my femme fiancée referred to me as her butch for the first time. It was the first time I felt proud of that identity.
— Krista Lane

The sense of self-assuredness I have gained, the ability to walk down the street dressed how I want, without giving a single fuck about what people’s weird opinions about how I live my life are.
— Anonymous

When I first realized not only can I pull off short hair, I look better with it. And then embracing ties and more masculine clothing.
— Amanda

Feeling powerful!
— Lauren B.

The first time I wore my strap. I felt more comfortable in my skin. As I have gotten older. I have realized my strap is JUST a part of my courage to be the “Man” I could have been.
— Stavie
So many. In my work life I was the first woman to have many of the jobs I held. But mostly it’s just using a public restroom.
— CJ Lammers

Struggling to connect with heterosexual peers, street harassment on the basis of not being legible as a man or woman, confrontation in public restrooms, loss of friends who were butch/tomboy when their families/society put homophobic pressure on them to conform, difficulty in finding workplaces where I am comfortable wearing my own preferred clothing and being informed by hiring professionals that my androgyny is a hindrance to my being hired.
— Kade

Harassment by cishet people has been a lifelong reality. Rejection by family. Being passed over for employment.
— Anonymous

I struggled with trying to fit in somewhere because I fall on the spectrum. I have struggled with finding mates because I love other butch women.
— Maggie

Acceptance. I hate(d) myself and my body for not being able to perform masculinity the way I saw others do it. Being apart of the Butch Fashion Club and seeing such a variety of butch bodies have helped me with these perceptions. I have to check myself and be like, there are big butch women and people and trans mascs who love themselves and I need to learn how to love being butch and having a tummy and thunder thighs.
— Phedrea

Getting mistaken for a 13 year old boy and also having people not accept it because I used to present feminine.
— Kat

I think my fondest memory would be when I cut my hair short because I never felt more like myself before.
— Emma

My wife putting a dress shirt and tie on me for the first time. I knew then I would marry this woman who understood me so well. Also went home and pleased her for hours after that, what a turn on!
— Donnie

Having my partner call me handsome is one of my favorite things about being butch.
— Minna

The positivity and compliments I received on my and my partner’s wedding suits (I’m very vain!). It made me feel official somehow.
— April

Being told by a 10 year old butch’s mother that the kid had said to her mum ‘I want to be like Emily when I’m a grown up’ after seeing me with short hair for the first time.
— Emily

Wearing a suit to a wedding for the first time. When I turned in a 13 page paper on Leslie Feinberg, and when I restarted T. A very happy day to be lesbian.
— Caroline

After being forced to dress femme during college because my parents wouldn’t pay my tuition otherwise, getting my hair cut and buzzed short was a really great and freeing feeling.
— Sal

Buying my first pair of men’s jeans. And arm wrestling with a bunch of butches where butch-ness was being celebrated.
— Nidaa
What are your hopes or goals for yourself moving forward?

What was your connection to butch or tomboy identity during your childhood?
I hope I can be more involved with our community, help keep us grounded, get over the insecurities I have about my appearance, and find a healthy long-lasting relationship.
— Anonymous

I hope I can stay true to my authentic self despite society and other people in my life pressuring me to be anything but.
— Payton Vahldick

I want to become more comfortable with myself as a butch-4butch lesbian, I often feel awkward about how I move my body around my partner, as if it’s at odds with my masculinity. I wanna find more comfort with that and settle into myself.
— Cameron

Be comfortable in butchness. Become more outdoorsy and handy.
— Marlowe

To find a like minded individual who is similar in tastes, adores me for who I am and like wise.
— Cole B.

I’d say I am very happy with how I’ve lived my life, and how I have never compromised my value system.
— Audrey

That I can continue to stand proudly out as a butch and help make room for all of us. That butches stand for a feminist and queer progressive vision and oppose toxic masculinity and that we are good allies to all queer and trans folk.
— Robin

I hope to make it hard for people to tell what sex I was assigned at birth. I’m on testosterone, but I’m also on estrogen. I want to marry my butch fiancé and have some kids eventually.
— Rae Graden

I was definitely a tomboy. I mean I liked things that boys liked. And I got the tomboy label and I was like, OK cool I can fit into this role.
— Nicole

The word tomboy also brings so much joy to my heart. Tomboy is who I was as a kid. And that felt really real. I love to get my hands dirty.
— Katelyn Skye

I was firmly a tomboy in elementary school. Then all throughout middle school and high school it was a terrible femininity. It took me a while to come back to that. I was like, I have to get my value from men.
— Isabel

Mostly in my life it has been pretty negative. I will tell you now I really don’t give a shit anymore.
— Rosie Mann-Deibert

I was a tomboy for most of my childhood and found myself associating with other boys the same age. Once I came to middle school, I felt the full force of compulsory femininity and repressed myself; trying to make a home in a mold I could never fit into or ever feel whole in.
— Gabrielle Garcia

I remember I had a tough time with identity growing up and you know it was always fight with my parents and I wanted to wear the clothes I wanted to wear and they were always wrestling me into a dress.
— Julie Loppacher

I mean I was a 1000% a tomboy in elementary school. I remember I got my first short haircut in like third or fourth grade and you get a lot of shit for it, but I got really lucky growing up in southern California.
— Austin
Less negative self talk. I am experimenting more with my personal style. To continue my living relationship with my butch partner.
— Krista

Acceptance and love.
— Phi

Learn to make peace with my body. I still think about transitioning a lot, or just spend a lot of time being really distressed about my body not looking more masculine in some ways (mostly because I’m so short), but I’m really really trying hard to just accept myself as I am.
— Nadine Santoro

To be my best self, living my best life.
— Anonymous

To always help younger butches to be themselves.
— Al

Become more comfortable outwardly expressing my butch identity. Fully letting go of the femininity that only held me back and made me uncomfortable so I can finally and fully embrace who I am.
— Leo

Keep living out and proud, become more comfortable in myself.
— Gabrielle

To continue to find acceptance as a butch.
— Adlai

I just wanna keep doing this. I think that it’s been good to connect with other butch people and I would love to continue doing that. I would love to meet some older butch women. Like, hey you’re out here doing this, we’re all out here doing this. It’s gonna be ok.
— Megan O’Brien

I was absolutely a tomboy as a kid, but had no idea that I might be gay until I was 14. I was in this place where I would deny the possibility that I was anything besides a straight girl, but would also flip shit if anyone tried to make me wear a dress.
— Anonymous

I was a tomboy growing up, but around middle school I faced a lot of bullying for it. I abandoned that in favor of being a “real girl” until I got to college. Femininity felt inauthentic and realizing I’m a butch lesbian was freedom.
— Payton Vahldick

I felt boyish as a kid and I desperately tried to conceal it and fit in. I loved women and hated men so much so I didn’t want to be “like men.” But I always felt awkward.
— Cameron

I loved being a tomboy, I idolized tomboys, but I was made to feel like tomboyishness had a limit. A girl could never be truly masculine, there had to be some femininity for balance. Any truly masculine tomboy would be seen as the ultimate weirdo.
— Marlowe

I wanted to dress and act much like boys did and didn’t really fit into any category within school, society, church or home. I felt I either had to conform or constantly get the crap beat out of me by peers and or disappoint my mom.
— Cole B.

I was always at ease being a serious intellectually gifted girl who hated dresses and femininity. I wanted a solid conservative look. I played all sports as a young girl, and really things were fine.
— Audrey
Emotionally I’m in a pretty good place right now. I’d like to keep moving forward with that. Occupation-wise I just accepted a job offer. My goal for the future is to keep it up.
— Nicole

To not stop searching for community even if the one I’m currently in doesn’t turn out to be a safe space. Don’t give up.
— Katelyn Skye

I want to settle. I want to settle in all aspects of my life, I’m prepared to settle down as a person. I want to get myself firmly connected to what has value, external value and value within myself and finding value. Understanding what I have to offer. What makes me a person.
— Isabel

I hope for growth, for love, for happiness.
— Gabrielle Garcia

I want to travel. I want to get out. As far as like the next 5-10 years ago I would really love to have a job, I would love to continue in cannabis. It’s something that I’ve really enjoyed working in, it’s something that’s made sense to me.
— Austin

I have a 12 year old son and I have hopes that he will be a functioning adult and won’t live in my house forever. It’s a big part of my life is his growth and making sure that he has what he needs in order to succeed.
— Rosie Mann-Deibert

It’s just to help people and I think about the struggle that I had coming out and learning to love myself was so intense that you know it matters to me that we can sit with each other in those difficult places because the struggle is vital.
— Julie Loppacher

I had no knowledge of butch. I was active but fat, not girlish, but tomboy seemed a word that thinner sporty girls were called.
— Robin

Even the tomboys felt so different from me, like “girls who like rough stuff and sports” as opposed to “people who also feel disconnected from girlhood.” It wasn’t until meeting another young butch lesbian that I saw myself in someone else’s face.
— Rae Graden

I was labeled as a tomboy and embraced it. I associated my desire to be chivalrous and protective of others as an integral part of my being not a typical female.
— Krista

I was always leaned towards the masculine side but would force myself into femininity for my own safety.
— Leo

I wasn’t a particularly girly child, but I wasn’t a staunch tomboy either. When I hit puberty and started being deeply distressed with my body and my gender, I didn’t even realize it was possible to still be a woman and feel this way.
— Nadine Santoro

I was a tomboy as a child, until I realized there is no such thing as tomboy. Women and girls can exist however they want. A tomboy implies there is something masculine and that isn’t necessarily. Women can exist in whatever way they choose.
— Anonymous

I feel like I didn’t really have one. I don’t know that I was like a particularly like hyper feminine child. I was just like a normal kid. But I don’t think that I had a lot of connection to that or knew that could be that way.
— Megan O’Brien
Final Thoughts
Butch to me means home, a sense of comfort, understanding, and genuine truth. Butch means that I do not have to deny who I am. Butch is resistance to the limitations and lies I have been fed since birth. Butch is not easy when it comes to the world around you, but butch makes sense and it feels right even with the internal struggle that comes with it.

Butch is finding myself. Butch does not deny me my masculinity and lesbianism. Butch embraces heritage, tradition, and community, but also grows and fights for what is right.

— Gabrielle Garcia

It’s very important to archive our stories because nobody else will.