

# FAT

## OPPRESSION

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"What do we ask for? We ask for equal rights as American citizens. We ask for life, and the doctors to cure us, not kill us. We ask for equal access to public accommodations without fear of ridicule, and we ask for freedom of opportunity based on our potential, not our appearance. So let freedom ring."

Russell F. Williams  
"Let Freedom Ring"  
The NAAFA Workbook

# What is fat Oppression?

Fat oppression is the systematic oppression of fat people. It is discrimination based on appearances and stereotypes comparable to racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, and classism.

*"Fat oppression is such a banal and integral aspect of American culture that most people take it for granted as a natural and acceptable phenomenon."*

from THE INVISIBLE WOMAN: CONFRONTING WEIGHT PREJUDICE IN AMERICA by W. Charisse Goodman, Gurze Books 1995

Fat people are discriminated against in many areas including employment, education, medicine, housing, accessibility, media, fashion, sex, and friendship. This discrimination is fueled by widely held stereotypes. Fat oppression is one of the last forms of discrimination still completely accepted in mainstream media and culture.

A few of the stereotypes facing fat men, women, and children are that they are lazy, unhealthy, a-sexual, annoying, stupid, unable to control themselves, socially inept, and gluttonous slobs.

**All of these stereotypes are untrue.** These are false ideas perpetuated by our culture, the media, and the weight-loss industry. **We should not have to break our backs to obtain the same rights and privileges afforded to thinner people!** Being fat is not wrong, it is not always a result of overeating or an eating disorder, it is not directly related to any particular health risks. Fat people can and do exercise! We have sex! We make love! We are loved! We lust! We are intelligent, we are professionals, we are working-people, we are parents, we are activists!

Fat oppression preserves the unnatural and biased power structure in America. **Fight against all forms of oppression, take back your mind.**

*"Dieting is the most potent political sedative in women's history, a quietly mad population is a tractable one."* Naomi Wolf The Beauty Myth

*"A cultural fixation on female thinness is not an obsession about female beauty but an obsession about female obedience."* The Beauty Myth

*"Loyalty to petrified opinions never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul in this world-and never will."* Mark Twain

**Fact:** Fat people are not unhealthy. In fact, being underweight is a greater health risk. But the worst thing you can do to your body is **RESTRICT** and YO YO diet.

## ResourCes

**National Association to Advance  
Fat Acceptance (NAAFA)**

[www.NAAFA.org](http://www.NAAFA.org)

800.442.1214

**Association for the Health  
Enrichment of Large People**

**AHELP**

P.O. Drawer C

Radford, VA 24143

703.731.1778 (phone & fax)

**Council on Size & Weight  
Discrimination, Inc.**

P.O. Box 305

Mt. Marion, NY 12456

914.679.1206

**Gurze Books**

P.O. Box 2238

Carlsbad, CA 92018

800.756.7533

fax 619.434.5476

**The Network for Size  
Esteem**

P.O. Box 9404

New Haven, CT 06534.0404

203.787.1624 (phone & fax)

# Take action

From FATISO? By Marilyn Wann  
Ten Speed Press 1998

- + Smile at all the fat folk you see on the street. No fatso should ever be smile deprived.
- + Speak up for yourself or others. Don't let fat-hating remarks slide.
- + Call a diet company's 800 number and run up their phone bill asking nosy questions like, "What % of your customers keep all of their weight off for five years?" (don't buy anything!)
- + Ask organizations that you belong to if they'll adopt nondiscrimination policies about weight.
- + Speak out against other forms of oppression too. No one is free until we all are.
- + When you see an ad that makes fun of fat people, write to the company and let them know what you think of it.

## continued...

- + Go to your local department stores and locate the large-sized clothing sections. If they are hidden in a back corner on the top floor behind housewares, ask the store manager why they discriminate against fat customers.
- + Examine your beliefs and where they come from. Reeducate yourself.
- + Strike a blow for fat-freedom. Join the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance. Call 1-800-442-1214
- + Casually mention fat as a conversation topic, without talking about losing weight.
- + Come out to your family and friends as fat, or as a fat supporter.
- + Remind your local officials that 55% of their constituency is fat. Ask them what they have done recently to end size discrimination.
- + Rip down diet ads you see posted on telephone poles. They are posted illegally...

Distributed by Riot Grrrl South  
East Michigan