

Concerning Fat Dykes: A Fat ‘Womonifesto’

by Valley Fat Dykes

Do not assume I want to be thin, or that I have issues with my weight.

Do not assume I am dieting or want to be dieting.

Do not assume fat is linked to eating.

Do not assume I eat all the time/overeats/eat more than you/am out of control with food/should eat different foods/do not like to eat.

Do not make assumptions about why I eat/what I eat.

Do not assume fat is a health risk. The stress of fat oppression and the hazards of dieting are health risks.

Do not assume that dieting results in weight loss. Dieting results in depletion of body resources, physical and emotional stress, heart and other muscle damage, and the gain of more weight than was lost.

Do not assume I am not healthy and physically fit.

Do not assume any or all of my medical problems are related to my size.

Do not assume I am asexual/oversexual/hiding my sexuality.

Do not assume I want to take care of you—I am not an earth mother or an overstuffed teddy bear.

Do not assume I want to be lovers with a thin woman; do not assume I don't. Do not assume I am desperate to be lovers with anyone.

Do not assume I am lazy/stupid/slovenly/jolly/super-strong/unhappy/placid/more tolerant/lonely/desperate.

Do not assume I am not entitled to the space I take up.

Do not assume I never get angry.

Do not assume it is a coincidence or “normal” if you have never been attracted to a fat woman. Why are you accepting patriarchal standards of beauty?

Do not assume I want to hear about your food issues/body image/latest diet/exercise plan.

Do not assume your body won't change.

Do not assume that fat wimmin do not have their own full lives.

Do not assume I want to be a part of your learning process about fat.

Do not assume you are the "right" weight or that there is such a thing as "over"weight. Over whose weight.

Do not assume I want or need your approval.

Do not assume my life problems/issues are attributable to my fat.

Do not assume I should be wearing dark clothes/prefer polyester/should not wear shorts or bathing suits.

Do not assume this is only a personal issue. *Fat is a political issue.*

Don't tell me/act like/think I'm making up or exaggerating incidents of fat oppression.



Drawing by zana

Miss Fat Manners

Rules of Etiquette

by Valley Fat Dykes

On the streets/on the dance floor/at the beach

Do not stare/sneer/make oppressive remarks or gestures/think I should have stayed home.

Be aware that bus seats, turnstiles, restaurant and theater seats, and bathroom stalls do not accommodate people who are different than the patriarchal "norm."

The space I take up is the space I deserve.

Between the sheets

Do not assume I am more interested in meeting your sexual needs than in having mine met.

Do not fear I will crush you if I roll over.

Do not say you love me/are attracted to me despite my size.

Do not think you can make my dieting a condition of your love.

In the stores

Don't use the words "flattering," "slenderizing," "minimizing." We don't want to be invisible. Some of us like horizontal stripes/fuchsia/exposed cleavage.

Have consciousness that it's harder for fat womyn to find clothes and almost impossible to find stylish clothes or bargains.

Don't comment on how huge clothes are that are too small for me.

Fat comes in different sizes. Do not assume that XL will fit all fat womyn.

At the table

Do not count french fries or calories—yours or anyone else's.

Do not utter any of the following phrases:

I shouldn't be eating this.

I'm really pigging out.

I'll start my diet tomorrow.

I'm getting fat.

Do not order diet foods or drinks. Do not support the oppressive diet industry. (We're not talking here about "the need some womyn have to keep careful watch over their blood sugar levels in order to stay alive,"** e.g., diabetic womyn.)

If you see me eating carrots, celery, or cottage cheese, don't commend me or assume I'm dieting.

Miss Fat Manners Etiquette in a nutshell

When in doubt, shut up and educate yourself.

For more information, read *Shadow on a Tightrope*; Fat Liberator publications.

**thanks to Elana Dykewomon, "Traveling Fat," p. 151, *Shadow on a Tightrope: Writings by women on fat oppression*. Lisa Schoenfelder & Barb Wieser editors. Aunt Lute Book Company, Iowa City, 1983.

We are Valley Fat Dykes, a large group of six wimmin from all corners of the Pioneer Valley in Western Massachusetts. We have been meeting for over 1½ years to give each other support and confront fat oppression, particularly in the lesbian community. This piece was inspired by our individual and collective exposure to too many recent incidents of fat oppression in supposedly "aware" literature and in our personal lives. Valley Fat Dykes currently includes Annie B., Leslie Baker, Cate Carulli, Diane C., Susan Goldberg, and Jan Hostage.

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a lesbian quarterly



number twenty

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THE CONCEPT OF *CL/LL*: *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives* seeks to document the experiences and thoughts of lesbians as we claim our past, name our present conditions, and envision our evolving futures. *CL/LL* will reflect the complexity and richness of those experiences and thoughts by describing the lives of ordinary lesbians—women who have always struggled to survive and create a culture for ourselves. The magazine is a forum for developing and clarifying our lesbian-defined social and political relationships.

Common Lives/Lesbian Lives is committed to reflecting the diversity among us by actively soliciting and printing in each issue the work and ideas of lesbians of color, Jewish lesbians, fat lesbians, lesbians over fifty and under twenty years old, physically challenged lesbians, poor and working-class lesbians, and lesbians of varying cultural backgrounds. *CL/LL* feels a strong responsibility to insure access to women whose lives have traditionally been denied visibility and to encourage lesbians who have never before thought of publishing to do so.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION—SEE PAGE 128.

COVER: from "Mes Amies, les Amantes," photograph series by Noel Furie

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Drawings by zana appear on pages 4, 56, 82, and 86.

Biographical sketches of authors appear after their work. Biographical sketches of visual artists appear on the inside back cover.

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