

Raphael

Brazil



Photo supplied by Raphael

Finding Your Leather Tribe

My relationships remain rooted in love, but when love and leather come together, it's something magical.

Claiming my leather identity was not a single moment—it was a series of awakenings and courageous steps along the path of my life.

I grew up in the countryside of São Paulo, surrounded by love from my mother and grandmother, but always with a sense that I was different. My childhood was quiet, dedicated to studies and classical music, and I often felt like I was on the outside looking in, especially when it came to friendships and belonging. I didn't know then, but my first real fascination began early: as a boy of five, I already felt drawn to boots—there was something about their power, their presence, that stirred something deep in me.

When I entered medical school, I did what many do—I tried to fit in, even dated a woman for six years. But after graduation, moving to the city, everything changed. I realised I was gay and came out, which felt like stepping into the sunlight after years in shadow. Around the same time, I stumbled across the leather community online. The sight of leather, its smell, the touch, the virility it radiates—it woke up a part of my soul.

It didn't take long for me to start buying leather and boots, always on my own at first, and going to fetish events to see what this world was about. My first party is a memory I'll never forget—the producer greeted me with a smile and said, "Finally, we have you here with us!" In that moment, I felt seen and welcomed, like a missing piece of myself had slid into place.

Embracing my leather identity has been a different journey than coming out as gay. With my family and friends

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outside the community, I simply don't talk about it. It's not a secret, but it's not something I share widely—I choose to keep that part of myself held close, cherished among those who truly understand it. Still, when I was Mister Leather Brazil, I received real support from friends, even those who were not part of the fetish world.

There have been challenges—misconceptions and criticism from people who don't understand what leather means to us. Being a leatherman means living in my authenticity, radiating my true self with power and pride. Leather gave me freedom, independence, and a sense of strength I never knew before.

I have learned not to let life pass me by, not to live for the expectations of others, but rather to step forward boldly and claim happiness where I find it. I wear my leather and boots as naturally as breathing—they are part of who I am, every day.

To anyone reading this, searching for themselves within the leather world: go ahead. Be true, be brave, and don't let anyone tell you how to feel or what you should experience. Life is too fleeting to miss the chance for joy or self-acceptance. In leather, I found my tribe, my belonging, and my essence.

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This excerpt is from ***Finding Your Leather Tribe: Leathermen Speak Out on Authenticity, Self-acceptance, and Brotherhood.***

- **Real coming-out stories:** 20+ deeply personal stories of gay men coming out twice—first as gay, and then into leather. These journeys span 10+ countries on four continents, including Europe, North America, South America, and Australia.
- **A carefully curated global directory:** 140+ leather and kink social groups, bars, events, parties, and retailers across four continents, including Europe, North America, South America, and Australia.
- **Find your leather tribe, anywhere:** An easy-to-use index of 60+ destinations across four continents to help you quickly connect with leather and kink communities around the world.

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