

## 5. FLOW BY EMILY STRONG

### ***EXCERPT FROM INTERVIEW:***

#### **What is your gender identity? Please describe.**

"I identify as gender-fluid. Gender fluidity for me manifests in my acceptance and comfort with gender blending, both in appearance and the way I carry myself. This fluidity often changes from one day to the next and is sometimes more representative of one than the other, but is ever evolving."

#### **What does femininity mean to you? Masculinity? How do you relate to these terms? How do these concepts impact the way you present yourself?**

"Growing up, there were certainly indoctrinations about 'ideal' femininity and masculinity and what they meant. But I was also taught to question and research things on my own. Doing so led me to question the indoctrination and boundaries of what these words both meant to me. As someone who identifies as gender fluid, these terms meld together for me in meaning and representation."

### ***FULL INTERVIEW:***

**Age** 41

**Assigned Sex** Female

**Pronouns** She/Her/They/Their

**Gender Identity** Gender Fluid

**Race** Multi-racial

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#### **What does femininity mean to you? Masculinity? How do you relate to these terms? How do these concepts impact the way you present yourself?**

Growing up, there were certainly indoctrinations of 'ideal' femininity and masculinity and what they meant. However, I was also taught to question and research things on my own. Doing so led me to question the indoctrination and boundaries of what both of these words meant to me. As someone who identifies as gender-fluid, these terms meld together for me in meaning and representation.

#### **What is your racial identity?**

I identify as multiracial because it's how I feel best describes who and what I am racially. My racial identity has been a topic of discussion my whole life. Some see it as me not being true to my 'real' identity. However, what they deem to be my 'real' identity, is an identity that they are seeking to impose on me to fit their thoughts about me, and who I should be. My chosen identity is who I am and what I know myself to be. Not the racial identity someone else is trying to impose on me.

**Have there been times in your life when your race has influenced how others have treated you?**

Yes. As a person of color, my race has heavily influenced how others have treated me my entire life. All of those experiences have had an influence on me, some in a positive way and others in a negative way.

**Have you felt pressured to change your appearance by close family and/or friends?**

I have definitely had friends try to pressure me to change things about my appearance over the years. People have told me I need to gain weight, or that I look too much like a guy or a man.

**Have you felt pressured to change your appearance by people you know only casually or by business associates?**

I'm naturally an overall small person in body and stature. I'm constantly being told by complete strangers, casual acquaintances, and business associates that I should eat more (usually unhealthy things) and gain weight. On the opposite end, I'm told that I should be/feel lucky that gaining weight is a problem for me and that my body is perfect. Both are very conflicting pressures and I've definitely had to tune them and other similar pressures out to hear my own voice and know what is best for me.

**Have there been times in your life where you felt insecure about your appearance?**

There have been times where I have not felt happy with my appearance because the personal goals that I had set for myself had not been achieved.

**Have you felt pressured to change your appearance by the media? What aspects of the media have impacted your self-perception the most? Commercial? Social? Other?**

There is constant pressure from the media and everywhere we look, for us to all change and be someone else or do something else. I tend to be more disturbed about these pressures and try to find ways to change and break the patterns rather than conforming to them.

**Do you do anything to alter your natural appearance? (tattoos, piercings, hair dyeing, makeup, etc) If so, why?**

As a model, I have definitely done things to alter my appearance for my work and for clients on specific projects. Thus far, all the altering for work has been temporary. On a personal level, I have altered my natural appearance with things that I wanted. I have ear piercings (one in each ear), wear makeup when it suits me, and have changed my hair color. But, those alterations were done because I wanted them, not due to influence or pressure from an external force.

**What makes you feel beautiful? What makes you feel empowered?**

I feel beautiful when I am dressed to impress myself and that confidence then exudes and impresses those around me. Accomplishing a goal I have set and feeling confident about its success makes me feel empowered.

**How have your family and close friends been supportive of your appearance and self-perception?**

Generally my family and friends have been supportive of my appearance by being accepting of how I choose to look and carry myself.

**Have you had any positive experiences with casual acquaintances or business associates that impacted your self-perception in a positive way?**

Over the years, I have had business associates who have recognized my abilities in certain areas and have provided me with opportunities to showcase those abilities. Those opportunities helped to foster a confidence and trust in my own skills and abilities.