

*Pride Speech Boston 1986*

## Speaking Out

Get Your Foot Off My Neck:  
Fat Liberation

By Judith Stein

By now, we all know that mainstream America lies about gay people. They lie when they say we increase our numbers by recruiting innocent heterosexuals. They lie when they say we are child molesters. They lie when they say we are unfit parents. They lie when they say we are unfit to be foster parents. Lesbian and Gay Pride is about self-love and self-respect. It's also about fighting those lies.

Well, that's not all mainstream America lies about. They lie about fat people. We do *not* eat more. We are *not* lazy. We are *not* less healthy. We do *not* hide behind our fat. We are *not* sick. *We do not need a cure!*

The lesbian and gay community has bought the entire package of lies about fat people. We think there is something wrong with being fat. We think that being fat is never as good as being thin.

I have four minutes today to undo a lifetime of lies. Fat people are still the butt of jokes. But fat oppression is no laughing matter. Fat oppression kills fat people. It kills us through repeated diets which fail 98% of the time and leave us weak and sick. It kills us through surgeries which cut out or rearrange our intestines or stomach and leave 10% of us dead on the operating table. But most often fat oppression kills us slowly, through constant harassment by strangers on the street *and* our friends and lovers telling us that we are just not good enough as we are. You say "If I tell you to lose weight, it's for your own good." I say "For my own good, get your foot off my neck!"

If we are victims of homophobia, we know where to get support. But fat lesbians and gay men victimized by fat oppression cannot run to our community for support — because our community has embraced the very attitudes that are killing us.

Real value in our community is still based on how we look. We may have changed the standards a bit, but don't think for a second that our community does not have standards of how we are supposed to look. We've tossed out Barbie and Ken as role models, but in their place we idealize the hot number, the butchy hunk, or the tough little Amazon. And our ideals are never, ever fat.

It's long past time for our community to get rid of the myths and attitudes that oppress fat people. Fat lesbians and gay men have given years of effort and tons of energy to the struggles for gay liberation. We are not just tireless co-workers, or good companions, or sympathetic listeners. You do not "just happen" to find fat people unattractive. You were taught to be a bigot!

If Lesbian and Gay Pride is about self-love and self-respect, then it must include every one of us. Fat lesbians and gay men will no longer be second-class citizens in our own communities. Not only are fat people energetic, talented and intelligent — we are also hot numbers, gorgeous Amazons and sexy lovers! Some of you have the good fortune to know this first hand!

For the rest of you, it's past time for change. Get rid of another chunk of the lies you were taught by our oppressors. Whether we are fat or thin, the only thing we need to lose is ignorance. Then, and only then, can we move forward together.

*Judith Stein is a founding member of Boston Area Fat Liberation and delivered this speech at Boston's 1986 Lesbian and Gay Pride celebration, June 14.*

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