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How to Look Like a Lesbian Without Even Trying

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How to Look Like a Lesbian Without Even Trying

Abstract

“Ugh. I hate those pictures. I look like such a lesbian in them,” my cousin explained to me while her family and I sat around their kitchen table. After she said this, her younger brother laughed into his chicken noodle soup and she hit him over the head. “Shut up. I’m telling you. They’re so bad,” she said. As the conversation went on, I learn that she was referring to pictures that had been taken at one of her lacrosse practices. The important part is that she was displeased with the photos. And it’s certainly *not* because someone had caught her in a tryst with a woman and taken pictures of the incident. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, lesbian, gay, social stereotypes

Disciplines

Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Gender and Sexuality | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies | Other Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Sociology | Women's Studies

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](https://cupola.gettysburg.edu) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

HOW TO LOOK LIKE A LESBIAN WITHOUT EVEN TRYING

February 24, 2013

“Ugh. I hate those pictures. I look like such a lesbian in them,” my cousin explained to me while her family and I sat around their kitchen table. After she said this, her younger brother laughed into his chicken noodle soup and she hit him over the head. “Shut up. I’m telling you. They’re so bad,” she said. As the conversation went on, I learn that she was referring to pictures that had been taken at one of her lacrosse practices. The important part is that she was displeased with the photos. And it’s certainly *not* because someone had caught her in a tryst with a woman and taken pictures of the incident.



This whole idea that a woman can look like a lesbian has been coming up a lot...and it’s rarely used as a compliment. The subject of “looking like a lesbian” has left me wondering what exactly it all means.

What does it mean to look like a lesbian?

I’ve never gotten ready in the morning, looked in the mirror and thought, “Man, I look like a lesbian today.” Does Ellen DeGeneres think that when she looks in the mirror? Is that something I should strive for because I am gay? Somehow I don’t think so. At least not in the way straight women are using it to refer to themselves and their friends.

I think that when a woman tells someone else that she looks like a “lesbian” she is implying that she looks unfeminine. First of all, what kind of ridiculous standards are women holding themselves and others to when they imply that in order to be perceived as straight they have to look feminine at all times? Second of all, how are we even defining femininity? Is it based on our preconceived notions about what we think men find attractive? If that’s the case, maybe we need to change that definition so that it’s not based on what we think men want in our appearances to be. Maybe we should instead consider our intelligence, independence and strength.

And what kind of assumptions are you making about the gay community to say that you can tell someone's sexuality based solely on what they look like? If that were the case, maybe it would be kind of nice. Then I wouldn't have to come out to all my friends and family members.

The truth of the matter is, though, that looking like a "lesbian" isn't really something that happens. And you'd probably get yourself in trouble if you assumed that every unfeminine woman you saw was gay and that everyone feminine woman was straight.

Even though I'm gay, I'm still a woman. And I'd still like for people to consider me feminine — the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. You don't lose your femininity when you start telling people you're a lesbian and you don't become a lesbian just because you don't look feminine one day. **I guess looking like a lesbian isn't as easy as you'd think.**

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