

JOB DISCRIMINATION


Fat people are openly discriminated against by employers, a fact easily documented by telephoning almost any large or medium company that is advertising for a job. No matter what your qualifications are, if at the end of the conversation you tell them you are fat, your appointment with the personnel department will be cancelled because "the company has a weight requirement." It would be difficult for a company to justify not even interviewing a black person, or even a woman, who was qualified for a particular job, but they do it every day when fat people apply for jobs. Employers justify this discrimination in one or more of three ways.

First is "insurance." Insurance companies will not insure fat people, and since many companies require all their employees to carry group health insurance, fat people will not be employed by the company. In this method, the company dodges the rap for discrimination and begs off saying, "We'd love to hire you but the insurance company won't let us hire anyone who weighs over---..." Of course, no one can get to insurance companies to show them that the newer medical evidence says there is no correlation between fat and any illness or early death.

Second is the myth that we are slow-moving and lazy, and no one needs an employee with those qualities. This is, however, pure myth, like the myth twenty years ago that black people had natural rhythm and were too stupid and lazy to be employed at any job that wasn't pure physical labor. Conversely, fat people are considered unfit for any job which requires any physical movement at all.

Third, and perhaps most insidious, is sexism. In our sexist society we must use our bodies to sell ourselves to employers and our employers in turn sell us to anyone coming in contact with their firm. Thin bodies are fashionable, and thus by definition carry society's "stamp of approval." A fat body in the office implies that the firm condones the "rebelliousness" of the fat person. Also, since part of the price we are made to pay for being fat is the loss of our sexual appeal, we are made a further drug on the labor market. Sex appeal sells; it's good business.

Fat people are forced onto welfare or stuck in low-paying jobs, despite a desire to work or abilities or educational background that qualifies them for better jobs. We have had enough. We now make the not unreasonable demand that employers hire us if we are qualified for the job. We demand equal opportunities and if we do not get them let all prospective employers know that we will fight for this right in any way we think necessary.

Published by 

A Fat Liberation Collective

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