

The Beauty in Femininity

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In August of 2023, I turned 20 years old, and for the first time in my life, I have begun referring to myself as a woman. My definition of “woman” includes all identities and expressions that would like to claim the term (I use she/they pronouns, and my gender expression is ever-fluctuating). As I say goodbye to girlhood, I find myself feeling nostalgic. The first twenty years of my life were spent giggling, playing dress-up, challenging the boundaries of femininity, falling in and out of love, exploring my body, and proving people wrong. Through their love and support, the women in my life have taught me what it means to be passionate, driven, kind, and strong. Therefore, this photo essay will pay tribute to the women and the experiences that have inspired me to embrace all things feminine. While trying to understand what it means to be a woman, I have begun to identify themes such as friendship, joy, and self-narration. Every woman must define womanhood in her own way, and this collection of photographs shall serve as my proposed definition. I have chosen these images from past selfies, group photos, and screenshots because I wanted my representation to be genuine to my experience rather than curated to tell a refined story. These photos are unedited and unapologetically woman to capture the range of femininity as I have come to understand it today.



Figure 1. the little girl inside of me



Figure 2. a working woman



Figure 3: Sisterhood



Figure 4: do we look good?



Figure 5: angry black woman



Figure 6: i woke up like this

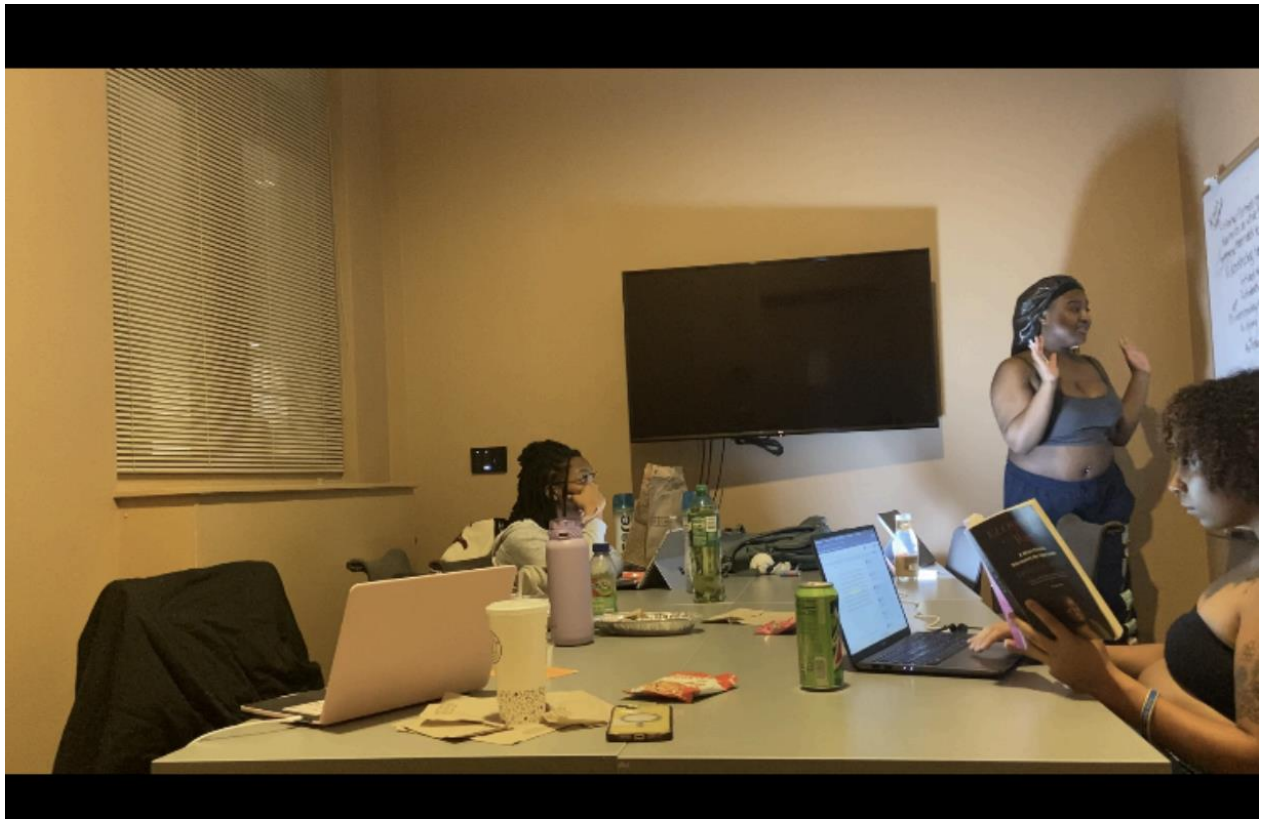


Figure 7: the real academics



Figure 8: friendship as self-care



Figure 9: holding onto each other



Figure 10: the woman I've become

Although I did not begin conceptualizing my femininity until recently, I have always loved being a girl. We are divine in our existence and radical in our negotiation of the world. Now that I have begun my journey to discover what womanhood will look like, I have become more appreciative of the little moments that connect me to other women and girls. More importantly, creating this photo essay has allowed me to reflect on the joy and support I receive from my relationships with other women. Whether romantically or platonically, I will continue to love and uplift women in a world that is determined to tear them down.