

WHAT IS FAT OPPRESSION?

Fat oppression is the systematic hatred, ridicule and discrimination against fat people by this society. It is based on the belief that fat people are not as good as thin people, and that fat people remain fat because we are lazy, lack will-power, or are stupid. Several myths are the cornerstones of fat oppression -- almost everyone thinks these are facts, even though both medical research and the experience of many fat people contradict them.

Myth # 1: People get fat because they eat too much, or eat the wrong foods, or maybe because their metabolism doesn't work right.

Over 100 studies have attempted to prove that fat people eat more than thin people -- and every one of them has failed. On the average, fat people eat the same amounts, and the same types of foods as thin people. In fact, in one study, a group of adolescent fat women said they ate more than their friends, even though an actual tally of food consumption showed that they ate less than their thin friends.

The myth that fat people somehow eat wrong is one held not only by thin people, but by fat people ourselves. As long as we think there is something wrong with us, we don't look so hard at the culture which keeps us feeling terrible about ourselves.

Myth # 2: Fat people could change being fat if they just would go on a sensible weight-loss diet.

Medical research has consistently shown that diets have a long-term failure rate of 98-99%. This means that 99 out of 100 fat people who do lose weight on diets will gain back all of the weight they lost within five years.

Also, because dieting itself changes the body's metabolism, people usually gain back not only the weight they lost, but also more weight.

In fact, the dieting process itself is unhealthy: it has been shown to cause hardening of the arteries in rats, and is generally thought to be connected with higher risks of heart attacks and strokes in humans.

Myth # 3: Fat people are unhealthy or less healthy than thin people.

Fat people range from very healthy to very ill -- just like thin people. Every attempt to prove that being fat causes more heart attacks, or strokes, or diabetes has failed.

Diseases thought to be caused by fat are all stress-related (like high blood pressure) and are more likely to be caused by the stress of fat-hatred in this culture, and the physical damage done by repeated dieting.

"Cures" for fat -- like intestinal bypass operations, or staples to make the stomach smaller -- have high death rates, and only make fat people sicker. Diets like the liquid protein diet have led to many known cases of death by starvation.

One study, known as the Roseto study, showed that in a community where most people were fat, and fat was well-accepted, that the rate of heart attacks was lower than the national average. As the children of this community moved away, they were studied. Once they went to places where fat is hated and fat people are oppressed -- the rate of heart attacks climbed right up to the national average for fat people.

WHAT IS FAT LIBERATION?

Fat liberation is a political philosophy and a political movement which is based on the knowledge that fat people are victims of a systematic oppression, and that the way to end this oppression is to work together for radical social change. We see the oppression of fat people as part of the existing social order that oppresses people because of their age, race, sex, sexual preference, class and physical condition. We know that until values in this culture are radically changed, fat people, and especially fat women, will suffer from fat oppression.

We especially want to develop and strengthen the connections between fat liberation and the feminist and lesbian movements. Fat women do not meet the accepted definition of women in this culture and are especially singled out for ridicule, exploitation and hostility. Fat lesbians confront sexism, heterosexism, and fat oppression as part of our daily lives. Fat women who are poor, or women of color, find this intensified in a culture which is both racist and classist.

What We Are Trying to Do:

- Ultimately, we are working to change society so that control is not in the hands of rich white men -- and so that the hatred of women, people of color, lesbians and gay men, poor people, and fat people is eliminated. We are working towards a culture that celebrates and affirms differences among us, instead of trying to destroy people who are different.
- We want to expose the lies that are the basis of our oppression as fat women -- and encourage fat women to listen to our own experiences and the experiences of other fat women as the truth about being fat.
- We will expose the lies put out by the medical profession -- and expose the "cures" developed for fat people -- which serve to keep us physically weak, starved, preoccupied by diets, and which kill us simply because we are fat. We demand that the medical profession stop pawning off "cures" -- because being fat is no sickness, and needs no cure!
- By forming consciousness-raising and political action groups we want to end the isolation and self-hatred that fat women have felt.
- We are confronting attitudes and ideas which oppress us as fat women or ideas which deny our own perceptions of our lives. We will confront those ideas as they come up in public (like TV or social gatherings) and also when they come up with our friends, lovers or families.
- We are fighting against social and legal oppression, like the denial of jobs, or the lack of inexpensive clothes, or the limits to mobility created by narrow chairs, benches and aisles.
- We want thin women to see how they too are victimized by the fear of getting fat, or the fear of getting fatter. This fear keeps all of us preoccupied with our bodies; and keeps us from uniting together to fight the real oppression: a sexist society which tells us how we ought to look, or how we ought to live.
- We are creating a positive presence and a positive image as fat women in sports, at the workplace, in theatre and the arts, in the media -- everywhere we go.
- We are learning to love and respect ourselves, and we want all women to love and respect fat women so that each woman can truly accept her body as beautiful!

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