

**On Selfhood: Young Lesbians Within the Margins  
Oral History Project**

**The Reminiscences of  
Michelle**

**2022**

## **PREFACE**

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Michelle conducted by Olivia Newsome on December 16, 2022. This interview is part of the On Selfhood: Young Lesbians Within the Margins oral history project.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator.

**Michelle** 00:00

Ready? Ready?

**Michelle** 00:01

Yeah.

**Olivia** 00:03

Hello, today is December 16, 2022. I'm Olivia Newsome interviewing Michelle here in Brooklyn in my apartment. Do I have permission to record this interview?

**Michelle** 00:13

Yes.

**Olivia** 00:15

Do you know you can stop recording at any time?

**Michelle** 00:17

Yes.

**Olivia** 00:18

Can you state your name, age and pronouns?

**Michelle** 00:21

My name is Michelle. I am 21 years old and I use she and they pronouns.

**Olivia** 00:27

How would you describe yourself?

**Michelle** 00:30

Um I did think about this beforehand, and I forgot to think about it.

**Olivia** 00:36

It's okay!

**Michelle** 00:37

Um, I guess I would describe myself as a young dyke. I've lived kind of all over the place. I am multiracial. I have ADHD. Um, I guess I'd also describe myself as like a very sort of like, bubbly, silly, slightly stupid at times; chaotic individual would definitely like gay above all else, at the forefront, at all times.

**Olivia** 01:25

Can you tell me where you're from? Where you grew up? And what your childhood was like?

**Michelle** 01:31

Yeah, um, so I was born in Florida. Like I said, I like moved around a whole lot. I lived in Switzerland for a while. I moved to Boston, in like mid Elementary School, and spend probably the largest chunk of time there, up until the end of ninth grade. And then I moved to California. spent a year there. And then graduated high school, from Seattle spent my like, junior senior year there, before moving to college in New York. In terms of what my childhood was like, it was interesting. My I have a brother, an older brother, can you hear me? I have an older brother. And we grew up in different school systems. So when I moved to Switzerland, or when we moved to Switzerland, he went to an international school and I went to a public school. So I learned French and was sort of in the like, just like regular, regular Swiss community. And then when we moved to the States, I went to an international school. And my brother went to public school, because he didn't really learn all that much French when he was at, like the American School. And then he went to boarding school. So like, we grew up very separately.

**Michelle** 03:02

So, I have an older sibling, potentially have some like younger, my younger, like only child tendencies, just because we didn't see a lot of each other. I was really the only one in my family who spoke French decently. And so being in school in Switzerland, and then being in school, at the French school in the States, was a really interesting experience. Because I was kind of, on my own a little bit in terms of a lot of the learning, because it wasn't something that my family could help me with. Like they're like, sorry, sorry, can we help you with this homework? Like, we don't get it. So that was really interesting.

**Michelle** 03:51

Other things about my childhood, I was always a very tomboy esque kid, which was not. Not that it wasn't favored in my family. But I definitely got a lot of like, oh, you should be more lady like and why don't you like dresses and skirts and pink. So that was something that I was not necessarily insecure

about. But I was very aware of the dissonance between how I wanted to present and how I felt, and the things that made me comfortable and happy. And the things that other people wanted me to be like wearing and liking. I was also a really athletic kid. I was in every single sport you can think of, like I play tennis, I was in gymnastics, I swam I fenced, I played basketball. I had a I had a very brief trapeze stint in the eighth grade Yeah, a lot of body issues. modeled, like insecurities? Yeah,

**Olivia** 05:10

What do you mean by body issues?

**Michelle** 05:12

I was not as skinny as all the French girls I went to school with. And my, so like, I was like very insecure about my weight. I also had a pediatrician in Boston, who told me that I was morbidly obese, and that I would die. If I know shit, yeah. And I was not like I, like, every so often, I'll look at photos of myself as a kid. And I'm like, Yeah, well, like, I've got some round cheeks. You were just like a kid. Yeah, but I was definitely not morbidly obese. But like, that's something that I had internalized so deeply. And it was also really difficult because I, my family, my dad, side of the family, a Swiss. And so like, a lot of the food we ate was like, we ate like, a shit ton of like vegetables, like we did not have like candy in the house, we didn't have junk food in the house, like it was not something that like my dad really prescribed to, just because like he grew up on like, like farm adjacent-ish. And so like, I ate super, super well. And was literally if I wasn't at school, I was swimming, or playing soccer, or in gymnastics, or fencing. So like, going to then my like, physician and her being like, you need to eat better, you need to exercise more like, you're way too fat. I like didn't know what else to do. And my brother was in public school. His body fat percentage was at one point so low, that they stopped letting him wrestle for a season. And he ate horrendously like he would after school with his friends go and get like multiple slushies down bags of chips.

**Michelle** 07:15

Because he could because he, like, lived around the corner from his school and like hung out. And I couldn't do that, because I went to school, like an hour away. And like, my parents were with me at all times. So I was not eating junk. Napoli, not like put up value on food or whatever. But like, that was something that was really hard to, like, grapple with as like a young kid. And it didn't help that, like, all the girls at school, are super skinny, and like, would comment on it and like, never fitting into like the clothing that like they would or whatever. So I had a lot of body weight issues as a young kid.

**Olivia** 07:57

Did your body weight issues get worse, the more you engaged with lots of sports?

**Michelle** 08:05

No, that actually didn't ever really impact it. Now, so I think about it a little bit more. But as a kid, it was more just being frustrated that the messages I was getting from my like doctors and family or whatever was you need to like, get out more, you need to run more. You need to like, work out more and eat better. And I was like, literally I'm either at school or I'm doing these things. So I don't know what else to do.

**Olivia** 08:39

Like I don't know what else want me to do.

**Michelle** 08:41

Yeah.

**Olivia** 08:41

Genetics! You gave them to me. So you mentioned a little bit about going to school, like Swiss school and being around all those French girls. And can you talk about what it was like attending middle and high school? Maybe how you felt during it? Did you like go into middle and high school? When you were you moved around a lot. Can you talk about moving around a bunch of different schools and why?

**Michelle** 09:14

Yeah, well, we really moved around, because my mom works in finance. And so when she would get a new job, we would just go with her. And Well originally when we came to the States, we weren't supposed to stay. We weren't supposed to say we were originally expats. We're gonna be here for like two years and then leave again. My mom was really just here to help the company she was working at, develop their US based whatever for a little bit. And then we decided to stay so that's why I ended up in Boston for more than two years. I think I was there for almost seven years actually. Middle School was here. It was time, it was fun. I was really into fencing, I had a lot of friends. I, it was stressful for me, just because I was very obviously the kid who didn't speak the language as well as language French. Because like, as much of a, I guess, you can say, like native speaker that I am, it's really hard to keep up when like, you have no extra support at home, like I got home and we were speaking German. And so that didn't translate well with, you know, developing all the grammar and vocabulary and whatever. So that was me, I thought about a lot. But then also, just like, I had my little group of friends. It was a really small school, so everyone knew everyone. Someone who came to school, you knew their business within three to five business days. So that was like a weird environment to be in. But it's also kind of comforting.

**Michelle** 11:16

Um, Middle School is fine. All in all, it was stressful. But I think it was okay. Once I got to high school, it was a little bit more tumultuous just because I since I was in ninth grade at the French school, and that is just a horrendous



experience. Because the French Baccalaureate system drags you through the mud. And it's just horrible. It's just a lot of like intellectual work and stress and exams all year. So I wasn't great. When I moved to California, for my sophomore year of high school, that was also a weird time. It was kind of the first time that I was like, legitimately exposed to queerness in any sense. I had my first gay teacher ever, which was awesome. I had like an obsession with him. Didn't know why I just thought he was cool. He was this like, bubbly, like 30 something year old, gay black man teaching precalc and trigonometry. Love that man. I don't know if he loved me. But he was great. And then I had some friends that are gay. And I was just like, they were trying to get me to come to the GSA. And I was like, Oh, I don't know. Like, I'm just an ally.

**Michelle** 12:51

Yeah, I was, I was questioning my, my proximity to queerness more so than ever. And I think that's just because I this is something I was exposed to at the French school. Yeah, it just wasn't like no one at the school was out. There was like rumors of one person being gay, but that was kind of it. So when I went to California, I was thinking a lot about that. But I also didn't really have a solid group of friends. My sophomore year and the school culture itself was so bizarre, so toxic. I went to Gunn High School and Palo Alto, which had right before I got there had a really, really horrible mental health crisis. And the CDC got involved. There was like cluster suicides. It was bad.

**Olivia** 13:50

Cluster suicides?

**Michelle** 13:52

Yes, it was bad. Every every train track had volunteer like guards.

**Olivia** 13:56

Wow.

**Michelle** 13:57

Yeah. So that was a it was an interesting environment to be in. I didn't have a lot of friends. So I witnessed a lot of the toxicity from the outside. And then we moved so I was like, Okay, I will see yeah! Move to Seattle. And then junior year is when I like finally discovered that I was gay. It like the light bulb went off, went off. And that high school experience in Seattle was equally horrendous and amazing. for varying reasons. Very much. The the lesbian trope of falling in love with my best friend who's straight didn't end up being straight, but was straight. What I what I identified as straight when I was I'm in love with her. So that was a thing. But yeah, I like founded the Ri ri chartered. The long lost GSA at that school, which was cool. But a lot of cool things, I worked at a coffee shop and all of my bosses and coworkers were gay. And so that was really, I think necessary for me to like, figure out my identity and also just be comfortable with it, or start to be comfortable with it. I don't think if I had that experience working there that I would have been in the place I was when I went to college.

**Olivia** 15:50

Were you still a tomboy through middle and high school?

**Olivia** 15:55

Yeah, that never changed. I was always more masculine in it wasn't really a thing in California, like no one really cared all girls school. Never Okay. Almost did when my brother went to boarding school. And so my parents were like, Oh, we're moving around so much. Do you want to just go to boarding school, and then you don't have to worry about it. I thought about it. And I was like, Huh. And one of the schools that was suggested was Dana Hall, which isn't a boarding school boarding school, but they have boarding

options. But I did not go to an all girls school. No, never. Thank God. I think that would have ended so poorly for me. Um, but no, I was I was a tomboy all throughout. Yeah, I anytime we there would be a dance. Aside from my senior year, like I was always in dresses. But in my every day, activities, and just I think General demeanor and vibes, I was definitely very much a tomboy.

**Michelle** 17:03

I became a challenge for some of my friends to like, make me a little bit girlier in like, a bad way, and in an interesting way,

17:15

Talk through that.

**Michelle** 17:16

Um, I so the best friend that I was in love with to, um, she thought it was so funny that I was so so boyish. And a lot of my, like, Girl, space friends. My junior year of high school also thought it was like really fun to get me to dress up and like be girly. Not in necessarily a taunting way. But just in the

**Olivia** 17:46

Your were curiosity way.

**Michelle** 17:48

Yeah. I never mean like, if I if I ever like really set my foot down, they'd lay off. Yeah. But I remember in an effort to transition me into femininity, my best friend. I was very much a flannel, lesbian. I chelsea boots. I wanted them but

I just thought they looked so bad on me. So I think I had a pair, but I just couldn't I couldn't wear them. I dress so poorly. Up until last year, you'll have to send me pictures after the interview. My favorite shirt growing up. And it didn't click to me that I was good at all. Until I realized that I was in love with my best friend in junior year of high school. But the signs were all there. What are these? Like big red flashing light signs? Was that my favorite shirt for like five years was a sleeveless like muscle top. Button up, flannel.

**Olivia** 18:51

So, what a crossover.

**Michelle** 18:55

So, you got the sleeveless muscle top. You got the buttoned down and the flannel. Yeah, all in one shirt. It was iconic. I love that thing. Um, it was no. I mean it went I feel like it was just regular flannel link. Okay. But anyways, in an effort to transition me into femininity, my best friend at the time. Not my best friend anymore. She bought me a plaid, push up bra from Victoria's Secret I think.

**Olivia** 19:35

Very gay to buy your friend a bra.

**Michelle** 19:37

Yeah, well, she did turn out to be gay.

**Olivia** 19:42

Bisexual?

**Michelle** 19:43

Pansexual.

**Olivia** 19:44

Okay, yeah.

**Michelle** 19:48

Yeah.

**Olivia** 19:51

Was it interesting to receive? What did you think about it? Well, our environment now too.

**Michelle** 19:58

Now I think is hilarious and that's time, it was very weird because our friendship had like frayed a little bit because of various things that happened in the friend group at the time. You summarize the things. There was a guy that we were friends with, who are in the friend group, I wouldn't say I was ever really friends with him who sexually assaulted many people. Myself and salt. Yeah, myself included. I'm not great. Yeah, a lot of other people. And I ended up leaving the friend group, but like the process of leaving that and before, I had really told her why. Like, it just it was it was all very weird. And so our relationship frayed a little bit because I like left the group. I felt like really hurt by some things that she had said. Not knowing that like, he had like assaulted me. Um, so like that just kind of like frayed our friendship for a little bit. And so when it was weird to receive this from her, I was like, Oh, really?

**Olivia** 21:07

It was in this time?

**Michelle** 21:09

Yeah.

**Olivia** 21:10

So, the frayed friendship and then she gave you a plaid push up bra.

**Michelle** 21:13

Yeah.

**Olivia** 21:14

To embrace your femininity.

**Olivia** 21:15

Yeah, well, well, completely. We've been on Tik Tok. Are you on Tik Tok? I can't remember.

**Michelle** 21:20

I was on Tik Tok a lot more prior to maybe like four months ago.

**Olivia** 21:25

Okay, so you will know what I'm talking about. I'll show you later. It's like this video where it's like to show you later. It's like embracing. Like get get yourself a partner who lets you protects your femininity. I'll have to. I'll have to show you the

**Michelle** 21:41

I would love to see it.

**Olivia** 21:42

And it's like this white dyke, like masc person who rides motorcycles, but then has a girlfriend that protects their femininity. So masculine is when motorcycle ride and femininity is when putting on a face mask. I have two videos afterwards.

**Olivia** 22:05

It's -

**Michelle** 22:06

I would love to see that.

**Olivia** 22:07

It's like a trend.

**Michelle** 22:15

I think that's so funny. Yeah. But yeah, the plaid, the plaid push up bra was an interesting choice. Yeah, Wild Wild Wild. Yeah, it was a Christmas brother. So it was like red and green. Straight to the track with Laci sheets. It was a little too small laundry. Yeah. Well, I had recently gotten a very, like gay hair cut. And she had quite the reaction to that in what way and that she thought I looked really hot and was turned on. And so did she say that she did. She was like, I like what and I showed her because we had like kind of rekindled our friendship at that point. And I like was gonna meet up with her and some other friends for dinner. And I just showed up with my donkey hair. And she sat there with her jaw dropped for a good five or six minutes. Like it's on. It's on some Snapchat memory somewhere. And then the first words that she said was, why am I really turned on by you right now. And then later found out that she then started to reciprocate some of the feelings that I used to have. And anyways, homoerotic friendships. Oh, it was that friendship was definitely homoerotic digital and give each other massages. No, but we're constantly like, literally on top of each other. This is gonna sound so weird. And maybe I don't want this archived for forever.

**Olivia** 22:20

I mean, who's gonna know?

**Michelle** 22:20

Anyone who listens to this. [Olivia cackles in the background].

**Olivia** 22:20

Say it! Or, don't say it?

**Michelle** 22:20

She? I'm gonna tell you this offline.



**Olivia** 22:20

Okay, tell me this offline. Tell me it offline.

**Michelle** 22:20

Yeah. All in all, it was very, very homoerotic. Yeah, friendship. Yeah, it was really intense. And we became best friends instantly. Like, we're both new. We met in orientation. So before classes even started, and then we like, immediately tied at the hip and everyone knew it. Like if a mom was somewhere. I shouldn't have said her name. If I won't write it down. And yeah, if she was somewhere I was there. Um, and then, as as intense homoerotic friendships occur. It also blew up as if it were, like, a breakup and lesbian breakups or intense attempts. How did the fallout happen? It all happened kind of around the like the clap bra. No, before the plaid bra. The plaid bra came as a Christmas present, senior year and our friendship kind of like frayed out and blew up a little bit at the end of junior year when the whole like assault. Okay, thing happened? Yeah. And like she didn't like really know what it happened or had interpreted very differently. Yeah. And I never said anything because I was like hurt by her like immediate response Yeah, of course. Yeah.

**Olivia** 22:20

So genuinely curious did moving around a lot affect your like mental health at all? Because you moved around a lot?

**Michelle** 22:20

Yeah, I I said that and I don't know if it necessarily impacted my mental health but I think it very much impacted my ability to form identity. And I say that because I like didn't really have a stable footing anywhere. Like I didn't grow up around family didn't really grow up around my American family

didn't really grow up around my Swiss Family because we were moving so much. So we'd see people on the holidays and made an effort to go to like Florida, see my mom's mom and like social entity, my dad's mom and all that. But I like didn't really have those connections. And so in that sense, I like kind of felt disconnected and lost. And then like, not being able to keep friends for, on average more than like three or four years because we would move and, you know, back then, we were all on Instagram. Like my friends in Switzerland that I had. When we initially stayed in contact, it was through our parents setting up like Skype calls. Um, so that that was difficult. Yeah, it made a lot of sort of identity formation things hard.

**Olivia 22:20**

Speaking of identity formation, can you talk about race as a mixed person and how that affected you when you were growing up?

**Michelle 22:20**

Yeah, that was really interesting. Because, again, I didn't really grew up around family. Besides my, like, parental unit, like my mom, my dad, my brother, I guess he's not part of the rental unit. You know what I mean? I was the most, like, mixed race looking person, in my immediate family. Like, I, as a kid, I was like, really, with age have just gotten wider and wider and wider. And it's really funny, I can show you a baby photo of me. Um, but I was, like pretty tan as a kid. I had really, really curly hair. My brother was super pasty. Like, very, not necessarily. He had like, kind of wavy hair. My mother's biracial. And she was like, a lot of like, she's very much like me, where like, people are just kind of like, what are you? Um, but like, it's not necessarily at first look, you would assume that she is half black. And so, um, my father is obviously a white little mountain man from Switzerland. So that was just kind of always very obvious to me, because like, everyone in the family would comment on it. Like, they'd be like, Oh my God, look at your tan skin and your, like, curly hair is so beautiful. And I was like, okay, um, so that was like, something that I was always like, really aware of, and it was part of the reason why, like with my hair that I had such as like, difficulty, like chopping it

all off is because my whole family was really obsessed with my hair. Now that I think I have particularly curly hair, but it was the curliest but like, it wasn't, it wasn't like my white family.

**Olivia** 22:20

It was your black family too?

**Michelle** 22:20

I mean, listen,

**Olivia** 22:20

Was it like texture ism? Like because you had like loose curls?

**Michelle** 22:20

No, like, again, like I wasn't super in with my family because we moved around so much like it was a lot of my like mother really loving my hair. And my like, Dad loved my hair because he was like, Oh, so pretty. So curly. Um, and so like it was those family members that were just like, I think because it like maybes because it like tethered me to like non whiteness that they liked it so much. But yeah, it's just something that I was like I was really aware of it because of how I looked, and how like those links were commented on. But in terms of feeling, like connected to any kind of racial identity, I don't necessarily think that I was conceptualizing it that way, or thinking about it in that way. And we never had conversations about it. Like, my mother never talked about race. My father never really talked about race. Aside from, like, stories of my grandparents being together and sort of the, the trauma and hardships of being a interracial couple in the 50s and 60s, and the like danger of that I'm gonna answer the question. I kind of lost myself.

**Olivia** 30:59

No, you answered it. Great. Do you remember what your first exposure to lesbianism specifically was? Because we talked about you realizing you were gay when you had a crush on your street best friend at the time. Like your first outside exposure to lesbianism, YouTube, lesbian, YouTube,

**Michelle** 31:28

lesbian YouTube talk about it. I think so I started my gay YouTube journey on gay man, YouTube. I watched like, Tyler Oakley and and yeah. And then eventually I found Hannah Hart. And I was obsessed with Hannah Hart. Could I tell you why I was obsessed with Hannah Hart? Absolutely not. But I love I loved Hannah Hart. I don't really remember any of the other lesbian YouTubers names because I truly was obsessed with art. And that was the majority of the content that I consumed. Um, and then yeah, I just really connected with her. I in terms of other exposures to lesbian things. I started to like, seek out lesbian content. Like I would look up lesbian things on YouTube, or like, try and look it up. Or I remember like watching Blue is the Warmest Color and Middle School.

**Olivia** 31:50

God.

**Olivia** 31:50

You watched that in middle school?

**Michelle** 31:51

I think, I feel like the eighth grade.

**Olivia** 31:52

That's so crazy for you.

**Michelle** 31:52

Maybe the ninth grade.

**Michelle** 31:53

How do you feel about that?

**Michelle** 31:53

I don't know. [Olivia and Michelle giggle in the background]

**Michelle** 31:54

For me, I was like, damn. Eighth grade. And you were a baby.

**Michelle** 32:54

I think it's a ninth grade.

**Olivia** 32:55

That's still I watched Blue is the Warmest Color like last year and I was like [gasps in shock]

**Michelle** 32:57

Oh, yeah. Um, oh, no, BuzzFeed, all the lesbians there. Yeah. Speaking of BuzzFeed, one of those signs that was a Jen was a big red, bright flashing sign was I would take those like, do you remember the BuzzFeed? I do know there was a period of middle school. I want to say seventh or eighth grade where i Nothing was seventh grade. I'm like picturing the classroom I was in. That's why I would on the daily take. Are you gay quizzes,

**Michelle 33:17**

and I would hope I would get bisexual.

**Michelle 33:19**

Well, I was like, gunning for gay. But if I got gay, I'd be like, No, that's not right. And if I got straight, I'd be like, This is bullshit. Like, I would get upset by calling me straight. I'd be like this. This quiz is rigged, which granted, like all of these quizzes were like, Have you ever had sex with someone the same gender? And I was like, well, obviously not. I'm well, well. But I would get like upset if he called me straight. And I'd be like, I had duped you. It may call me gay. And this was months. months of daily, are you gay quizzes? And it didn't occur to me people do.

**Olivia 33:39**

Yeah.

**Michelle 33:39**

And every straight person questions their sexuality that much. Yeah.

**Michelle 34:19**

It didn't occur to me at all. Like it literally one of my friends had to tell me, it my junior year. I was like, Snapchatting Snapchat messaging him. And I was like, Dude, I like I can't stop looking at this girl without just wanting to kiss her. And he was friend. Yeah. And he was like, Do you have a crush on her? I was like, No, and he was like, it sounds like you have a crush on him.

**Olivia** 34:43

I was like, that's when you kiss your friend.

**Michelle** 34:45

Yeah, I was like, What do you mean? And it's like, it sounds like maybe you're a little gay. Then I was like, and then and then I was like, I am? This again?

**Olivia** 34:52

2018?

**Michelle** 34:52

June Yeah. 2018

**Olivia** 34:53

Okay.

**Michelle** 34:53

Like true. Like I had to be told did not occur to me never occurred. No. I just thought you know straight people things I also did Eeny, Meeny Miny Moe

with the guys that I liked. Which, in my defense growing up at a very small school, when the dating pool is 10 guys and your grade I think even if I was straight, I'd be playing any meenie miney mo that's true. Like you just know too much about everyone to actually like anyone like I grew up with you. This was weird now. Yeah,

**Michelle** 35:22

I get that same, same. Have clothing, jewelry, makeup tattoos? piercings?

**Michelle** 35:38

Yes, yeah. Um, so I don't have any tattoos. I really want tattoos. It is my grandmother is one and only my Swiss grandmother is one and only like, quote unquote rule. Okay. Like, she was like, you can murder someone just don't get a tattoo. Wow. Like, you know, what if Sure. I'm also the only girl in the family. And like, the I know that there's like an attachment there to me. So I'm like, I'm I'm fine. I'm not getting a tattoo for a few more years. Yeah. Very much want to tattoo. I think I want a quarter sleeve. I feel like that'd be really affirming of what I don't know.

**Michelle** 36:11

Why do you think it feel affirming?

**Michelle** 36:12

I just

**Olivia** 36:14

It's okay, if you can't explain it.



**Michelle** 36:16

You There's something about having a quarter sleeve a quarter sleeve. But just feels very like Nike. Yeah, to me. Yeah. Yeah. Or like a forearm tattoo. I actually really don't want anything on my forearm. Okay. I don't know why I just I haven't a bare forearm. Thank you. Use it for other things. Um, no, I My like rings are something that I am very attached to like I feel naked leaving the house without them. I also have this absolutely disgusting. Watch that I've worn every single day for since my sophomore year of college. Also feel naked when I don't have it. Like when I say avoidance every single day like I I played Ultimate Frisbee last year. Like wore it to Frisbee.

**Olivia** 37:05

Like played with it on?

**Michelle** 37:06

Yeah.

**Michelle** 37:06

Does it smell? It's okay.

**Michelle** 37:10

She She I'm surprised this thing hasn't given me a skin infection. She smells she smells she the leather has like it's like an \$80 swatch watch. Yeah, the it like the leather is like coming off of it. So why don't you replace the band? Well, because I Okay, so the actual reason why I'm not replacing this is because a I told myself I took an incomplete last semester, as I told myself the reward would be getting a new watch that isn't grubby, grabbing gross,

and it's probably gonna give me a disease. But also, the reason why I'm not just throwing this out is because I think that like, it might be cool to put in the archive. Yeah, because this has been like something that's like very masculine affirming for me. And I'm very attached to it. A wristwatch is very masked by Yeah. And like this, I think almost more than anything has very much like made me feel comfortable. And it has been kind of like my blankie a little bit. And I'm being so real. Like, yeah, but then also my like, ear piercings. Like, I have three ear piercings on my left side, because it's the gay side.

**Michelle** 38:09

Is that a cross? It's just a dangle.

**Michelle** 38:48

Um, yeah.

**Olivia** 38:51

Do you believe in coming out? And have you come out multiple times before? Or does the phrase coming into it any resonate with you in any way? I know you talked about realizing you were gay. And that's kind of a version of coming out to yourself or coming into yourself.

**Michelle** 39:09

Yeah. Um, I I wouldn't necessarily say Believe in coming out because that makes it feel like it's a religion or something. But I definitely have come out. I had to come out a couple times. Just because I originally came out as bisexual. Yeah. And then I was not as it turns out, I don't like men. Um, and then also like, telling some of my friends that I like, don't necessarily identify as a woman. Like I think I like kind of came out as non binary to some people

like that always, never like super fit. So like the coming out after being a lesbian part has always been more of a like a, here's this thing about how I feel about my gender. Take it early, but yeah, but I also get the like, there's a lot of people that like I haven't come out to, and I don't feel a need to come out to him like you'll find out when you find out. I don't think that coming out is necessarily a necessity for queer people. And I think that like, it can be dangerous. So like, do what you got to do. Um, like, as long as you're not hurting anyone? Like, who? Like why am I to say that you need to like announce, specifically, like in a formal way, sit someone down and be like, I'm gay.

**Olivia** 40:54

What were your first encounters with lesbian sex? Like, you fucking you watching lesbian porn you're hearing about like, you hear about lesbian sex?

**Michelle** 41:06

My first encounter with lesbian sex was porn.

**Olivia** 41:09

How old were you? Too young?

**Michelle** 41:11

Yeah. Okay. Um, yeah. Too young, too young to be like, watching Internet porn. Yeah.

**Olivia** 41:22

Where do you first find Internet porn?

**Michelle** 41:24

Pornhub.

**Olivia** 41:25

How did you find Pornhub?

**Michelle** 41:27

originally found Pornhub Pornhub because of one of my friends. And then like, on and off, would like go on there and be like, I'm just like, curious. And I'd get mortified and be like, I don't like this. And then I would spend like 689 months, okay, not looking at anything and be like, I wonder what what's happening.

**Olivia** 41:54

Did you look at the Lesbian category?

**Michelle** 41:56

I was all over the place. I was on the straight category. I was on the gy men category.

**Olivia** 42:01

Why?

**Michelle** 42:02

I don't know. I don't know what my voice just did there.

**Olivia** 42:04

It's okay!

**Michelle** 42:06

I really did not enjoy the lesbian sex category. Why? There was just something about it. That made me so uncomfortable. Not in a sense of like, I was like, Oh, I shouldn't be watching this out. There's just something about the dynamic that like Pornhub lesbian sex. portrays this. Just kind of gross.

**Olivia** 42:34

Did you have any ideas about what lesbian sex could be like before you encountered it on PornHub?

**Michelle** 42:40

No

**Olivia** 42:41

you had no clue. So your first time did you even know lesbians can have sex?

**Michelle** 42:47

I mean, I wasn't really thinking about again. I was too young.

**Olivia** 42:51

You were too young. But you were watching lesbian sex?

**Michelle** 42:54

Yeah, for like two minutes. I'd be like, nevermind. It was weird.

**Olivia** 43:00

And how did your ideas about like lesbian sex? Grow? You know, like, you're a dyke. Maybe you have sex? I don't remember we discussed you fucking are like you having sex or if you were asexual or not.

**Michelle** 43:14

I do have sex. [Michelle and Olivia giggle].

**Olivia** 43:15

Okay, yeah. So you canonically fuck. What are your thoughts about lesbian section? What you've heard about lesbian sex? beforehand.

**Michelle** 43:26

I was very scared of it before. I started having lesbian sex. Yeah, I was I was very much like, I was afraid of vaginas. I was like, what if I'm bad at this?

**Olivia** 43:50

Yeah.

**Michelle** 43:50

What if I don't? What if I don't like the like, smell or the taste or whatever? I'm, like, that would not be good for me. Um, yeah, it was a lot of like, I was just, like, really scared of it. Um, I like, like, I think most of my thoughts around lesbian sex really just had to do with like, performance anxiety. Because I, like, always kind of knew. Or, like thought that I was there would be a top. And so that kind of added to the like, oh, I need to be good at this.

**Olivia** 44:31

Yeah.

**Michelle** 44:32

Because especially like, if it is my, like, first time having sex. And I also am not someone who's inclined to receive.

**Olivia** 44:46

Yeah.mAnd then you suck.

**Michelle** 44:50

Yeah. Because especially with someone who's like had sex before.

**Olivia** 44:54

Yeah, someone who's fucked.

**Michelle** 44:55

Yeah. And so I was just like, really scared.

**Olivia** 45:00

Did you identify Did you like? Did you? Or do you identify as like, like stone? Or like a touch me not? Or just you just have a preference or did have a preference or thought you would have a preference? Where do you learn these preferences?

**Michelle** 45:12

I used to be a like stone top, not necessarily the sense of like, I don't want anyone to like touch me at all. Yeah. But I definitely was like very averse to receiving for various reasons. And it, it really wasn't until my current girlfriend that I felt comfortable enough with ever being on the receiving end. She was great. I love her.

**Olivia** 45:47

I'm excited to see her in like an hour. Has your lesbianism been influenced by academics or theory in any way, if so, how?

**Michelle** 45:58

I am pretty much all of my identities have been based in academia for better or for worse, or for better, or for worse, I would say worse, twice, not better twice. Yeah, like I said, I, I moved around so much that I feel like I really struggled to build identity in every category. And so a lot of my identity



building in like, queerness, and race and in politics, even like, it was all very academia oriented, oriented. And yeah, I lost myself.

**Olivia** 46:48

Like, what specifically? Like, what are you reading like lesbian theory or like, gender theory or a little bit of everything? In class, or just for funsies?

**Michelle** 46:59

Um, well, when I came to college, I had it out to make every single paper I wrote good. Um, which was great. For me, it was fun. But it was, it was a lot of reading, as much as I could, I've always, like, really sucked at reading, like, I don't have the attention span for it. Like, don't process large text very easily, at least before I got diagnosed with HIV. So I like didn't know what was going on. So like the, the reading was all like, bits and pieces here and there. And then just like talking to other queer folks and like hearing talks on the internet and and, like podcasts and that kind of jazz. I listened to I don't know if you know, the podcast query by like, Cameron Esposito. Sounds familiar. Yeah, like listen to a lot of that. Which was like really cool. But I yeah, like compulsory. heterosexuality and like the the lesbian. Master dog. Oh,

**Olivia** 48:10

where did you encounter the lesbian masterdoc? Was it over COVID?

**Michelle** 48:13

No.

**Olivia** 48:14

You encountered it before then?

**Michelle** 48:16

Yes.

**Olivia** 48:16

Where?

**Michelle** 48:17

I don't remember. I think it was the end of high school.

**Olivia** 48:21

Have you seen it before? The Lesbian masterdoc like recently?

**Michelle** 48:24

No. Is it different?

**Olivia** 48:26

It came back up. Over COVID. So a lot of like people who during the pandemic on Tik Tok lesbian masterdoc resurfaced again.

**Michelle** 48:37

Oh, but like, did it change?

**Olivia** 48:39

I don't know. I didn't see it in high school. I didn't know it existed for that long.

**Michelle** 48:44

It's been around. Um, yeah, no, I do that I resurface. I'm actually writing a research paper on how Tiktok influenced the development of gender identity throughout the early pandemic.

**Olivia** 48:59

Just submit it to the archives.

**Michelle** 49:01

It's not gonna be that good. It's a research paper, but it's a research paper for a class I desperately need to finish.

**Olivia** 49:07

Okay. No pressure. Nothing should feel pressure.

**Michelle** 49:11

Yeah. But it is. I think it's gonna be a fun paper. It's called Tiktok turned me queer, okay, or made me queer.

**Olivia** 49:19

Sounds fun. I can't wait to read it or not read it or scan it and put it with your collection and someone else can read it. So how do you think race informs your interactions with the lesbian community?

**Michelle** 49:33

It No, I started with it. That's not where I'm going with the sentence. The way that I think it informs most of my interactions is just that I'm really aware of it. I feel like for the most part I'm very like, I know like, not everyone likes this term, but like racially ambiguous. And so I tend to raise a lot of question marks and people will like see me and assume that I'm part of like various different racial groups, I get like, Polynesian a lot, I get Asian a lot. I get Hispanic a lot. And so that tends to prompt a lot of questions. Like, regardless of being in the lesbian space, or not. In lesbian spaces, specifically, like a lot of my interactions with larger lesbian groups is through my girlfriend. And most of the lesbians in her circle that she hangs out with are people of color, most of them are black. And not all of them know, how I can say how I identify like, no my, like, racial background. And like others, like assume various things. And so like, it's something that I think about a lot in the sense of like, I'm just like, how are you seeing me right now? And then also, just like, language differences. And yeah, I don't know it. I've thought about this question so much, and how is it gonna respond to it? And everything that I've thought of until now, it's just pooped out of my brain? That's okay. Um, yeah, a lot of a lot of how it informs how I interact is a lot of just like, me being self conscious and like wary. I would never enter a specifically like lesbian POC space who was not for me. Or like, don't necessarily think it's for me. But it's not necessarily how it just it varies so much how people see me and how.

**Olivia** 52:05

do people look at you and think you're white?

**Michelle** 52:08

Yes. And no. Okay. Like, it like really fluctuates. Person to person and also like seasonally from summer like it was summer winter. Yeah. Okay. Well, a little bit of a shapeshifter

**Olivia 52:27**

When you were when you were dating, or finding lesbian community, or friends, did you ever as a racially ambiguous person, your own terms, or a mixed race person, struggle or understand concepts of desirability, and race when dating? Did you ever think about that when you were dating? Or did it never come up? Or when you were thinking about friends or lesbian spaces in general?

**Michelle 52:57**

Um, I don't think so. I will say that, like, I was wary as I am to enter like, POC, lesbian spaces. I also am, like, so uncomfortable in like all white lesbian spaces. So it's always been like this thing of, like, I don't really know. A, like, I have a lot of social anxiety. So like, entering a new space in general is, is really daunting. And I tend to not do it unless I have like a friend like can go with or, like, I can go with my girlfriend or whatever. But then also then, like the added layer of like, not feeling like I belong in certain spaces, but then also being uncomfortable, uncomfortable and others. Just kind of like made me feel like I was like, stalled and in limbo didn't really know where I could like enter? Or how, I don't know if I answered your question. I think it does.

**Olivia 54:03**

I think any answer that you have to a question is a good way and it's a great answer. So you mentioned messy gender identities and not fully fitting into a gender or butch dyke as gender identities and can you talk more about this? Like what does it mean to have a messy gender identity and what does that mean to you and how are you figuring out your conceptualizing your identity?

**Michelle** 54:27

Yeah, um, I, a lot of my struggles around my like gender identity and also just like terminologies like using the word butcher to describe myself is again linked to my forming of an identity through academia, and through general like social discourse, wherein every if I feel like I don't fit 100% into a category, it just feels appropriative and exploitive, which is another like thing but like the like racing makes it a little messy. Yeah. Where I'm like, oh, like, I don't necessarily want to identify this way or like, enter this space or hang out with these people, because I feel like it's exploitive, and it's appropriate. And I'm like trying to claim something that's not mine.

**Olivia** 55:14

That's a lot of pressure you put on yourself. Yeah.

**Michelle** 55:18

I have a lot of conversations with Rachel about it, actually. But like, part of the reason why, like, I've always known that as more masculine of center tomboy was never really a term that like, was hard for me to identify with just because like, everyone called me that and also, I feel like it's a lot. It's so vague. Felt like it felt fine. And, like Butch is, is one of those words where I always gravitated towards but I've never felt like Butch enough to be able to call myself Butch.

**Olivia** 55:58

Why? What do you feel like you're deficient in or lacking?

**Michelle** 56:03

I just feel like there's something missing aesthetically. Maybe like, in terms of vibe, in terms of age, I feel like a lot of times when we think of like butch lesbians, like you tend to think of like, older 50 Or yeah, like older white, like broad build, like dikes and that's not necessarily something that I feel like I necessarily look like I'm also not like one another one of those sort of stereotypes and like ideas around like bitchiness has to do with like being really, like tough and like, grounded and stone or whatever. And that's not me, like I feel like people look at me, and they're just like, that is some goof. Another bunch of people aren't goofs. But I just I feel like if I don't 100% fit into all of this things, then it's not right for me to claim that. But I've like I'm trying to like, take that belief to the curb. And like Rachel has been really great about it. Like there's this like Butch monthly. Yeah, you should know.

**Olivia** 57:24

LHA cosponsored and Alex cosponsored ig.

**Michelle** 57:28

There's one happening on Sunday, but I can't go because I have a final.

**Olivia** 57:30

I want to go to Butch Monthly! [Olivia giggle jokingly]

**Michelle** 57:36

That is exactly what Rachel said. She's like, I can't go. But like I want to.

**Olivia** 57:41

I'm like, send me your name. Send me your isntagrams. Can you look for me?

**Michelle** 57:45

I'm sorry. We'll look for you at Butch monthly. Yes. Well, I'm not going to be here. For the one on Sunday. No, go to the next one. The next one. Okay. If I'm not out of the country, I'll go to the next one.

**Olivia** 57:59

Good. Anyways, later, just put aside Butch monthly. Yeah, yeah. Can you you mentioned agender like it as one of something that you might be identifying with or leaning towards?

**Michelle** 58:19

Yeah, a lot of that has just to do with I. Whether this is actually, I feel like a lot of masculine lesbians tend to like, struggle a little bit with gender identity, at least in like, my experiences and talking to other like masculine lesbians. But I agender just feels a little more of an accurate description, because I don't necessarily feel like I like, identify as a woman, but I wouldn't really, I don't really feel like identifies anything else. Either. Like, it very much feels like an absence of something more so than the presence of something. And that's why like a gender has has always felt a little bit more comfortable than say, like non binary or genderqueer. Or other things I thought I wouldn't like if someone like described me as I wouldn't be like, No, that's not me.

**Olivia** 59:20

Would you prefer agender? For the reasons that you stated?



**Michelle** 59:25

Internally? I do. Yeah.

**Olivia** 59:27

Okay, okay. How does your gender identity or how you're figuring gender inform your interactions with the lesbian community? Do you feel like gender non conforming entities are maybe ignored, or pushed to the side? I'm going to go on a tiny little tangent here to add context. So I'm always thinking about other people's responses to these thoughts and like other masculine lesbians who are in this project, and I'm thinking about my conversation that I had on one day with Ash. We were having a discussion about what it means to identify as Butch, or feel like you can't identify as butch being masc of center or masculine lesbian and being in lesbian spaces. And the implication being that it's like a femme for femme space, or space for women, only women loving women, or conversations about butchness or masculine was in being like, anachronistic or feeling like they are out of time, because we're moving beyond the concepts of Butch or Butch femme or masculine lesbians as a thing. And I don't know if you relate to any of that, but I wanted to give you a chance to like put yourself in conversation with other people in the project.

**Michelle** 1:00:52

Yeah, I, and that's what, no, that's great. I wasn't when I was like reading and like listening through these questions. That's not necessarily how I was, conceptualizing that question. Think about it, how you were thinking about it. Um, but I, I do like see that like, I get it. I do think that there is this assumption about like, butch lesbians and masculine lesbians and a lot of like stereotypes. Some of them are, you know, sometimes truth and I'm some of them are like, really just folks placing the same feelings about men onto like, masculine lesbians and being like, Oh, you're like toxic and aggressive and don't care about women, yada, yada, yada. Um, which I think is false. Or like, assuming that all masculine lesbians are, like, I have a lot of masculine lesbian friends, or not a lot, but I have a few who, like are constantly

misgendered. And like they them or whatever, and they're like, I am a woman, I love being a woman. And so we're gonna hear a lot from them like those qualms. But the way that I was thinking about this question had a lot to do with like, not necessarily an experience that I felt in person in groups like I've similar to like the last question about like Butch McClay, and identifying as Butch like, I am far more comfortable actually, in more femme, lesbian spaces and around other like androgynous or femme lesbians, just because I'm so self conscious of not being masculine enough, or Bucha. Enough for other spaces. But when I'm thinking about gender nonconforming identities, and those conversations, again, haven't really felt that exclusion in person, but I see it and feel it a lot online, on like lesbian meme pages. Or like, even like, lesbian, like history pages, not the archive. But like another page, one specific isn't working and underscore history.

**Olivia** 1:03:21

Oh, we don't know who that is. And they're using the first half of the name. Yeah, it's not associated with us. We don't know who they are. I know, someone ash literally mentioned lesbian underscore has a history about some of their negative feelings.

**Michelle** 1:03:37

Yeah, I was just having a conversation about this. But like, sometimes, you know, like those pages, they'll like post questions. And then folks will respond, they'll like, post all the responses on their story. And there's a lot of conversations that I see online about like, non binary lesbians or gender non conforming lesbians or lesbians who date non binary people. And how, like a lot of an overwhelming number of folks are really against, like, lesbians being non binary. And especially when it's like a Mab, non binary people who like only date women not being allowed to call themselves lesbians. And so that's, like something that I'm so aware of, and I think it's like such a shame that a community that is so policed and so like just kind of like shat on by everyone. And to like, try and make lesbians such a conservative Have like definition that like you have to be assigned female at birth, so you have to

only the other, like, women who are assigned female at birth. Like I just don't get it like I get I fully understand like wanting lesbian spaces or just for lesbians. Just like I think that like, it's so valid to have bisexual spaces just for bisexuals, because they like different experiences. But, like, just knowing how many lesbians and like masculine lesbians have struggled with gender identity. To then, like, exclude them and be like, you're not a lesbian because you have like a messy gender feeling or whatever like that just a historically so wrong. Be like, why are we trying to like break apart? This community?

**Olivia** 1:06:05

Yeah. Kind of a pivot. But what's it like? Making and meeting lesbians in your city now? Where do you find them?

**Michelle** 1:06:18

Um, again, I find them a lot to my girlfriend. I came to college and didn't really have any lesbian friends at all, like all of my gay friends were men.

**Olivia** 1:06:33

Interesting!

**Michelle** 1:06:34

I thought it was a lot. Somehow, I I like came to NYU. One of my before I like actually wrote my white and my USA. I like really didn't think I was gonna get in. And so I was joking with one of my, like, gay friends in high school. And I was like, shall be I should just like, in my why NYU sh for gay. And send it like just gay submit out of the 500 words, just that come to NYU. My program is all straight people, except for one gay in education is like that. Yeah.

**Michelle** 1:07:10

So the part that like, I felt the trade on was that the cohort before me. Or like two quarters before me, every single person was gay. Every single one of them. And I know this because I was like talking to a lot to the advisor from back then. And I was like, Girl, this whole program is so strange. And she was like, What do you mean? She was like, the entire group before me was all like, queer people. So I felt betrayed. I was like, why is it that my year? I'm one of two gay people. And the only lesbian. The world hates you clearly. Through your through your girlfriend? Yeah, through my girlfriend also through Frisbee. Frisbee is a very gay sport. Yeah. I met like a number of lesbians through there, which has been really nice. I'm just like, a lot of other like queer, folks. But I think the biggest entry point to other lesbians specifically has been my girlfriend, but that's also a little complicated.

**Olivia** 1:08:20

Have you experienced or felt any isolation from the broader queer community like spaces that are queer but not lesbian?

**Michelle** 1:08:30

I don't know if it's been more feeling excluded or excluding myself.

**Olivia** 1:08:40

Why?

**Michelle** 1:08:42

Again, like not feeling lesbian enough, lesbian enough, queer enough?

**Olivia** 1:08:47

Why would you not be lesbian enough?

**Michelle** 1:08:50

Well, like now, I feel as be enough when I came to college, oh, at the beginning.

**Olivia** 1:08:54

okay.

**Michelle** 1:08:54

Yeah, I like didn't feel queer enough. Like, it was very much not necessarily an insecurity about like, not feeling like I was gay. Like, I knew I was gay. Like, I was very fruity. But it was more so that there is such like, I felt like aesthetically, politically, like I wasn't doing enough and I wasn't enough. And so I was very intimidated by those spaces. Because I thought like, I was assuming that I would be excluded and that I wouldn't be like gay enough and cool enough to like yourself before it happened. Yeah. Yeah.

**Olivia** 1:09:35

That's okay.

**Michelle** 1:09:36

That's kind of been a lot of the pattern. And it doesn't again, it doesn't help that I like I'm very anxious in new social situations. And yeah, I Yeah.

**Olivia** 1:09:56

You mentioned not having a super close lesbians. How does that affect you? Can you talk more about? You've mentioned a little bit about why that's happened or why that might happen but like how was it affecting you not having like a super close lesbian community?

**Michelle** 1:10:13

I'm not gonna like emotional

**Olivia** 1:10:17

if you cry, I might cry though in response

**Michelle** 1:10:20

okay, I'm keeping it all in

**Michelle** 1:10:22

No, don't keep it all in let it out.

**Michelle** 1:10:27

I was listening to frozen today

**Olivia** 1:10:28

frozen 2 was the best movie.

**Michelle** 1:10:30

I my staff having my freshman year roommate has gave me like this plushie from Build A Bear.

**Olivia** 1:10:36

Yeah

**Michelle** 1:10:36

And the paw plays the song from frozen 2

**Olivia** 1:10:44

like that, like colonial, indigenous narrative love, land back. Anyway.

**Michelle** 1:10:51

Frozen is great.

**Olivia** 1:10:52

Well, I'm not gonna let you skip away from this question.

**Michelle** 1:10:58

It Sucks. Like to put it as simply as possible is sucls. Why men just like, like, their minds. I like it's definitely been one of those things that I have yearn for and craved and felt very lonely as a result of having a lack of one eye was the other Boxing Club, sorry. I was very close to being in like a lesbian circle. And

then was not able to, which really stung. I'll give the context for this. I was like best friends with my girlfriend for a year before we got together. And she had always really wanted to introduce me to all of her lesbian friends and like, get me into her circle. But like a lot of like, they would always meet at like a bar or a club. And I didn't have a fake ID had a lot of anxiety around getting a fake ID. And so it was one of those things where it was, like, she always tried to get me in. And then like, it was really just like a waiting game until I turned 21 could like finally like join them and whatever. And then we started dating. And that made things a little bit messy, because she didn't really want to mix her, like, romantic partners with her like friend group because of some past issues. And so, like past issues with like that happening. Yeah. And so it was like one of those things where like, I went from like, really being wanted to be included, to then, like, very much being excluded from that or not explicitly excluded, but it felt very, like, don't come Yeah. And so that like very much hurt for for a while, fully understood it fully respected, it was not upset by it. But it was one of those things where like, I came like so close to like Finally, having like a group of lesbian friends too, then very much not being able to and even if I like join that circle, like I still would have been her girlfriend and not necessarily like independent human. Yeah. Um so that like sucked. Um, yeah, and I think it's like just a little bit more because like, it had been one of those things that I had, like wanted and been waiting for in a lot of queer things. A lot of lesbian things in the city are very alcohol centered.

**Olivia** 1:14:02

Yeah. Very centered around substances. Yeah, and carding and going out and spending money and

**Michelle** 1:14:08

yeah, so like, it's not to be like really could access before and then finally like, was about to be and then not um, yeah, I think ever since like, I've just been, not my voice quivering, I've been like, especially I think lonely like craving.



**Olivia** 1:14:34

What was your first visit like to a lesbian related place or event?

**Michelle** 1:14:41

Um, I think Henrietta's?

**Olivia** 1:14:46

Okay, what was the like? Was it what you expected?

**Michelle** 1:14:50

Well, okay. Well, there's there's two like the first like, like the actual lesbian related thing is I went on my 21st birthday to Henrietta's at like five o'clock in the morning. No. Okay, good. Penrose is my open bar. I don't think any bar is open at five o'clock. Early. That's our late. That's a long time. I mean, maybe they aren't, but I don't have the span for that. No, we weren't in the afternoon. I was working in a coffee shop at the time and had to, like, working at blank Street. Yeah. And I would have had to get up at like, 4:30am The next morning to like, get ready and open the store. So I was like, I'm not partying all night. So I went, I like this has been playing for a while where I wanted to, like get a drink at a lesbian bar on my 21st birthday. It was gonna be coming home. But they didn't have the outdoor booth anymore.

**Olivia** 1:15:50

You didn't want to get COVID in day.

**Michelle** 1:15:54

Yeah, I mean, it was more so at the time, less of the COVID thing and more just like I had so like, set out to like, be in that little like, garden booth thing. And then like not having that gave me so much anxiety. And I didn't want to go in because because you had it planned out. Yeah, yeah. And so then we went to Henrietta's because they had like the like, outdoor like boots, or whatever it is me. It was Rachel. And it was my ex girlfriend and my ex girlfriend's best friend. What again, group? Yeah, and we're all lesbians. Yeah. Um, and Rachel and I were secretly in love with each other at the time. Didn't we didn't we hadn't pulled each other together that long. We got together on July 24.

**Olivia** 1:16:37

Damn, U-Hauled?

**Michelle** 1:16:40

We did. We signed the lease two days, two, three days later. got together. Two Three days later moved and it was messy. It's okay. Um, but we had also been like, pseudo dating for like a year for like, at least months. Like it was it was getting increasingly homoerotic. Yeah, to the point where like, we, at one point would like I sleepover at her apartment, and we'd spent the last couple hours cuddling before falling asleep. And then the first couple hours cuddling after waking up. And it was one of those things where one of us would be like, Oh, I don't want to go like I'm just gonna stay here and cuddle. But like neither of us will be other than we liked each other.

**Olivia** 1:17:23

Yeah, just besties. Cuddling?

**Michelle** 1:17:25

Yeah.

**Olivia** 1:17:26

A lot for hours.

**Michelle** 1:17:27

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, I'd like go I recorded her so hard recorded. But like, not even intentionally, like, I just like had so much like love for her. And like, I just want to take care of her so badly and like I would go over in the summer and just like, make dinner, and like, like, do the dishes. On her birthday. We all went to the beach. The day we got together actually. Not her actual birthday, but her birthday party was on the beach. And that morning, I like gotten up super, super early. And like, took the train to her apartment. And I made breakfast for her and her roommate. Like cleaned everything like I I was a lesbian of you. I was courting her so hard. Yeah. What was the question again?

**Michelle** 1:18:18

It's okay. You love your girl!

**Olivia** 1:18:20

I do.

**Michelle** 1:18:21

First experience at Henrietta's?

**Michelle** 1:18:23

Oh, right. That was fine. I mean, it was it was weird. It was it was it was how you would imagine. Like it was a little bit of a like, what is it called the like, the triangle? Romance thing. A love triangle. Yeah, there's a little bit of a love triangle going on. And then the like ex girlfriend's best friend who was just there like, what's happening. It was an interesting vibe

**Olivia** 1:18:55

you expected like Henrietta's like being at a lesbian bar.

**Michelle** 1:18:59

I was like, I was I was very like intimidated. Yeah. But then my actual like, more so I think like lesbian entrance or whatever turnabout was I went after Rachel and I got together. I went with her friends to Henry I chose to go dancing. And that was I feel like a little bit more of an entry into like lesbian events and my little my little foursome event. And that was interesting. Not interesting. It was fun. It was like really cool to be able to like, be in that space. I like have not been back since because Rachel got injured and so like we haven't really been able to go out. But yeah, it was like, I'd also like never really gone out dancing before like I don't dance. I didn't know Gingers since you here.

**Michelle** 1:20:07

We have to go to birthday parties. I know.

**Olivia** 1:20:10

Yeah.

**Michelle** 1:20:13

Sex. Yeah, that was that was fun. There's a lot more men there than I anticipated. Which I wasn't. I wasn't a fan of some men sometimes, too. Yeah, there was a lot of men a Henry that a lot of men. Yeah. All like very tall. Gay men, I think, Okay, I'm still still my favorite. There. At one point. Again, like, think of someone who's never been out dancing. Never been to Henrietta. It's never like, whatever. There was this couple who I saw, like, they were basically fucking against me. Like, I was the wall. They were leaning against. And like Rachel was trying to like, I think almost like switch places because she like, had been hundreds before. Like, knows the vibe was very much like, oh, no, like, Michelle has never been here before. This is not gonna end well. Um, but just like dancing with like, this couple behind me. And I had half a mind to just like, step away and watch them fall. Because they were like, literally, one of the girls had been like, picked up and was against me. But I was like, I don't want to, like fucking Yeah. But I was like, I don't want I don't want this to become a scene. Like, I don't want that my first time here. And like, I cause like, an accident on the floor. I just like awkwardly pretend it didn't happen. But it was fun. It was really nice. would do again, not to like having Yeah, but the like going out.

**Olivia** 1:21:50

What does existing as a lesbian mean to you?

**Michelle** 1:21:56

I forgot this question existed I don't know. I don't know. I identifying as a lesbian is really important to me. And it feels like a really core part of who I am. And how I see the world. I don't know, I couldn't necessarily put into words exactly what it means to me. But like, I very much feel like like lesbianism is is community it's, it's, to me, it's like a it's a way of of loving. Regardless of its romantic or sexual or platonic, I think there's something very unique about how lesbians love and care for others. So

**Olivia** 1:23:09

What lesbian spaces or communities do you wish existed?

**Michelle** 1:23:14

I wish there were more explicitly lesbian spaces that weren't bars. Yeah. And there's something that I actually really want to do, like I, one of my career life goals, is to save up as much money as I can, and then open up like a lesbian coffee shop. Like, I just feel like so many lesbian things, so many queer things in general, like is all around drinking and even was not around drinking. There's always alcohol present. And especially as like a young, gay person, like young lesbian, like I both once I was 18 and before I was 18, very much craved like a space where I could be with other queer people. They're lesbians that just hey, I couldn't legally access without needing a fake ID and be just was able to, like be there and be in community with people in a sober way. And I think that that is like such a shame. That doesn't exist because even if you're not under age, like there are plenty of lesbians who don't drink for various reasons or don't want to drink. And that is a whole group of people that is excluded or made to feel like they can't necessarily be in community.

**Olivia** 1:24:50

What does lesbian joy mean to you?

**Michelle** 1:24:54

Um, Another question that I forgot about, but a little bit more to think about anything, well, just in the sense that like, I'm very much someone who functions best on like specific questions, and that sort of broad question

**Olivia** 1:25:13

It is a broad question. Do you want me to specify it for you?

**Michelle** 1:25:18

Maybe.

**Olivia** 1:25:19

Pkay, so when you're thinking about lesbian joy, maybe you could think about a time that felt, I don't know if you've seen this meme, but it's like, lesbian, it's like very lesbian, super lesbian, hotly lesbian, like, I can show it to you like after the after the after we're done. But like, maybe a moment in your life where you were like, You know what, this is like a very lesbian. This is like a super lesbian experience. And I feel so fucking awesome. And I'm so happy. I'm a lesbian. And this is awesome. And amazing.

**Michelle** 1:25:52

Yeah. I mean, I think I think about how much I love being a lesbian when I'm with my girlfriend, which is cheesy and corny, but she's truly like, the love of my life. I, like cannot don't want to imagine life without her. Um, but I think I had this moment, last year, where I was just like, sitting at a table with Rachel. And like, some of her like lesbian friends came over. And then, like, next thing, you know, there's like, six of us. And we're all dikes of varying, like, affinities. And we're just like, talking about like, gay shit, and the non gay shit, and then gay should again. And that was the first time that I had been, like, in like a physical group of people who were only lesbians. And eventually, they all left or whatever. This was before Rachel, I start dating. And I like, we like hung out later that day. And I just like started bawling. Because I was just like, so overcome with, like, joy and like feelings of community and like, all that good shit. And I don't like I don't know if that like fully answered the question. But like that perfect for me was just like one of those moments where like, I like, was so happy and like, felt like I belonged and, like, felt like there were like, people there who like, even though we

weren't necessarily like talking about any like, one's individual experiences, specifically, like I felt so like, seen and like, understood. On like, a non spoken just kind of like, vibe.

**Olivia** 1:27:52

Yeah, you guys just get each other.

**Michelle** 1:27:54

Yeah.

**Olivia** 1:27:55

At least at some point.

**Michelle** 1:27:56

Yeah. Um, yeah, that was like one of those moments like, even though I think about it, like that was just like, so. Cool. And like Rachel was shocked. She was like, What do you mean, it's the first time you've been around like, a group of lesbians. I'm like, I've only been around like one or two lesbians at a time. And she was like, baffled. Like, that is why

**Olivia** 1:28:19

I think my first time being around a lot of lesbians or like more than three would be when I was at the archives, and I knew what you mean. I think I went home and I didn't cry. But I sat very silently for a couple hours just thinking, yeah. Is there anything you want to talk about before we end anything you feel like you're you really want to say? Um, anything you missed?



**Michelle** 1:28:54

I'm sure there is. There's probably nothing that I can think of right now. Okay. Besides just wanting to re-emphasize that I love my girlfriend so much.

**Olivia** 1:29:03

Michelle loves their girlfriend!

**Michelle** 1:29:05

Yeah, like Can't. Can't say it enough.

**Olivia** 1:29:09

Okay, well, thank you so much.