

SPEAKERS:

GLORIA, our guide, a fat dyke-about-town

NORA, a fat queer

ALEX, a fat queer

RAMONA, a fat queer

SAM, a fat queer

Barrage

Words from offstage: (*Fast and furious, shouted, moaned, written, tossed, hurled, spit – a verbal barrage*) Bitch, why are you so fat? Oh my god Poor thing She has such a pretty face. If you just exert a little discipline – Hey, Jenny Craig is open on Sundays! I don't know why you insist on wearing such unflattering, form fitting clothes How can you stand letting anyone see you eating? Fat Ass! I really don't think you need to eat that. Did you see the size of her? Do you know how many calories are in that? Ugly fat slob Bring some of that jellyroll on over here! Could you get your fat ass out of my way? Jesus, did you get a look at that? She must weigh... You smell, bitch! Fat Dyke! But it's so unhealthy, so dangerous. You are repulsive. I love you and I worry. Damn fat cow! What an ass! Don't you ever get tired and want to be normal? You'd be so pretty if you lost some weight. Don 't you want to get married? Fat Albert! Hey, Big Momma! Look out, here it comes! If you just ate sensibly and exercised... Fat Bitch! Damn (3 syllables- da-a-am!)

(Through the barrage of hateful artillery, through the middle of the war zone, walks a fat woman. She enters from the top of the stage and slowly makes her way downstage. She emerges from the war zone, to address the audience.)

GLORIA: (*Confident and matter-of-fact in her bearing, she addresses the audience directly in the wake of the barrage.*)

I live in a war zone. Every day that I wake up and walk out my front door I make an advance in the battle. There is no safe haven – I am even in danger of attack in my own home. Family and friends are double agents who claim to hate my fat, but not hate me, who claim that their fear justifies their tactics, who remind me that I am fat and therefore diseased and in dire need of fixing.

I am in danger of attack when I am alone, when even the TV is turned off, and the radio is thrown out the window and the Barbies are all buried and the magazines are all burned. But the fear of being fat, of getting fat, is all around.

I am on the front lines of our war on fat, and I am at peace with my body, more days than not. You can make peace with your body. You really can.

It's not just the fat people in my life that need help with self-image. It's also the people that the doctors show a little fucking chart to - the one that says, Hey Now, Careful, You Need To Lose Ten To Fifteen Pounds...and these people WANT to lose ten to fifteen pounds. Every damn person in this culture seems to want to lose ten or fifteen pounds. Here's the thing. If you want to be healthier, eat vegetables; get some exercise. Believing that you are never good enough hurts you, and everyone else, too. I want you to stop letting fashion magazines and big-business-beauty-corporate-culture dictate who and what is beautiful.

Here's a test. Close your eyes. Think of a beautiful person. Picture them in your mind's eye. What do you see? What are you looking at? Do they have wrinkles? Do they have a scar? Do they weigh 400 pounds? Or do they just happen to look like the white, skinny, blonde, blown-dry 20 year old actor you saw on TV last night? OPEN YOUR EYES! I mean, really, open your eyes. Think for yourself. Be creative. Don't let somebody else define what is beautiful and slip their image into your head. Find and define beauty for yourself! Open your eyes.

SAM: Open your eyes, but don't just look at beauty, focus that gaze on privilege in general. They say privilege is a funny thing- real hard to see it when you have it, real easy to see it when you don't. So I practice. Practice opening my eyes to it. To seeing that, hard as it feels to be me at times, I'm still a fat white chick, and I am rolling in that race privilege every day. I'm not gonna be the first one hassled by the cops, and I'm not gonna be the last one offered the job. There was a guy who filed a lawsuit when he was fired. He said, "They fired me for my weight because I am a black man." But the law couldn't get it- follow this logic, "Well, it's not weight discrimination because there are other fat people working there, and it's not race discrimination because there are other black people working there." But listen to what he says, "They fired me for my weight BECAUSE I'm black." What is so fucking hard to understand about that? See, that's some of my privilege- because I'm white, I'll be the fat person who gets to keep their job. If I'm getting fucked over because of my weight, it's gonna be straight up, you know? My weight is not gonna be some legal loophole for some fuck's racist attitude. When someone discriminates against me because they don't like the way I look, I'm not going to wonder how much is due to skin color and how much is due to size. And I am not going to have members of

my own race blame me for society's racism, saying I make my people look bad cause being fat makes us all seem lazy and stupid. And I'm not going to be caught in a culture conflict- my grandma in Mexico telling me that my body being so small makes me seem so white, while my own kids, born in this country, tell me I'm too big and should lose weight so they are not embarrassed for their friends to see me at their school. Telling me I am not to be seen.

GLORIA: If you get to be seen, that's a privilege. When I was in high school, before I even knew what "queer" really meant, I knew gay men existed because I saw Hugh Grant in some movie set in England. I knew gay men could be sexy because that's how they were shown. But I never saw queer women. It sounds silly now, but I simply did not conceive of two women together, sexually, as a possibility. Years later someone said, "We're dykes," and then I realized, "Oh, that's an option." Dykes were so invisible in the culture that it did not even occur to me.

That's what hearing about being at peace with my body is like for lots of folks, be they fat or thin. Most people are like, 'Wow, not hate my body? I guess that is an option- cool. It never occurred to me.'"

It wasn't always like this. This knowledge didn't come free. I wasn't born with it. I learned how to be a survivor by surviving my childhood.

*(Underlined words are said in unison, **as indicated.**)*

ALL: *(Voices in the dark from different places on the stage, in unison.)* When I was young.

GLORIA: When I was young.

(Following lines delivered from darkness.)

NORA: First grade.

ALEX: Junior High

SAM: Ten.

ALL: When I was young.

RAMONA: Fifteen.

GLORIA: Six years old.

GLORIA and SAM: When I was a kid...

SAM: *(Continuing the sentence without a pause, from the ground where SAM lies from the Barrage, SAM is trying to zip up the jeans, straining.)* My dad sent designer jeans to me. I must've been around ten or so, and I was so excited to have gotten a present in the mail. Something he shopped for with me in mind. They were tight flowered blue jeans! Too-tight flowered blue jeans. I lay on the bed, sucking in my stomach, gripping the little zipper with all my strength, trying to get into them, and I knew as I lay there that he had sent them to me as a signal. He wanted me to get thin so I could wear these jeans.

ALEX: I was sitting in the doctor's office. I was about twelve, not fat really, just not thin enough- definitely not skinny, definitely not like I was supposed to look like. Not in denial, here, just more of a stocky Jew boy with a belly than an all around fat boy. Watching the doctor point to a chart that illustrated the direction that I was moving in. I was already in the Overweight Zone, and if I were to keep at the steady accelerated pace...well, I could easily ruin my life, obviously. I was stuck between the doctor and my mother, being compared to a thin black line on a graph. I wasn't unhappy about my weight at that point, over or under or whatever else he wanted to diagnose. But I was unhappy about that moment, about feeling stuck there in his judgment, seeing myself through that asshole doctor's eyes, and having to meet my mother's eyes afterwards. Still, my mother feels compelled to question what my belly is doing hanging over my pants. It's self-explanatory. It's hanging. But even though she's answered her own question, she has to ask anyway.

NORA: *(From her Barrage position she emerges cross-legged like a little kid sitting on the ground to respond.)* I knew at a family gathering. I mean, I knew 'cuz my dad told me already, but at this gathering there was food out for eating and I remember my uncle Doug would say, "Are you eating again?" every time I would go to eat something. Like he just had the explicit right to comment on my body and my personal consumption. I never heard him say that to anyone else in my family.

NORA and ALEX: (in unison) I felt so self-conscious.

ALEX: First grade. New School. Private school. Uniforms. Plaid ones. Dresses- green/blue with pleats and bibs. White shirts underneath. None in my size. Surprise! Not. We'll have to have one

made. First day arrives. No uniform. Can't conform. Long sleeved green T-shirt dress with stripes down the sleeves. Day two comes. No uniform. Same dress. Year passes. Same dress. Uniform never did come. School picture. I fit in, apparently. With the boys.

OK. Fast-forward ten years. High School. Going for a field hockey uniform and having to be measured and she makes a fuss of, "Trying to find one in THAT size, dear"- like I am a hassle to be dealt with. Hassle. Knowing my body projected out in curves, in hips and tits. Feeling exposed and learning my body was something to be concealed for fear of the attention I might draw. Which came first? Being fat? Or feeling like a boy? Fat-ness and female-ness collided squishing me-ness right out of the picture. Now I know I'm fat cause I've got these tits. Trannies attempt to be helpful- "Go to such and such store- they have really big binders there." No, not in my size they don't.

ALL: None in my size. Surprise! Not.

SAM: Oh, yeah, the skirt came in my size. Technically. Holy Spirit School. I was a big cheerleader. It was a little skirt. And the nuns of Holy Spirit School were aghast because the little ruffled skirt, which hung demurely due south on the smaller cheerleaders, rose so very high over my so very full ass. Just by being, I flashed everybody behind me with pink-pantied Holy Spirit cheerleader bottom.

RAMONA: 15 years old. Camp Tawonga. I am a counselor in training. I am in love with Jason Weinstein. Running around in the summer mountains. I gave him a massage. Loosened him up- steamed up his glasses. He wore little round glasses and had broad rower's shoulders and the sweetest grin.

Summer's over. Feeling crushed out, unrequited, but still flattered by the close friendship with him- kissing friends. After a reunion that September in the city, we were dropping Jason off. I sat next to him on the floor of the pick up, thigh pressed to thigh, warm, open, and happy. Jason kissed me- kissed me goodbye as he got out of the truck - kissed me goodbye on the lips- my first such experience- and in the incandescent joy of the boy I loved kissing my lips- the outdoorsy-boy-ey smell and feel of him, he looked me in the eye and whispered- just to me, "You would be so pretty if you lost weight. I would love to go out with a girl as pretty as you would be if you lost weight. You have such a pretty face." Swear to god. I still cry for that girl that day.

[Beat]

NORA and ALEX: I cry.

GLORIA: I cry for the boy.

RAMONA and SAM: I cry.

GLORIA and RAMONA: I cry for the...

GLORIA: ...boy.

RAMONA: ...girl.

SAM: ...child.

[Beat]

SAM: How does it happen?

ALEX: Mothers hit their children - "Stop staring!"

RAMONA: Mother's clutch their toddlers...

NORA: In the mall.

ALEX: In the bank.

RAMONA: In the grocery store.

NORA: Kids talk.

ALL: Mommy, she's so fat!

SAM: Mothers clutch their toddlers. Gasp.

ALL: [horrified gasp]

ALEX: Hush!

RAMONA: Hush!

SAM: Hush!

NORA: Hush!

GLORIA: Hush!

ALL: It's not polite!

NORA: No, not polite, and worse than that, it simply isn't in keeping with her Berkeley-open-studios-artist-persona—well, the attitude is, but not the shouting out if it, so she says, horrified, “Ezekial, that's rude. I'm sorry.” And I say, “Yes, Ezekial, I'm fat. Just like you are blonde.” And she hurriedly mutters, “Yes, people are different- we celebrate differences.” Well, she says something like that- I can't remember exactly because I am thinking too loud in my head, “If celebrating differences is so god damn important to you, then how come every single one of your 45 beautiful-award-winning-individually-named-overpriced-one-of-a-kind-hand-sculpted-porcelain-faced-antique-silk-velvet-and-vintage-lace-clad-semi-precious-gemstone-encrusted -I-am-oh-so-Berkeley-hand-made-dolls are all thin and white?” Something about the apple and the tree and it falls pretty damn close. We teach our kids by what we do and what we don't do.

SAM: Men react to me in anger on the street. For example, there's the, 'How dare I find you cute?' reaction. As if its my fault that Bozo with a hard-on has suddenly realized the compelling hotness of actual plump flesh, which makes him confused and defensive cause Hustler magazine told him fat chicks are not sexy.

Some guys cannot believe their beady little eyes. They stare as I approach, like they are witnessing a miracle, like I am naked and dancing a polka backwards while eating a strudel on the sidewalk. (*Turn stare directly at the audience, eyes wide, face relaxed, and mouth slightly open – visualize stunned goldfish.*)

Then there's this other reaction I get from some men- they look at me in disgust and anger. “How dare you be so unattractive? How dare you take a bitch off the market by being so fat?”

You wouldn't be a dyke if you weren't so fat." As if it's my job to be attractive for them, to make myself an available commodity, so they are not mad at me.

GLORIA: Anger surrounds me and gets inside me. It strengthens me and exhausts me. I need it.
Anger is the currency in my war zone.

ALEX: Furious ~~angry~~ with my girlfriend's parents, who are pressuring her today to get weight loss surgery, saying it will bring her happiness. Refusing to believe her when she says she's already happy. Not listening to her when she says she won't risk a 1 in 200 chance of death on the table so she can be thin. Caring more about her body size than her life itself!!! Fuckers!

ALL: Fuckers!!!

RAMONA: The anger I get, it comes from all sides. See, even though my size has not changed in years, I walk between two worlds. Sometimes I'm a fat girl, but sometimes I am thin- or I should say, sometimes I can pass.

When am I fat? Like when I'm shopping for clothes with my thin friends who are all trying on some sparkly blue tankini except for me. See, it only comes up to a 14 and I can't usually fit a 14. Really, I wear a 16, which puts me in a whole different segregated department than my thin friends. But sometimes I can make a 14 work, IF it is stretchy, or cut roomy. I have to nonchalantly stretch and pull to see if it's worth it to actually try it on. Trying stuff on that is too small is a really painful thing, cuz I am just confronted over and over again with the reality that I don't fit. That I am too big.

When am I thin? Well, when my fat friends and partners tell me so: "What are you complaining about? You're not fat." True, I don't get called names on the street so much. True, I can sometimes find pictures in fashion magazines that look something like me- you know, when they are talking about 'figure-flattering suits' that 'camouflage' problem areas. True, I can dress in certain ways, if I am careful to practice fashion-slight-of-hand, so nobody sees my full size- so I pass. True, there's never been a movie seat too small for me. I mean, I am really close to the same size as the average American woman, who wears a 14. So I do have privilege. I know I do.

But still, ya know what? We average-sized American women may not always be fat enough to be seen as "fat dykes," but we sure are fat enough to get shit for our size. Like when I was not allowed to participate in a medical survey through an over-the-phone interview because I am "overweight." "Over whose weight?" I asked. And I found out through my conversation that the

woman on the other end of the phone was a fat woman herself. “Sure,” she said, “I’ve heard of the whole BBW thing - it’s big on the Internet, right?” I talked to her for at least half an hour about being “healthy” and being “fat” and how the concept of “health” is used as a way of controlling people, trying to get them to disrupt and distrust their own natural ways of being in the world. (*Voice rising hopefully, falling into more casual connection with the audience*) And I swear, I mean I don’t know, maybe I just like to think so, but I HOPE that by the end of that half hour she had some glimmer of how I think fat is beautiful. When all we do is try and mold our bodies into little ideals, we will never see our beauty - why don’t we love how beautiful we are? The woman on the phone kept saying,

ALL: "I know, I know, I know."

RAMONA: I hope she knows.

NORA: I know that I am beautiful. Look at me. Aren’t I beautiful? It is hard work to stay on my body’s side – to remember my worth and feel my beauty. Some of the work is internal. I gently rub my belly and feel plushy satin – I feel good. Breathe deeply when I need to, filling my belly bowl and chest cavity up with air. Some of the work is external. Thank God for so many people in my life who made me know I am beautiful and desired. And the first person was Rhonda - in second grade. 1978.

I was one of two fat girls in class- the other was Rhonda. We didn’t really ever talk to each other- she was a cool kid I remember- I remember thinking she was C-O-O-L. I was a nerd. You know, always raising my hand in class and stuff. Probably speaking to each other would be too much for our horribly self-conscious selves. Being friends with the only other fat girl would be an admittance of something- I’m just not sure what.

Somehow we did end up talking- I think it was that we ended up in the same cabin at the second grade outdoor education sleep over. The only thing I can vividly remember about that trip was that Rhonda and I became friends that week and Rhonda made a linguistic error. A linguistic error I will never forget, because it made me turn pink and wet and fuzzy. It was after dinner on a rainy evening and we were all alone in the cabin. Rhonda meant to ask me to rub her temples, which was amazing enough. Instead, she accidentally said, [SAM: “Will you rub my nipples?”] Thank you , Rhonda.

[Beat]

SAM: I make eye contact as I move through the crowd - shoulders firm, arms free- I take up space. (*Mirror words with body – take up space.*) I try and take up all the space I need and then take up a little more space - just on principal. I take an extra chair, or sometimes an extra half a chair – on the bus, on the plane, in the classroom, in the courtroom. I need an extra chair, or half a chair, to fit. I take what I need.

GLORIA: I stand, connecting the earth and sky, at the center. Feel my weight in my hips, my feet, my back, pressing toes into soft soil, impressing my strength upon the ground. (*arms open wide – inviting, embracing, challenging.*) I open myself...inviting in... crackle of sex, susurrus of pleasure, plip plop plip of transformation. I relax into the strength of my self, the glory of my round body pulled by gravity toward the center of the earth, toward the center of my own being, into the center of my passion, of my connection. And I am held. Air moves over me, a lover's touch, awakening every square bit of my abundant, naked skin.

NORA: (*Sensuously. Throughout her speaking, NORA is rubbing her hands over her flesh, in all of the “fat” places, especially the areas that are loci of shame and concealment – double chin and upper arm wattle and fat folds at the waist and jutting fat of the ass and hip. As she mentions a part of her body, her hands are mirroring and reinforcing her words. She is grooving on the feel of herself, sensuality personified.*) Looking at my first nude self-portraits I was in awe of the way my fat slides, moves, settles. I gaze in the mirror at my flesh, my hanging breasts and belly, while being fucked from behind. My inner tiger is visible on my skin- those sexy tiger-stripe-stretch-marks emerging softly on belly, ribs, breasts. Showing my strength. My stretch marks are proof of my journey.

ALEX: My first glint of true fat lust, was with a woman who would use the word voluptuous to describe herself, with a woman who was comfortable with herself, comfortable enough to let me really look at her, to let herself love being looked at. Looking led to touching. Etta James singing in the background...My lover's breasts, her hips, her stomach, and dear God, her thighs...everything was just so...soft, so round. I mean God DAMN! She permanently changed my ideal of what a woman is supposed to be. I want a Blues song woman, a sweet smelling, not afraid of her own power, great, full ass-shaking woman. I started to look for fat in the people I pursued. My mouth seeks out soft, round skin and the crevices of folded flesh as my hand slides between large thighs.

NORA: My hips and thighs and breasts filled early with puberty, engorging, thrusting out into the world. I remember looking down inside my T-shirts, seeing the cleavage from new fatty breasts squished together. I can still see my mother's worried glance at my ass, tight in last

summer's jeans. I spent hours caressing, stroking, pinching my own curves and swells, where my smooth new flesh grew up and over the edges of my clothes. I was eleven years old when I realized that my sex, my desire, was intimately connected with a body that was bigger than everything that sought to confine me.

SAM: Being fat enhances my sex life. Well, for one thing, when I am in the middle of sex, back arched, thighs wide, hair sweaty and wild, I am thinking, "Oh, damn that feels so fucking good,"- not, "Oh, damn, I should not have ordered dessert." And if I have been "bad" that day, you can bet your ass it does not have anything to do with calories consumed. You know what calls to me? The back of the knee of a fat friend transfixes me where the flesh slightly hangs down and begs to be worshipped, caressed, licked, bitten. Mmmmmm. Precious.

RAMONA: Being fat enhances my sex life, too. It's in the bouncy, bouncy, bounce, and the jouncy, jouncy, jounce. In the smack, grab, and squeeze, undulate, press, and tease. My flesh is mounded, grounded, and surrounded. My girl and I together are velvet crush, ripe and plush. Sex with my fat lover is tight jelly silk, orgasm drenching us both, salty spray. I wake up the next morning with mysterious scratches and bruises neither of us can remember. Holding my big fat lover close in my afterglow, pressing her to my heart and cunt, arms full, stretched wide and long.

GLORIA: I can hold my boy down, immobilized, just by draping myself leisurely over him. And strength- these legs carry hundreds of pounds up and down many flights of stairs each day so anyone who is lucky enough to be between my thighs- well, let's just say you're not going anywhere until I let ya. I use my bulk in pushing up against someone, say, leaning onto their chest, holding them down. I spread my self over all, infusing me with strength.

NORA: I learned to love my size –

ALEX: (*Interrupting and moving over to join NORA*) Yeah, more of you to spread wide and beg for it harder and faster.

NORA: More stamina for long fucking. Larger libido to match.

ALEX: Not to mention it makes your ass a bigger target.

GLORIA: I feel lust when a person talks to me about who they are through their body- when they show me their strength through their body.

RAMONA: It takes strength to be the boy with eyeliner and pearls...

SAM: ...Or to be the fat chick in the tight dress with little ruffles pulled snug and ripped fishnets stretched wide and full...

GLORIA:...Over unapologetic calves. It takes strength to be the fat woman in the thong-bikini or to be the fag in the hard-body gym who proudly shakes his fleshy, un-liposuctioned ass.

(While she speaks the next lines, SAM, ALEX, NORA and RAMONA gather around GLORIA – laying her down, one supporting her back, embracing her, one at each of her thighs, holding her legs firmly apart, one moving in between GLORIA's open thighs. By the end of her speech, GLORIA is surrounded by the other women, barely visible in the middle of the pack.)

It took strength for me to be sexual – to overcome fear of my own body and offer myself up to the gorgeous ritual of first sex, of defloration. A pack of fat dykes are my initiators – four – astounded that such a gorgeous morsel as myself was a virgin who thought I was unattractive because I was fat. It took strength for those fat women to allow their desire to spur their actions, to pluck me like a ripe fruit, to reach out to me - caressing my body, looking into my eyes, telling me how beautiful I am, how hot I am. It took strength for me to respond with my own desire and act on it. They surround me, support me, open me and fuck me – guide me to my first orgasm – at 27 years old.

ALEX: Fulfill your sexual fantasies.

NORA: Have the strength to admit compelling desire.

RAMONA: Desire for your round, big body.

SAM: Uncover the strength in you to take your pleasure...

GLORIA: ... to ride my lovers' hands and writhe in my lovers' mouths – to glory in my first fat fuck.

SAM: Fat enhances my sex life when I can appreciate inch after inch...after inch.

RAMONA: Fat enhances my sex life each and every time a lover knocks me out with her fat American thighs.

ALEX: Fat enhances my sex life when my girlfriend says, “You better not ever diet and lose your belly, or else you’ll just ruin everything.”

NORA: Fat enhances me sex life when there is more to hold on to, more to want and more to love.

GLORIA: Fat enhances my sex life because I am not afraid that I - or she - will break.

[Beat]

Final Fusillade

GLORIA: I walk through a silence – a conspiracy of good taste and politeness in the face of horrified reactions - if we don't talk about my fat it doesn't exist, right?...I don't exist. I am either a target or I am invisible. I am supposed to be the ghost on the battlefield. No! I do not accept it. I confront this war zone. I fight back. I am tougher than the diet industry. I am stronger than a stereotype. I am a survivor.

SAM: I am a super hero.

NORA: I can bend the minds and eyes of mortal men.

RAMONA: I am a shape shifter.

ALEX: I am a bullet, a bomb that destroys.

GLORIA: I am a scalpel who cuts deep in pain to heal.

NORA: I'm not just playing a role on stage at Ladyfest.

RAMONA: I'm a fat girl telling you what's real.

SAM: I am sexy.

NORA: I am powerful.

SAM: I am visionary.

ALEX: I am your nightmare.

RAMONA: I am your fantasy.

ALEX: I am your teacher.

ALL: This is your official invitation.

GLORIA: Learn.

-Curtain-