



the play

the zine

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Preface

Since November 2013, **FAT: the play** has been happening all over Austin, TX. We have performed it in theaters, at a university and at a thrift store (twice!). But so much of this project has been the process of creating the play we share with the public. **FAT: the play** is not just a play. It is everything that's happening along the way-- happening in our living rooms, in Facebook threads, in coffee shops, in group texts, it's happening in swimming pools, in instagram/tumblr hashtags, and in parking lots. This zine will give you a taste of who we are and our process: What terrifies us? What do we love? What can we do better? This zine is an open invitation to join us in the writing down of our fat femme glory. At the end you will find writing prompts to inspire the telling of your own fat truths. Share them! Share them with your dog or your mom or your neighbor- or share them with us! We want to know about your fat.

Here's to this project getting fatter and fatter,



xoxoxoxo



althea, bunny, caleb, dan, jules, nicole, sandy

first time we were all in a room together!



FAT: the play

Frontera Festival 2014

Featuring:

Althea Clemons
Caleb Luna
Nicole Arteaga
Jules Pashall
Erin Burrows
Dan Miller

Created by:

Althea Clemons
Caleb Luna
Nicole Arteaga
Jules Pashall
Erin Burrows
Dan Miller
Sandy Pee

edited and directed
by:

Jules Pashall
with special thanks to:
Beverly Bland Boydston
Rebecca Karpovsky
Rachel Gilbert
Mike Lacourse
Morgan Collado

director's note:

We are a group of fat femme-identified queers. Most of us are not actors and don't identify as writers, but we have stories to tell. For two months, we have been meeting to talk and eat and cry and laugh and write about living in fat bodies. How do our different race, gender and class identities affect our experiences as fat people? How do we undo the internalized shame our culture has taught us? For so long this word has been used against us- to dehumanize us and to pathologize us:

Fat - adjective: (of a person or animal) having a large amount of excess flesh.

But fat is not lazy. Fat is not ugly. Fat is not stupid. Fat is fun. Fat is beautiful. Fat is smart. Fat is sexy.

Take a moment to consider how you think about fat people; about the fat people you see on t.v., the fat people you see in the super market, the fat people that you love.

This is for you. But it is also for us. We ask you to bear witness to reclamation

Femmefesta

This is for the fat femmes.

The fat femmes who never felt like enough.

Not pretty enough (what the fuck is that?), not white enough, not thin enough, not femme enough.

The messy femmes, the dirty femmes, poor femmes, disabled femmes, dark-skinned femmes, rural femmes. Hungry femmes, young femmes, lost femmes, femmes who didn't know something was missing, femmes who are desperately seeking a community they know they are missing, femmes for whom nothing is missing, femmes who might not yet know they're femmes.

We are seven fat, queer femmes living in Austin, Texas on traditionally Tonkawan land. Six months ago we came together with the intention of making art. Of making a 25-minute (or less) piece of art about what it means to be fat, and queer, and femme in this world, for an audience of mostly strangers, with no expectations. What we found was so much more.

What blossomed out of this experience was a family. A community built upon our shared experiences of fatness, queerness, femmeness, and their intersections. Not with the misunderstanding that these identities homogenize our experiences, but with love, hopefulness and a willingness to learn from each other through our differences to create a bigger, wider, more expansive, fatter community for us all.

FAT: the **play** became so much more than the seven collaborators that met and ate and talked and laughed and cried and danced and primped and traded clothes and loved. We want to share this with you.

We are coming from a place of open-ness. Open to learning from each other, of making mistakes and learning from them. Open to sharing ourselves and our stories in the service of learning and discovery, in an attempt to make visible the reality of our oppressions, the necessity for change and an end to fat hatred and oppression.

We put our bodies on the line. We are demanding space for ourselves and for each other, together. We do this in an act of empowering ourselves in the face of and in opposition to fat hatred, white supremacy, masculine dominance, ableism, "the war on obesity", capitalism, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colorism, transmisogyny, prisons, zionism, colonialism, classism, ageism, and more. We do this for the purpose of collective liberation.

This is a process of community, collaboration and communication, of which none of this would have been possible without. Of delight of being, delight in being, of joy and trust. And of love. All of this, for ourselves and for each other and for the world we are building.

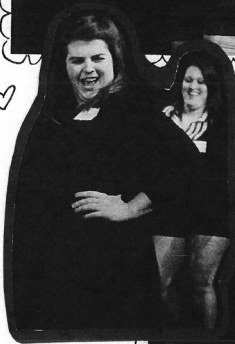
These work together to create a collective self-care project. We refuse to be afraid of or deny the truths that we are wonderful, beautiful, powerful, deserving beings. And so are you.



Dress
Rehearsal



photos by
Beverly Bland
Boydston



Introduction to Round Table Discussions

Saturday, May 10th, 2014

One lovely Saturday, we merry band of FATs gathered together to talk about our process, what it has meant to us, what lessons we took from it and our lives as Queer Fat Femmes. We wanted to share selections from that Roundtable Conversation with you. As you read this you will learn more about Caleb, Althea, Danny, Sandy, Erin Bunny, Jules, and Nicole, how this whole thing started, how it changed us and how we feel about it afterwards.



On Unlearning Fat Hatred

SANDY: I want to talk about hanging out with other fat people, but they were never fat identified because I had fat friends when I was in high school and middle school, but it was always about shaming each other's bodies and it was never about being okay or feeling okay in our bodies or with each others bodies. It was always coming from a very negative place of like "We have to put each other down and we have to shame each other for looking this way or being this way," or fucking whatever, and not experiencing that in a group of other fat people was just mind-blowing. That was a really big thing.

ALTHEA: It feels like a lot of my life has been, not thinking that I looked good, but that I didn't look bad, and it's been really transformative and amazing to be like "I do look good in this," and "I do feel sexy in this," and "I do feel comfortable being this way" and being who I am and, baring my skin, literally, to people. You would not have caught me dead in a swimsuit in public, ever, like a year ago. So that's a pretty huge thing for me.

ERIN: That's supposed to get at how has this process changed your relationship to your own fatness, you know. I'm thinking back, actually, I had this realization where I reread this thing that I had written that I shared with Jules and Althea at one of my first writing sessions at the back of [Bennu Coffeeshop] and I wrote this little stream of consciousness piece about parts of my body that I was grateful for and the parts that I still hated. I went back and reread it and it is so hateful. It's like, I couldn't even see how much internalized hatred I was still carrying around, despite having been in fat communities for a long time, you know. I worked at Re/Dress, which is a plus size clothing store that was based in Brooklyn when it opened, and was surrounded by other fat people, trying to create communities where fatness not only was tolerated, but truly celebrated. And still carrying around these ideas of the parts of myself that were not worthy of being on my body, you know, and still living in my head and valuing my brain over every other part of my physical self. Even, going back and being able to reflect on that only, like, six months later is powerful, you know, in that you can do this work for a long time, like years and years of trying to unpack a society that tells you that you're not good enough and it will still show up. o just that level of honesty, like, whoa, I shared this really hateful thing in a space where I was trying to tap back into fat positivity.

JULES: On that note, I just feel like you can be doing this-- you're always going to be doing it. You're always doing the work. For me, something new that's been happening to me since this process is like when I have sex, I talk about my fat. It's not just like, "Oh we're having sex, so you must be okay with my fat." No, we're talking about what my fat feels like, we're saying that word, we're talking about how my fat is utilized during sex and it's arousing. I remember thinking,

when I was thinking about the work I needed to do (around my own self acceptance), I remember being like, that is literally the scariest. That's a hard no for me. I will never-- you can love my body all you want but we will never talk about my fat, my fat isn't going to be why we're fucking. It filled me with so much fear. And now I do that. I literally just never thought I would. Part of why that is, is now I'm so turned on by it in this way that I wasn't before. I don't know if that's the "fake it 'til you make it," of unlearning those things. It was something that had been utilized in ways that didn't make me comfortable before, you know? There's a real difference [between that and] people talking about your fat when you're having sex in a way that feels really shitty and awful and terrible, that's not what I'm talking about. But this is hot and sexy and I thought it was impossible. I think that's come from this process. I can directly link the timeline of me incorporating that into fucking and that's part of being in a space with other fat people and being turned on by other people's fat and being so into other people's fat bodies. We talk so much about how you can be into it on other people but on yourself it's so much harder. You can be really aroused by other fat bodies, but your own relationship to how your fat is in that sense is really hard, sometimes, to find erotic.

DANNY: I think from the beginning of this process I was really in a low point in how I felt about my body and also was smaller than I have been in a very very long time, and was in a really shitty place about all of it. I have experienced that thing that [Jules] talked about, fucking people that fetishized my body in ways that are, you know, they talk about my fat body and they're getting off on shaming me about it and I did that for years. It's a really, like, healing and powerful thing to do that [differently] with you. You know, it feels so good, it's not about [someone] getting off on my body being disgusting, you know? The whole framework for my fat is totally opposite in this space and I think a lot about a thing [Jules] told me about your body experiencing things differently depending on what context it's in, you know, that in this space there's like an existing... I don't know, thing that every bit of my body is great and sexy and desirable and deserves to be loved and worshipped and it's not gross.

SANDY: I feel like I shit on myself a lot for like not unlearning things as fast as I should be and when I get in those spaces, I try to remind myself that I'm 25, right now, I think? So, let's say for 23 years I have been learning how to hate myself and all of those things have been reinforced and reified in my life over and over again. So, like, of course I'm not going to be able to unlearn those things in two years. How could I possibly try to unlearn 23 years of hating myself in 2 years? That's impossible! That's not real. And that doesn't even account for all of the messages we get daily and weekly and monthly about hating ourselves and the ways that we participate in doing that against people that we love and care about. So obviously it's going to be a daily struggle.

DANNY: Daily practice. Literal daily practice.

CALEB: Yeah, there's... this has kind of been a retroactive process for me in so many ways. Like I've done a lot of fat activism before without realizing it. And in my past before I moved to Austin,

or whatever, it's something I think about. Like, right before we did our [Treasure City Thrift Store performance of "Fat: the play"], it was freaking me out a lot and there was a thing that happened that made me feel like shit and it sort of reified this fact that like even in radical queer communities I'm not valued in ways that feel really shitty and people who I expect to get it and I expect to not be shitty are still doing that thing without realizing and I have just let it fuck with me a lot these past couple of months. I feel like doing this work is really important and I don't necessarily have to be in this space to do this work. And it's not necessarily about the play, or like this process because this process has been, like, really amazing for so many reasons. But it's like this really weird dichotomy of being in this place of regression at the same place of like being so open and forward and vocal about how fucked up it is and like trying to hold those spaces at the same time.

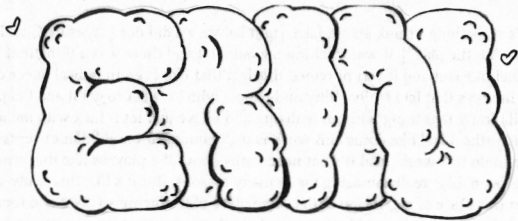
SANDY: Not to say that it's the exact same thing, but something else I like to think about when I'm personally regressing, is like with kids, kids regress into comfortable behaviors when they are about to shoot forward in development and I feel like that makes me feel better about shit. Because it doesn't feel like I'm regressing and I'm a piece of shit and I can't do anything right and so on and so forth but like, I'm uncomfortable and I'm trying to learn and learning is really fucking hard so maybe I need to step back into some things that help me feel better in order to learn more.

ERIN: That explains so much.

CALEB: Part of me is like, I know I've learned in life, it's like a fucking rollercoaster with ups and downs and everything passes, like, even the good passes. Also this process is not solely about us, it's like we're interacting with an entire world that teaches us to hate ourselves everyday and, like, unlearning that at the same time, all the time, it's like so fucking...

NICOLE: It's exhausting. *(Collective agreement)* ♡





aka "Bunny" ♡



Fave snack: I can't believe I'm putting this in print but for real, it's a peanut butter and pickle sandwich

Fave fat body part: I've been loving the curve from waist to hips-- especially because I have a well-placed tattoo on my side that is really special to me.

Fatspo: Tess Munster has been a big one lately-- but really all of the original shopgrrls from Re/Dress in Brooklyn - you know who you are. I was such a babyfat when I started there (circa 2009) and was quietly learning to unravel my own shame in the most loving fat community I could imagine.

Signature outfit: I love a vintage (or vintage-inspired) a-line dress - preferably with cleavage and cut just above the knee

Big fat dream: Walking into a thrift store and finding endless affordable, super cute options. A bigger dream really would be having the time and creative energy to design and make my own clothes. Walking into a queer party space and know, without doubt, that my fatness has nothing to do with my desirability - except, ya know, increase it :) oh right - and smashing patriarchy, dismantling capitalism, ending white supremacy and all other forms of oppression while dancing and laughing hard in the company of my brilliant, liberated community.

Fat root: Beth Ditto and sweaty Gossip shows in Portland as a wild lil teenager

Fave line from the play: "What if electrical pulses of desire for myself, my notions of the world I want to live in, the connections I make - came from my sweet, simple, fat cells and I learned to love them for this?"

What were your expectations?

I expected the writing to be easy and the performance to be deeply challenging, but honestly it turned out that my experience was the opposite of my expectations. It was the digging into my fat memories, fat experiences and my ever-developing analysis of fatness that was most difficult. It was challenging to take some of the most shameful moments of my life and turn them over to Jules, put my trust in her hands to select lines for the first draft of the script. I doubted my writing in deep ways as we edited the script and questioned every word. I let go primarily for the sake of time and needing to feel confident about memorization. I had no idea upon entering a collective art-making process just how important those early brainstorming meetings would be. When you are culling from an unedited place-- that's when the truth rises and sticks. The rawness of that writing made it into the final show in many ways.



Hardest thing

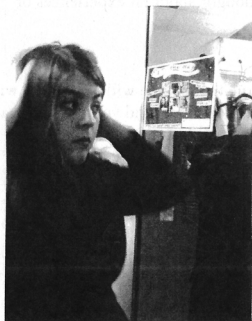
The hardest thing for me was letting go of my perfectionism. I know it is not possible to capture the nuances of my complex relationship to my own fatness and the fat hate I learned from my parents, my communities, my culture in a short monologue. I settled with a slice of perspective on what it was like to grow up in my house, with my family while also attempting to honor my current relationship to size-, body- and fat-positivity. I also wanted to weave in my current understanding of the impact of my whiteness and middle-class background impacted my relationship to my body without it taking up too much space in the show, or feeling like an inauthentic acknowledgment of privilege. It is a complex to be real about my experiences of pain and violence while keeping an eye on how my various privileges show up in the process and the content of the work.

This balance of unraveling and talking directly about my identities while not allowing it to dominate a space or work is one that I am always learning how to do better.



Best thing

The most rewarding part of the writing, editing, rehearsal and performance was the cultivation of a tight-knit crew that kept my engagement afloat even on the most draining evenings. We had a practice of checking in and out at the beginning and conclusion of each meeting. This way we had at least a quick temperature gauge about how everyone was feeling about the process as it unfolded. This practice, in many ways, became the foundation of trust between us and a way to express with honesty how this felt as it was



happening. We built a strong community-- one that did not exist before the initial call for a gathering of queer fat femmes in Austin. The best thing about being part of "Fat: the play" was the artistic intimacy discovered, nourished and cultivated while building fat queer community. I believe we all have healed in significant ways by giving so much to this work - I know I have.

Do you identify as an artist?

I have identified as a writer and visual artist since entering high school but this is the first piece of performance art I have co-created outside of the context of school. It feels really good to stretch myself into other artforms and embody my work in such a direct and vulnerable way. The overwhelming support we received from our community in Austin made these risks as an artist worth it in ways that are still difficult to articulate but that keeps me going to meetings and co-cultivating the continued growth of this project.

Who should see this play?

In many ways this play is specifically for other fat queer femme-identified people. I think our shared hope is that across our spectrum of experiences, most people will find a reflection of their own-- something that resonates deeply, feels honest, feels liberating, feels like an invitation to love yourself and other fat people without reservations or conditions. The play, however, I think is also designed to illuminate the beauty of fatness in contrast with the survival strategies of fat people for those who have never critically thought about fat experiences or who are very far removed from their own.

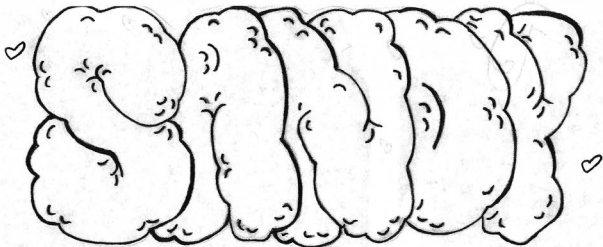
Something you wanna say to your baby fat self

Something I want to tell my baby fat bunny self is that it's true that people will fall in love with your heart but not in spite of your body. Your heart is part of your body and you deserve the kind of love that sweeps you up whole, all parts fully recognized, intact, fleshy, heavy, hairy, real. No one who can't accept you for everything you offer, size included, is worth a second thought let alone the enormous gifts of your affection.





FAT
BABE



If i could be any food what would i be? Fuck it lets do a meal. Id be a cuban sandwich w pulled bbq pork (representando lxs cubanxs), no cheese, on buttery garlicky cuban bread with seasoned fries and a mint oreo (extra oreos - i want that shit like slush) blizzard on the side (plus a joint).



Signature outfit: Mesh leotard, short black shorts or hot pants, lacy socks, black boots, dont forget the pocket knife!, silver jewelry, back up lipstick for later reapplication, possibly a one hitter if i remember.

Big fat dream: Teaching and loving fat babies in a space that is inclusive and accessible for other community shit that fat queers can utilize for fat dance parties, fat potlucks, family dinners, reading, not reading, helping and loving each other.

Fat queero/fat root: Athia, who was the first person i remember talking about fat bodies fitting in spaces, the way time and shape affect the body and an allaroundbadass who hasnever ever ceased to amaze me with her words.

Fat quote: "redonda como la tierra que tantos mitos y leyendas encierra" and later in the song "el silencio no me protege, no me voy a callar, vivan las gordas sin domesticar, las pasás, las pesás, las que no creen en na"// "round like the earth, which so many myths and legends enclose" and later "silence doesn't protect me, i won't shut up, live the fatties, without being domesticated. the heavy ones and all, the ones that don't believe it all" - "Gorda" by las krudas, queer afrocuban hip-hop duo. living and performing in ATX

What were your expectations?

It's so difficult to think about what my expectations were because i have no frame of reference for performing or creating art. i expected maybe hanging out and discussing fatness, listening and learning about nuanced fat experiences that are not part of my lived reality, and maybe some sort of relationship growth between the group. i did not expect to relive childhood and formative fat-hating experiences. i did not expect to bond with these folx in the way that i did, to be able to discuss deep traumatic shit that i altogether repressed, in some cases. i didn't expect the outpouring of interest and support by folx in and out of our social group, let alone outside of austin. i sure as shit didn't expect crying in public, being moved to tears by others words, and refusing to emotionally shutdown in the face of some of the hardest shit i've ever had to think about, unlearn, and heal from.



Do you identify with being an artist?

i mean, no? but also yes? i've never felt that creativity was a strong suit of mine. i am realizing more and more that that is bullshit, but also that i allowed myself to shut down artistically/creatively because of how afraid of failing i was/am. i'm realizing now that what is considered "art" is very intentionally policed because of whiteness and white supremacy, capitalism, misogyny, and the fucking totality in general. surviving is fucking art, especially when there are so many factors that are actively seeking our demise, reminding us that these institutions were surely not made for us to benefit from (depending on who we are and to varying degrees). i refuse to keep myself from pursuing new endeavors because i have been told and have internalized the idea that i have no voice or at least a voice not worthy of a platform. fuck that shit, everything we do is art (except of course when we are hurting or stealing from folx we hold institutional power over).

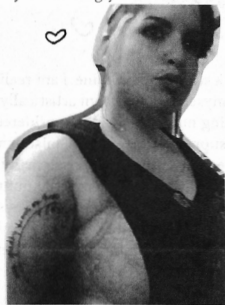
Who do you think should see this play?

babies. teenagers. anyone coming of age. fat folk who have been shit on their whole lives and whose beauty has been stolen from them or denied. fat queers who do not have the same social capital as skinny queers. my parents. everyone's parents. fat white queers who think that we, as fat white queers, are exempt or absolved of the responsibility of perpetuating and recreating politics of desirability in our own social groups (because we're not and we have never stopped doing that shit). "acceptably" fat or smaller fat folk like me that take up a lot of space in the fat community and center our voices. anyone who talks shit about fat fucking.



What was something you heard all the time about fatness as a kid?

my dad married my mom, who is fat and passed her fatness down to me (and my sibling). my dad is so terrified by fatness that he cannot stop himself from commenting on any and all bodies, creating a constant competition and hierarchy of bodies. this is the environment for my childhood, the space in which my parents would pass on their own complicated relationships with food that i would later build upon. disordered eating habits and obsessive (and forced) exercise were facets of a "healthy" lifestyle (in what universe?) as well as a daily dose of caustic, blaming fat hatred. fat hatred as a pointed insult and platform for virulent misogyny, with constant conversations about who was at "fault" for bringing fatness to the family. fatness was a problem to be fixed, a disease to be prevented, an obstacle to a "happy" life (whatever the fuck that means?). my mother projected her internalized fat hatred onto me and presented it as a loving conversation to help navigate the complexities of life, the saving grace that might help me see the error of my fatness, her opportunity to gently and lovingly break me before anyone else could.



FAT
BABE



Special thx ♡ to the Steakfinger Femmes - Ivy May, Beverly, & Danaford. ♡



♡ for graciously ♡
with your individual and collective
presences each and every day.

sandy's big fat thanks:

everyone i know who has helped me grow as a person, which is a v long list, but for this zine and time in my life in particular: Every Single Rag Tag Weirdo In This Group, nico gumbs for everything we've ever shared and made it thru, nicole the celestial femme of my dreams, athia for every word she's ever said and written, bradsford von braddington for being the gentlest kind hearted friend, alse for being incredible in all regards and always being gentle with my feelings and patient with my bullshit, raeann for walking me through so many things, dad/ellis for being the best model for a dad any and every dad should aspire to, every orlando friend that i need to see more of - ten (kathryn, cristoina, kiki, pep pep), every single baby i've ever hugged, cried with, was frustrated at, talked through my feelings with, every baby that taught me what it is to love and hurt and cry in public with no regard for etiquette, every baby who has ever taught me to forgo every misconception i had about myself, every baby that showed me that i am fucked up and i need to do better. i can never express enough gratitude to yall (in general, but also to the babies). <3



On The Actual Performances

NICOLE: We were talking about how many times we performed it in total. 6, 7 if you count [the excerpt done at the panel we did for the Feminist Action Project conference at the University of Texas]. And how it was just going to be once and how after that second night after we got [Best of Week at Frontera Fest] I was like NOPE.

JULES: [I was like] I'm all done! I went home and I cried. I felt like I had led everyone off a bridge. I felt like I failed everyone. Before we knew we had won Dan was in the car with me and I was like "This is terrible," like, everyone had the worst time. The second time [we performed Fat: the play] to that terrible audience who didn't get it and I felt like we all left feeling wounded. I left feeling wounded. And I felt the energy in the group plummet and I felt like everyone... I felt really exposed, I felt like I hadn't thought it out, I felt like everyone exposed themselves in a way that like wasn't fair and there was this audience that like didn't fucking understand the gift that was being given to them.

SANDY: Can I ask what happened during that show?

NICOLE: It was just the worst audience.

ERIN: It was people laughing at our most traumatic lines, that was something that really stuck out to me.

DANNY: They didn't get our jokes and they laughed at things that were not funny.

JULES: And a lot of looks of disgust.

ALTHEA: A lot of closed body language. They were all crossing their arms and just sitting back and I was just like "WE'RE FUCKING PERFORMING ABOUT OUR BODIES IN FRONT OF YOU," LIKE--

DANNY: You're uncomfortable?!

JULES: And Nicole, you said that night, "I can't do this again."

NICOLE: I cannot share myself in this way and be met with that.

JULES: It's violence. It feels violent.

ERIN: Especially compared to the first night-- (*Group agreement*)

ERIN: Because the first night all of our friends and lovers were there in the audience--

NICOLE: And we had a standing ovation, and I will never forget that feeling of turning the corner in front of the theater and being met with dozens of our friends and people in our community cheering, and the fucking feeling of just knowing that we did something so... so magical and being so supported and loved and held to the night after that was like--

DANNY: Huge drop. *Huge drop.*



NICOLE: I had said, yeah, "I'm not doing this again," and then we found out we won Best of Show and Jules texted me and asked, "Will you do it?"

JULES: 'Cause I was scared you wouldn't. I was like, people are done. That's it.

ALTHEA: And we were all together and we were like "Oh, damnit"

ERIN: Because the first night, the cast party, literally as each cast member walked in, it was like, SCREAMING--

NICOLE: Celebrating!

JULES: We had also just found out we had won Best of Week and so everyone was coming to that party being like, "We fucking did it, our friends came, that was amazing!" It was our first [performance], it was the highest of highs you can get in theatre. You'll be chasing that forever.

NICOLE: And the next night when we walked into that [other] party, it was like, "Fuck. We did it."

DANNY: I don't know, Jules' face when they called her--

JULES: Yeah, I was in the car because I had just been crying about how like I was a terrible failure and I should have never done this. I really felt like that, I was like, "Why did I do this?" I felt like it was selfish, or that it was this really terrible thing and then they called me and then I was like.. it felt like people hadn't gotten it, like we did all this work and no one was gonna get this. And we talked about how weird that validation is. The idea of validating-- what'd [Caleb] call us? A rag tag group?

ALTHEA: That sounds like a TV show promo: "In a world where a rag tag group of fats.."

ERIN: And so the rest of [Frontera Fest] was okay and then [the Treasure City Thrift performances] were amazing and the difference between performing for our people and like having an audience where we knew that we were getting to people's hearts because they had some similar experiences to us. It made it so much more clear who this was for and why. So I'm actually really, in a weird way, grateful for those fucked up people on the second night. Because, "Oh right, this is real! We live in a world where fat bodies are actively oppressed and you don't even know what to do with yourself when people are taking their power back."

DANNY: They literally... yeah.

CALEB: Also, it's this fucked up thing that like the Best of [Fest] audience was so much more open to us because we had this label and so they were like, "Oh, like clearly, this has done something." So they were more willing to be open.

JULES: That's how I like tried to convince [y'all] was being like, "People are gonna like be more receptive to us because we've been given this gold star. Like, this is is something deemed good and so you should be listening to [us] because whoever made this decision, some suit, this gatekeeper of culture decided this was good," And so people were more receptive--

SANDY: Because fucking social capital.

On Earnest Intersectionality

ERIN: I mean, I think it's important to note that, I think all of us, identify as radical queers and there was so much intentionality of bringing other parts of our identity into this process, that it wasn't the singularity of fat and we could not divorce fatness from our race, class, age, sexuality, gender, but still I think fat gets treated like a single issue in our world, that somehow it is separate, or that the shape and size of your body is disconnected from all of your other experiences. so it's something I really valued about this process from the very beginning. so for me thinking about fatness and whiteness and privilege and middle class and being able-bodied, you know, all of those things were present in our process and I remember something really deep about that that kept me going, even on the days that were really hard because I also wanted to push myself in my politics around fatness. and I felt like we weren't just talking about it on a surface level, we were like building real, deep relationships like I want to know how you grew up with your fatness and I want to know how being brown shaped that or how being poor shaped that. so that's a big part of it for me, that's something I really learned.

ALTHEA: I think part of what made this process so comfortable is that [Jules] was specifically focused on our differences and how that shaped our fat identities and like our identities in general, and I feel like if someone had just come up to me and said, "well, I just want to talk about fatness," I would've been like "no, i'm going to go out the door now," but [Jules] was so focused on everything that makes us different and wonderful and beautiful and unique. But also like there is a shared experience with our fatness but there's also so much that goes into it for everyone.

CALEB: This has really made me think about whiteness a lot more than I normally do, but like especially being a fat dude, the shapes of acceptable fatness for fat men and like how it's so racialized and fucked up and how much that affects my experiences and it's like so fucking enraging.

DANNY: ...yeah and there's still so many things that we haven't talked about yet in ways that we could do so much better to each other. I know that there are things that happened that were, I don't know the words, but yeah that were hurtful and hard and I know that I did and said things even in my personal writings that like I felt entitled to feel or say because it's my body and my experience but I'm certain that there are ways that I need to learn to, um, talk about that in ways that are not gonna be so hurtful and entitled. Is that a complete thought?

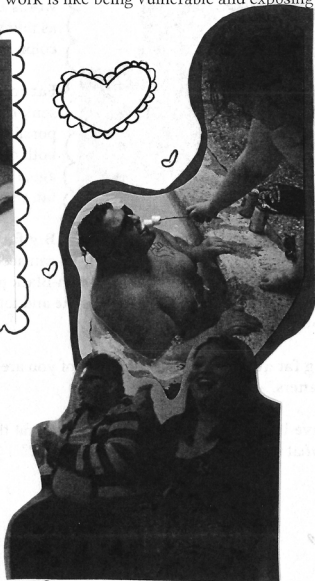
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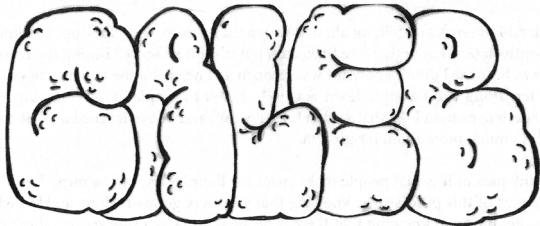
SANDY: Because we all have such a different relationship to our fatness and also the ways in which we are perceived by others in our fatness.

DANNY: Yeah, and that was like, to be totally honest, that was my biggest fear going into this thing. I remember, I think right before or right around our first meeting, taking a walk with

[mutual friend Beverly], and talking about how scared I was to, like, fuck up, you know, and like now six months later I know that I've fucked up but it's not so scary? I think the reason why I was so scared was because I didn't know if I was as open as I needed to be to learning or just like, that was really terrifying. I did want to learn how to be better to people in my community who have different experiences than I do, that I often forget about. and I have learned a lot about that but there's still so much more room for growth.

JULES: I think part of it is that people make space for their feelings to be hurt, does that make sense? Like part of this process was knowing that you were gonna fuck up and knowing that you were gonna get hurt and knowing that there is no such thing as a safe space. I think part of what we've talked about, that we need to get better, that we need to do better and we will but also when you talk about these things, giving space for authenticity gives space for their authenticity to be fucked up to you and painful and, like, I think that we all sort of tacitly made room for that in this unspoken way and maybe it needs to be more spoken. It was just a thing that happened and it wasn't named. It was happening. Part of doing this work is like being vulnerable and exposing yourself and there's no way to not.





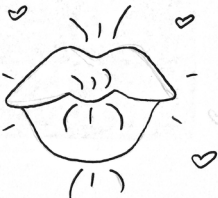
Fat queer: audre lorde is my all-time biggest inspiration in so many avenues, and i am constantly striving to use her words and her work in the service of her and people like her, as much as it's possible for me to as a non-Black cis male of color.

Fat root: i saw margaret cho's stand-up dvds by accident my senior year of high school. those were the first inklings of possibilities for fat, queer, femmes of color. though we have both changed and grown since that precious time ten years ago, i still honor the importance seeing her had for openly fat, sexually closeted baby caleb

Big fat dream: CHAIRS/BUS SEATS/BOOTHS/PANTS that can accommodate my splendor. whataburger delivery service. for queer men, thin folks, non-Black people of color, fellow non-disabled folks to GET IT THE FUCK TOGETHER. the complete and total annihilation of all interlocking systems of domination.

Big fat quote: "Even though some of you are pretty thin, you all have fat hearts, and that's what matters." - Fat Amy in Pitch Perfect

Fave line from the play: "fat bellies on fat thighs on fat cunts"
"what if my fat was as vital as my breath?"



the hardest thing about this process was being vulnerable. and honest. there is so much shame wrapped up in my experience as a fat person. so much shit i don't want to talk about because it's fucking embarrassing. because one way that fat hatred manifests is through humiliation. humiliation as a tool of obedience.

to share this with strangers felt like so much. it still does.

and there was/is so much doubt. so much second guessing my own experiences. what if i'm wrong? what if what happened was because of something else? am i whining? am i throwing a fit? am i self pitying too much? am i being a victim? what do all those words even mean? are these all just ways to ask if i'm challenging an institution of oppression? is that thinking too much of myself?

to tell friends things that i don't even like to think about because they are sad and scary and embarrassing was hard. to tell those things to strangers was harder. to tell it to members of my community, who perpetuate this bullshit all the time was fucking terrifying. thin folks seem to think i can't tell that there's a difference between being cordial to me and thinking i'm an actual person. sometimes people who hate me deep down will let me know, and that's great. it saves me a lot of time. sometimes they will engage with me on a regular basis, hug me when we see each other, let me care about them, pretend to give a fuck. and i know they don't. and the thought of letting them know was hindering. i wanted to let it stop me. i wanted to continue to participate in my own oppression through silence. because speaking is so fucking hard.

it is so comfortable to not speak. i am so used to it. i didn't necessarily want to change that. to this day when people let me know they saw the show i get a pang of embarrassment. like, oh my god they know. they know these intimate things about me. how are they using it?

the hardest part was confronting my internalized fat shame when i thought i was done. the hardest part was confronting that i have so much further to go. the hardest part was learning that this is a process that never ends and being okay with that. the hardest part was being honest.

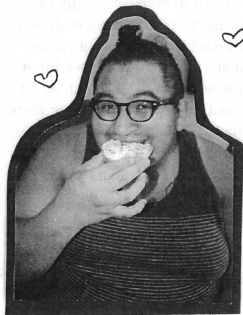
i had pretty low expectations for this play, initially. i thought that we would do this thing, that might be kinda ok, maybe a little cool, and perform it once for an underwhelmed audience and maybe some friends. and we would be like, ok great job friends group high five, and go on with our lives. maybe this is what i was telling myself because i was so terrified of doing it. not the writing part, so much. or, at least, not at first. but the like, being on stage part. in front of people. being the center of attention. that prospect made/makes me SO uncomfortable, and i'm not convinced that doesn't have anything to do with growing up fat and spending all my time just hoping nobody would notice how fucking fat i was. so to intentionally put my fatness as the focal point was... nauseating. i was 100% not expecting for the play to become what it has been, which feels so much bigger than us. maybe that is conceited. who knows. i have never claimed to have an accurate grasp on reality. i'm in



#feelingsschool (liberal arts), where they told me everything i feel is real, so whatever. the world revolves around me. and that isn't a fat joke.

the best part of the play was the sense of community that came out of it. that i knew i wanted but i didn't know just how much it would do for me. the sense of being around people who can be so open and honest and loving and supportive was transformative.

i remember one day, after rehearsal, when this had become so much more than i thought it would become, thinking to myself, "wow. this is what i needed to see so long ago." and all i really want to do-- all i really can do-- is do what i can to make the world a little easier for the people coming behind me. and this play feels like such an important part of that process.

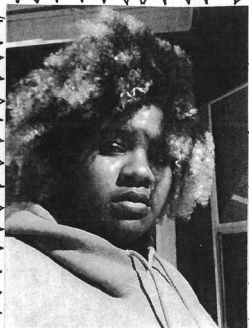
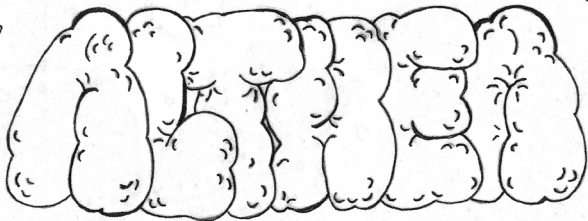


growing up fat made me hard, and bitter, and angry, and strong, and amazing. growing up fat made me shut down emotionally for self-preservation from all the shit that i was going through and couldn't, and didn't want to, confront. it made me insecure and think that everything that was happening to me wasn't true, or i was overreacting. it made me naive. and i don't think it was just being fat. it was being fat, and closeted, and confused, and in a rural area, and poor, and mexican-but-didn't-know-what-that-meant, and the youngest of my mom's kids, and the younger sibling to my older siblings, and my mom's kid and my dad's kid. i was SO lost and angry and felt guilty for being angry and guilty for feeling all the things that i felt. i thought that i was wrong, for everything, and it made me so insecure. because no one was around to acknowledge how fucked up it was, until i met my best friend, and we were just kids trying to help each other. and things got better after she came along, but it took a long time to undo all the damage before she was there. and all the damage that has happened since she's been there and all the damage that is still happening. i became amazing because i thought that if i couldn't be hot that's the only way people could love me. so i became funny, and silly, and quick witted. and then i got smart. whatever the fuck that means. maybe smart is just another word for hurt and fucked up and desperate and trying to make



sense of shit. i don't consider myself smart. i am hurt and i am angry and desperate and lashing out. i am trying to make sense of myself and this world and myself in this world, and i refuse to be silent about it anymore. because if nothing else, i have learned that i am more than this world wants to let me believe. that i deserve more. that i can express this in a way that people listen, that is sometimes useful to the academy, is just a fucking fluke. and being fat made me this way. my bestie and i used to talk about being fat and what it meant for who we were, and how could we lose weight? being fat gave us so much. it made us into these amazing, powerful people we loved so much. how could we betray our fat by losing it? growing up fat made me who i am. i don't thank it enough.





Fat root: Caleb was the first fat person I ever met that was fat and loud about it. That actively and happily shared his fatness with the world and was open about it.



Fave snack: Cool Ranch Doritos dipped in Tostitos Queso

Big Fat Dream: For the food scene in Hook to be real. For us to be able to sit down at a table, imagine whatever food we want to eat and get it in bright neon yummy colors.

If you could be any food: I think I would like to be a Grilled Cheese sandwich (simple, lathered in butter white bread with slices of American cheese) with a spicy dill pickle, bacon and creamy tomato soup to go with it.

Signature outfit: Lacy sleeveless dress that fits me like a glove and is also flowy enough to cover my transformation into Wonder Woman

Fave Fat Body Part: My hands? Or my Thighs? My hands are always warm, comfortable, small and chubby, great for hand holding which I wish I did more. My thighs have shielded me from so much and have most of my scars. I used to hate them but now I see the beauty in them.

Fatspo: Amber Riley, Morgan Robyn Collado, all the FATs, all the fat babes on Tumblr

Fave line from play: "This thread is strongest, most powerful when it it meets other threads like it woven into a tapestry, ornamented by our bodies, our brownness, our queerness, our resistance."

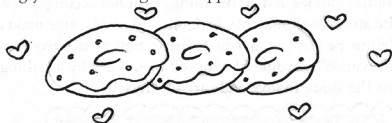
Best thing:

The best thing about this process has been the space it has created for me. I know that there is a space where I can always be open, be bold, be more than I ever thought that I could be. Having a safe space to be more of myself in has been so important to my self growth. I'm not as terrified of failing or not being the best or not being right because I have a safety net, I have people making sure I can keep going. I've never had this many people behind me, encouraging me and it's beautiful.



Hardest thing:

Being real. Being true to who I am and still using words to creatively explain this to others. I have always been really good at shielding parts of myself and this process has required breaking that shield down and sharing the gooiest, most tender parts of myself not just with my fat babe family, but with an audience filled with strangers who could never identify with me on a variety of ways. It was terrifying, exhilarating and filled with ugly cries but I'm glad it happened.

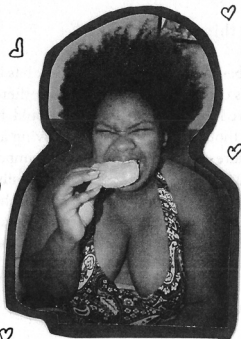


What were your expectations?

I honestly had the lowest expectations, I thought we would just be getting together and making art together. I genuinely didn't think I would go on a regular basis because I was "busy" and didn't have time for "frivolous" things like art. But the thing is, I needed this collective and our work so badly and I just didn't know it. I didn't know Jules planned to write and perform a play, I didn't know that my fat or femme identity could become so important to me, I didn't know I needed to be immersed in this world so badly. I'm so glad it happened the way it did because my low expectations meant that I could dream big.

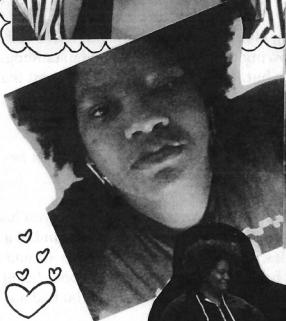
What will you take with you from this process?

I'm taking that love and endless patience with me. I'm taking with me the knowledge that if someone wants... No, fuck that, if someone deserves to be in my life they will meet me with the same care and joy and laughter and tears these femmes have given me. No one that has ever made me feel bad about myself intentionally or not, deserves the gift of my presence. Because I am a gift. I am willing to care for others, to prove I want you in my life, to run the gauntlet for my friends and you better fucking earn that. The care I've received during this process has taught me to value myself in ways that I never could for 24 years. The patience I've been given has taught me that it's okay that I'm not perfect, in fact it's amazing, and all these other people are willing to love me BECAUSE of that. I've been shown I'm important. I know now that I can be who I am right now and also confident that I will get better with age. I'm getting a clearer picture of myself. I feel happy not obligated to do things for others because people who show me love and patience will be here for me whether or not I do it. I can lay down and cry over pointless things, little details, Netflix movies and all the things I cannot accomplish while crying and know I have an anchor in the storm, a shoulder to lean on, and some fierce makeup tips if all else fails. No one has a right to define me but I choose to define myself by the love I receive, from myself, from others, from FATs forever. Why would I let myself be defined by anything less than absolute love and care that allows me the space to love and care for myself?





FAT
BABE



♡
♡
♡

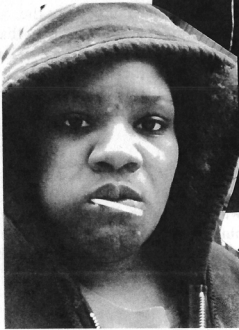


photo credit:
Beverly Bland
Boydston



On The Fear Of Art-Making

DANNY: The first time we were all together was for that picture that we took that was in [Caleb's] living room.

CALEB: For me the process as a play, the prospect of doing writing and performing, was panic and I freaked the fuck out. but like, after being together, that first meeting with the duck, that Sandy wasn't there for, unfortunately, sorry Sandy--

SANDY: IT'S FINE

CALEB: Everything clicked so much, and I remember being able to just talk about shit that I had gone through so easily and just with so much comfort knowing that there was an understanding, like a shared understanding, which maybe, is not the truth, but it felt like maybe at that point that was the closest I had ever gotten to feeling like other people knew what the fuck I was talking about and that was a lot.

NICOLE: Yeah for me the first time being in that space was very... I felt very anxious about it because I feel so anxious about writing and sharing my writing...

ERIN: I mean the first time was in [Jules'] living room, on a mattress, on the floor because you had just moved into your apartment, and I remember, just feeling very cozy, and that it was kind of a favor because (Group laughs) I knew you were excited, Jules, about making collaborative art and so it was, it was always a stretch for me from the beginning, but you know, people joke about being manipulated into this process by you but we showed up and you had a calendar and you had an agenda

ALTHEA: I was intimidated as fuck when we got there, because I think I walked in without the thought that it was serious, and then there was an agenda and a calendar and there was a plan that was gonna happen and we already had the space and everything and I was like "whoa, okay, so i'm gonna be in a play in like a couple months and that's a lot." and I hadn't done theater in like three years, so that was pretty scary. Also you, Dan, walked in and I was fucking terrified of you--

DANNY: Me?

ALTHEA: I had never seen you before and you were just like so badass--(Group laughs)

ALTHEA: and I was like "Oh my god, i'm gonna... I don't know what i'm gonna do, i'm gonna melt into a puddle, I have no idea." and it was nice to get onto other things, other than just being in the room, listening to Jules' agenda because then I was like "Oh, this is actually the sweetest person in the world and so kind and generous," but when you first walked in I was like, "Oh, fuck. Okay."

(Group laughs)

CALEB: I knew [Dan] the best at that point, like I knew y'all [Erin, Althea and Jules] and-- Well, I knew Sandy who wasn't there and I had never met Nicole--

JULES: I was so scared because I didn't really know Caleb or Althea or Sandy and I was just really anxious. I was anxious about being too much and I was anxious about being too serious and being too, like, "here's what's happening, guys!" and I couldn't say that because I just didn't know what people wanted to do. But I also had like this agenda and space, so I also had a vision of something happening, but I wasn't gonna know what it was until everyone else chimed in. I felt kind of, well, I didn't feel "manipulative", I felt strategic-- (Group laughs)

JULES: --making it on my birthday because people felt more compelled to show up. (Group laughs)

CALEB: Wow

ALTHEA: Very effective.

JULES: It was also just a matter of timing-- I had this idea and that was the closest date, it was like, "oh my god, I have this idea! That show's in February!" It was just a real time crunch thing that happened to be around my birthday, which was conducive.

ALTHEA: I think I didn't know that I really wanted to do it until [Jules] invited us to the birthday party that night and I was like "Okay, these are people I can fucks with", you know? (Group laughs) When I got to [Jules' and Erin's birthday] party and it was really fun and happy and I knew like nobody, but it was still really good.

DANNY: The first time Jules talked to me about this was in my car, sitting outside of [Bennu coffee shop], and we were still broken up, (Danny laughs), and you said that you had this-- it was our first time seeing each other since our breakup-- and you had said that you were, that you had this idea that you wanted to make some art with fat people, and I was like "OKAY GREAT. So, we're just gonna sit in my car and talk about making community art?" I didn't really understand, like I had no idea that you had like this developed idea, until I came to your house for the first meeting, which I tried really, really hard not to go to and i'm really, really glad that I did. But... yeah, then, I was just really blown away by how serious it looked because I just didn't know that you had a plan, you know, and THAT'S when I got scared. (Danny laughs) Also, [there were] a lot of things going on, we were just getting back together and making art together was not something that we have ever done before and, um... so a lot of that is really tied into this whole thing, you know? Us dating is what got me there, but like being there, and Caleb and Althea and Erin being there, and the things that we talked about, that's what made me come to the next one. I think that I didn't really feel solidified in wanting to be part of this project until it was Jules and I, and Sandy, and Nicole, all had dinner, which was what really solidified, I think, that I wanted to be a part of this. because I was really, really nervous about it and it was so great. I had never really met [Nicole] before, like we had met, but we hadn't gotten to know each other at all. So hearing [Nicole] talk about your feelings about writing, and your apprehensions about writing really made me feel so much like there was somebody else in the room that got it. I wasn't the only one who was scared of writing, you know.

or talking about my writing. and that, like, that's what made me stay and keep doing it, I think.

JULES: It makes me think a lot about relationships, like for folks who did know each other beforehand, or folks who didn't know each other really well, or for folks who have dated amongst this pool of people, right? (*Group laughs*)

JULES: Like that meeting, we refer to that meeting being so funny because we had all had these other reasons to have met each other before but hadn't built real relationships with people and for me it was a lot of apprehension a lot of feeling anxious and I feel that was really cool and there's still dynamics of that happening here and we can still come to this space. I just think that that's cool and--

NICOLE: It really speaks to what we've found here and what we've built here.

DANNY: Yeah, we can keep showing up with that weird complicated hard shit, which I think is really magical and yeah.

ERIN: Sandy, did you want to talk about how the first couple meetings were for you?

SANDY: Um, that was the first meeting that I had gone to, when the four of us [Danny, Jules, Nicole, Sandy] had dinner, and I feel like if I had gone to the [meeting] previous to it, I may not have stuck around because, like, I don't have any direction or goals, and it's really hard for me to see people who have so many of those things, who are so driven and motivated and sometimes that really scares and intimidates me. So I think it was really cool to have a really informal meeting where we just had dinner and like talked about like eating as fat people, and eating around people who are not fat and eating around people who are fat, and that was really important to me. I remember that [Jules] was like, "Well, everyone has talked to me about how they don't want to do this--" (*Group laughs*)

SANDY: and [Jules'] words were, "Okay, raise your hand if you don't have any experience in art or theater" and all three of us raised our hands and you were like, "Okay, just for visibility." (*Group laughs*) and I feel like we all breathed a collective sigh of relief at that point, where we were just like "Okay, maybe we can do this. maybe we can hang out and do this together."

CALEB: I was thinking the other day about how we are such a rag-tag group of fuckin' weirdos, who got together and did this shit. I mean Jules, you obviously have a lot of experience and Althea, you... well,





I don't remember everyone's resume right now-- (Group laughs)

SANDY: I'm really thankful that you, Jules, were super motivated and driven, because if I had been the one to say, like "I have this idea!" it would have been like, "Well, I'm gonna write it down because it's funny!" and never would've talked about it again, so it's like really fucking important to have someone who is driven and wants to put in the energy and the time to do those things and realize those things and so thank you for doing that and for bringing us all together.

JULES: I feel like the reason I did this is because I couldn't do what I had originally planned. This came from like this place a failure to me. Like I am this person with no drive, who can't do shit, who says she wants to do this thing and can't do it and can't pull it together unless there are other people around. I can't be driven by myself, so [Sandy] seeing me like that is like, "Oh god." This is really like pulling teeth. I am so grateful that people wanted to do it. When I sent out those initial emails, I was like, "Well, I can probably get Dan to do it" (Group laughs) Well, then it would be a really different show. (Group laughs) So Dan and I date, for all you listeners. So I was really grateful.

NICOLE: I mean, really the reason why I showed up is not because I had any interest in writing or in being a part of a collaborative art group or writing group. It was really because I just wanted to hang out with y'all. I wanted more queer friends. I had, at this point, a lot of my queer friends had moved away and I felt very much like [I was] not in a community, especially not a fat community. I've never had a fat community and really, I just wanted to make friends and this turned out to be such a powerful, easy way to establish these meaningful friendships with you all. And I'm so, so grateful that I pushed through my anxiety and just fucking wrote some things and shared it, even though it made me want to throw up.

SANDY: The whole time. (Group laughs) Never not having that feeling.

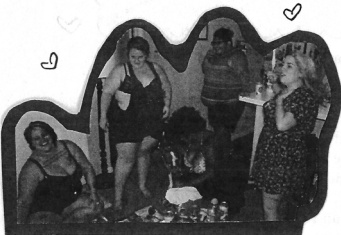
NICOLE: I still have that feeling.

JULES: Can people speak to that maybe a little bit, about sort of what that feeling was, of feeling so... like what it was to push through that? How did you and why did you?

CALEB: I think it says a lot that none of us stopped doing this.

DANNY: None of us dropped out. I think coming to this experience with so much anxiety about writing, with so many feelings that come from a lot of places, about not having an education like the rest of ya'll, not having experience writing, or feeling like I have academic language, or whatever, to talk about this shit the way that people talk about it, in ways that make me feel like I don't know anything. And then it didn't really feel like the things that I wrote during our writing sessions that felt that important to me... it was like when I read what I wrote and y'all had things to

say about it. And you got it, you understood what I was saying. That was the big thing, I was worried that I wasn't gonna make any sense. And, not only that you understood what I was saying, but that you had things to say about it, and then I had things to say about the things that you had to say about it. That's where most of my monologues came from, or at least how I see them, as conversations that came from what I wrote and that encouraged me to keep trying to write. At least I knew that even if what I put on the paper was total shit or whatever, like I would get something huge out of it.



NICOLE: I think that's what felt really important to me, was pushing through that anxiety. I mean, I've always had a lot of anxiety around writing especially since being in graduate school and feeling totally inadequate and, totally not articulate and just, like, not talented enough to be in grad school. I think that comes from being a brown person, a queer person, a child of an immigrant who is illiterate, whatever. You know, it comes from a lot of places. But what made me push through all that was seeing other people's openness, and willingness to be vulnerable-- (Group laughs)

NICOLE: Their willingness (Group laughs)

SANDY: I also enjoy everyone staring at me. I got it. [Sandy has a misspelled tattoo on her finger that says willingness]

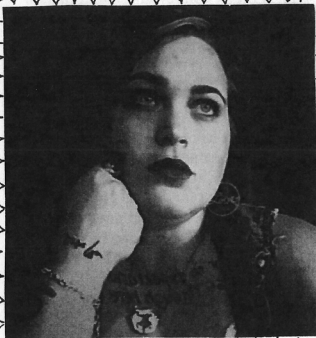
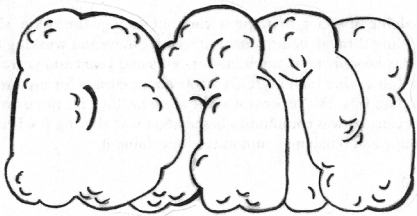
NICOLE: Ultimately acknowledging or seeing that, the reward outweighed the risk of sharing my writing. and this process of healing through being vulnerable with others and working through these issues and this shit that has been living in my mind for years and years and years and never really working through it with folks other than myself. I wrote about fatness for my thesis but that was a totally different process than this. This process was far more healing, far more powerful, far more transformative for me, because it was community based and I was sharing it with other fat people. And making relationships and building community while doing it.

DANNY: That's really beautiful.

NICOLE: Thank you.

ALTHEA: I think for me the issue wasn't writing, because I feel pretty comfortable about that, or acting. It was more about talking about fatness, because that's fuckin' scary as fuck for me. I feel like for me, I didn't really come into my fat or femme identities until really recently and they're still very new to me. I mean, a lot of it is because of this play and the people that are around me and making me feel really comfortable being who I am, but a lot of it was that I didn't know any fat people because that was just where I was in my life. I just didn't interact with fat people, especially not self-identified fat people. It was just like so much of me was thinking "Oh, I just need to not be fat anymore and then I can be a normal person." And some of it is I have a lot of anxiety about sharing things that are so personal and just like nobody really like reacting to it and just being like, "Oh, I guess that's how you feel. I don't care." you know? I don't know, so, it was really intimidating and when I get intimidated, it's like hard to read things out loud, but it was like I have to share my writing because other people are really, really nervous about their writing and my writing is fine and I just need to share it so that other people feel comfortable, but also if I read this aloud I'll fuck it up and it was just really scary. I think that I feel way more comfortable with everything now.





Favorite snack: Burgers.

But also, right now I'm super into using egg salad as a dip for salt n vinegar chips. fuuuuuuck.

Fave body part: belly and legs.



Fatspo: all the FATs and I guess this is where I list my fave tumblr fat babes: Jess (cunthulhu), Evan Etcetera (dirtygem), Cortez (glitterlion), Jessie Dress (jessiedress), Anjle (strangeasanjles), Majesctica (tangledupinlace and heavymuffintop), Taueret (sophisticunty), Corey (tierracita)

Fat root: Ursula the sea witch, Miss Piggy, Jessie Dress, my aunt Colleen in the 90s

Signature outfit: lately I've been wearing some various crops with the same pair of high waisty short shorts I wear pretty much every day or slutty short skirts.

Big Fat Dream: a fat family with a baby

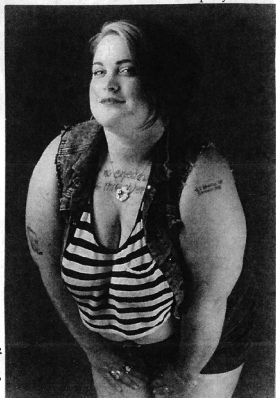




body wasn't the way it had to be. Jessie is my fat community. ♡

"FAT: the play" was the first time I participated in any intentional community building, and it was the biggest and scariest collaborative art project I've ever been part of. I had so many fears about sharing my writings and performing. I'm a poor kid. A high school dropout. A community college dropout. What the fuck do I even know about writing anyway? So, my grammar sucks and I just type what I say in my head and that's my writing. Haha who wants to read that? And then I'm supposed to get on stage? Last time I acted was my 9th grade Theatre intro class one act play and here we had plans to perform for this like big deal local theatre festival/competition thing? I've been yearning to do stage art since forever, but I have always been too scared to fuck up and ruin it for everyone. Like, that I would disappoint my friends, all my personal life shit was gonna show all over my face. And you know, it probably did. But I didn't disappoint my friends. Turns out my friends want to hear what I have to say. And they like how I say it. And other people too. I know all these fears for me have to do with mental illness and codependency, but it is that shit that makes it hard to make art like this, to be vulnerable like this. I didn't do it perfectly but god damn it I did a good job, even with work drama, triggered days and weeks, break ups and relationship shit, I still showed up, remembered my lines (mostly) and delivered a raw, authentic, sexy and powerful performance.

Photo credit:
Ann Harkness



I never knew a thing about body positivity until I met Jessie Dress. We met at a call center work training class. It was 2007 and I was my fatter. All I remember is i was immediately drawn to them and we started talking on our breaks and we found out we had mutual friends. Then we were friends. I was so excited for this new friend. Over some years we became very close. Jessie talked about loving their body, loving their fat, how they would go naked swimming with their friends. I did not understand. Jessie explained to me, very plainly, that wouldn't it be awkward if they were the only one not naked. That blew my mind. I never met a fat person before that didn't hate themselves for it. Jessie told me hating my

FAT: the play helped me shed so much fear about not being smart enough, educated enough, interesting enough to do something like this. I could never have done this alone. My fellow FATs made it safe for me to share my feelings about myself and my experiences. They helped me say that shit out loud, they helped me start to process pain and shame I thought I'd locked away forever. We held each other energetically and physically while we nursed broken hearts. Like even though the pile of baggage feels so insurmountable, so overwhelming, we are here with each other, unpacking that shit one thing at a time. I'm so grateful. I'm so so grateful.

I am fat and I am LOVED. I am a whole, worthy, loved person.

I wrote this during the meeting where me and Jules and Nicole and Sandy had enchiladas: "Today, I feel my fat feels good. I took a selfie and made extra sure it included my double chin. That felt real good."





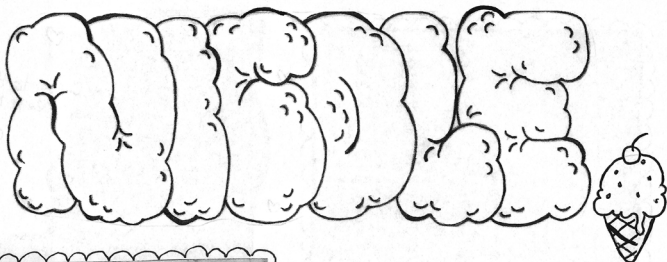
Dan tattoos herself



"Jules"
Dan's sketch from
Fully Figured ATx
fat life drawing



Fat femme 4 fat femme 400



Fave snack: french bread! or chips and salsa. Followed by an ice cream sandwich. But a fancy one with big, soft cookies and salted caramel ice cream.

Fave fat body parts: More generally, I love the shape of my body. More specifically, I love the fullness and roundness of my belly and the curve of my hips. And I've recently fallen in love with the thickness and jiggle of my thighs. They are power.

Fatspo: everyone in this play. Morgan Robyn Collado and all my other fat friends, every fat babe on fatpocfashion.tumblr.com.

Signature outfit: my favorite look right now is a pair of high waisted shorts and a sheer white tank top. The shorts are faded denim and are decorated with a really rad 90s sunflower print. I feel so bably in this outfit because it unapologetically showcases my round, plump belly and my best tattoos.

Fat dream: Being able to walk into any store and finding something cute that fits me. Bringing Portillo's Hotdogs to Austin. And Thai Pavillion (this little Thai restaurant in my college town) And good pizza. Also, can I get a fucking quality meatball sandwich in this town?

Fat root: Francis Ray White. The cutest, raddest fat scholar I know. They invited me to my first fat dance party, Unskinny Bop in East London. I never really thought about my fatness critically until I met them.

Fave line from the play: "fat thighs on fat bellies on fat cunts... your tummy is rubbing against my wetness and I want to scream because your fat is literally fucking me."

Hardest part: I think the hardest part of this process was very much the writing. I had finished grad school a short while before this project started and the process of writing was (and is) one that is really painful for me. Learning to write about my body in an institution that is founded on white supremacy, classism, ableism, heteropatriarchy, etc etc was really difficult for me. My experiences in grad school really kind of tore me down. As a fat, queer, poc daughter of an immigrant, the academy is not built for me or anyone like me. I felt constantly inadequate and devalued. Because I had spent so much time writing my thesis in this setting, it became impossible to divorce writing from feeling wounded. What was even harder was the act of sharing my writing; I felt so vulnerable sharing those parts of myself. Even more so than the act of digging deep into the caverns of my trauma to fetch these memories of anti-fatness and self hate. And I think a lot of these feelings are rooted in how the world silences me and stories like mine on the regular. I can hardly find the words to talk about myself, my histories, my feelings, because I've so rarely been given space to. But with these folks, I was. For what felt like the first time ever. And not only that, but my stories and my feelings were held in a way that felt safe and loving. My words mattered to them. And feeling that eventually made this process less painful for me. ♡

Best part: So many things! The fashion. I learned to love my self so differently and wholly through this process. Being surrounded by fat babes all the time really emboldened me to wear things that scared me most: crop tops, slutty skirts, fatkinis, anything sheer. Honestly, my fashion now really illuminates how comfortable and loving I am with my body. This group of folks are the most genuinely affirming people I've ever shared space with. The warmth and femme appreciation that characterized our weekly meetings is completely unmatched. I could be having a really bad body day but being met with an outpour of compliments and affirmation the moment I would walk into our meetings was so transformative for me. It taught me how to care for myself in tender and forgiving ways. It taught me how to hold space for those really difficult, often ambivalent feelings about my body and about my fatness. But really, the best part of working on this project was the deep community building that happened here. I went to my first meeting not actually wanting to write or perform in a play but because I was craving an authentic, supportive community. I needed more queer community. I needed more femme community. And I really fucking needed more fat community. And we built that in really meaningful ways. We made ourselves so vulnerable; we dug so deep into our own personal histories of trauma and violence together. And in that process, a really tangible and revolutionary love grew between us. We built community together that seeks to be less oppressive, that is invested in holding ourselves accountable when we misstep, that values our voices and our creativity, that centers our differences. A community in which I feel truly loved and worthy and valued. I really can't imagine life without these folks. ♡



Who is this play for? Me 5 years ago! Folks who feel like they aren't deserving of someone's love because of their fat. Queer fat people and especially queer fat femmes that don't feel like there's space for them in white, normie-bodied, masc-of-center/androgynous queer communities--because fuck that--femmes matter. We are the bones of our communities. Masculinity is bullshit, unchecked masculine privilege that is defined by anti-femmeness and misogyny is bullshit. Femmes are powerful and necessary. That's in part why this project has been so healing and so revolutionary-- because it is rooted in femme love and appreciation and care-taking.

Something you would say to your fat baby self? Wear whatever the fuck you want. Take risks with your fashion because I promise, you'll look great. Show off the parts of your body that scare you most. And believe that people want to fuck and date you because you are fine as hell and have so much to offer.

Abundant thanks to my fellow FATs. And to Bill Savage for introducing me to queer, fat activism and in doing so teaching me that my body was valuable. And to all the fat friends and fat lovers I've had throughout my life.

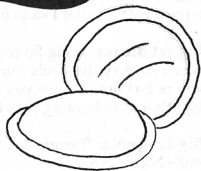
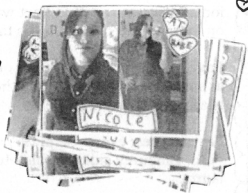
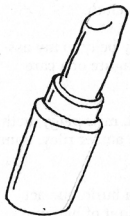


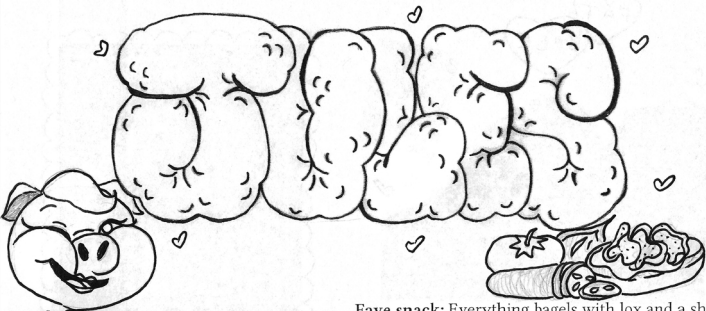
THIS IS A PLACE HOLDER.
I procrastinate and can't be happy with a single word I put down on paper, I will edit this to add something meaningful and truthful and I'm sorry. So I'm just putting words down to fill up some space so that I push myself to write something. I will be proud of. So I'm just trying to take up space so that I don't fuck up the formatting.

Sorry Dan & Althea.
The overwhelming guilt, y'all are doing great. I appreciate all the work you've done with this zine so far. It's going to be so fucking rad and I can't thank y'all enough for being my friends. I love you Sever
- Nicole



FAT
BABE



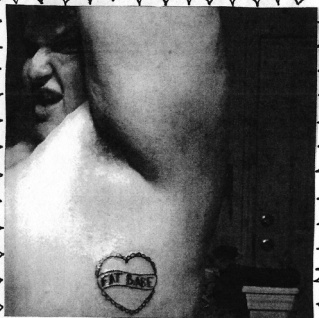


Fave snack: Everything bagels with lox and a shit ton of whipped cream cheese and tomato and red onion and cucumber. That I eat with my grandparents on Long Island over a plastic table cloth.

Fave body part: the S curve of my belly to my ass as someone once said I have the "figure of a care bear, all belly and butt"

Fat sheroes: everyone in this cast. miss piggy, beth ditto. gabourey sidibe. ashley fink. amber riley. nomy lamm.

Fat root: seeing dirty martini do a burlesque act where she pulled a 30 foot ribbon out of her enormous ass. reading "the cult of thinness" by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber



Signature outfit: A tank top showing hella side boob, a lacy bra, shorts so short it looks like no shorts

fishnets that my thighs have busted through, ankle length cowboy boots (my calves are far too mighty for anything taller), my Glitter Pig vest that Dan made, my chain wallet (geeet into it) all topped with the hat I stole from my grandfather.

Big fat dream: A big fat orgy. And by orgy, I mean like, fat bodies loving on other fat bodies in whatever way that feels comfortable. Maybe you're naked or maybe all your clothes are on? Maybe you're fucking? Maybe you're spooning watching the Real Housewives of Orange County? Preferably it's in a swimming pool full pillows.

Big fat quote: "People don't want to hear about your diet. Just shut up, eat your lettuce, and be sad" - Nicole Byer

A Moment I was The Fattest Person In the Room... I am 22 and I am in college. I am naked. And I am onstage. And I am naked. I am naked and I am onstage. I am in front of about a hundred people. Everyone is there:

1. all of my friends
2. my twin brother Sam
3. my mom's friend who's known me since I was a baby
4. and some of my professors (whom I had personally invited)

So I'm the fattest person in the room. And I am fucking naked. On a stage. There's a spotlight on me. I'm trying to remember the lyrics to "My Body is A Cage" which I am singing a cappella. My hands are shaking. Maybe I'm crying?

"...My body is a cage that keeps me from dancing with the one I love but my mind holds the key...."

...I'm living in an age That laughs



When I'm dancing With the one I love But my mind holds the key...

...Set my spirit free Set my body free..."

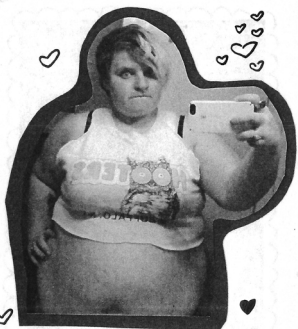
I'm not one for linear concepts of time and shit, but I do think of my life in some sense divided like this:

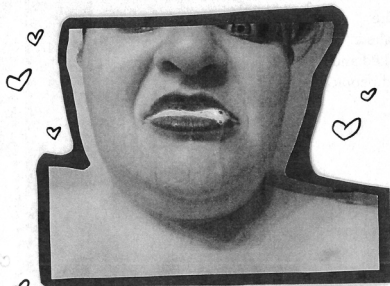
Special thanks to my twin Sammy for saying... "I think this song is what you're talking about... It was totally a twin thing!"

EVERYTHING BEFORE ME! NAKED! ON STAGE! FUCK!!!

EVERYTHING AFTER

Because up until a little bit before this, for so long, like my whole fucking life, I was hiding-- I wouldn't let my shirt ride up. I wouldn't wear tank tops. I wouldn't wear





intimidation

was praised and validated a lot. My parents and teachers and culture were telling me that I mattered. I was given access to acting lessons from the age of 8 and was praised for it, so theatre became "my thing." I used performance to both escape and find myself in my fat, genderqueer body. Being on stage meant I could explore my body without it being my body; I was me, but I wasn't me.

When I got politicized around my fatness, I didn't know how to process what I was learning- what do you mean I'm not supposed to hate myself? What do you mean I don't deserve to be treated like a joke and with disgust? So I started making performance art about being fat. I was gonna need to physically put this new information into my body. So. I got some friends together and put on this burlesque show. I was the only fat person in it. And I was the only person who got fully naked on that stage.

I had really done this for ME and I hadn't totally thought through the fact that other people were going to talk to me about this THING that I had done. Some of the stuff people said was amazing and validating and humbling. People were telling me that the piece helped them feel more comfortable in their own skin, it changed their lives. My twin bro was crying. Some folks all of a sudden thought I was really sexy which was fucking weird. Two dudes were even gross enough to ask if they "could just suck on my nipples." Everyone was telling me what an "inspiration" I was and they were all smaller than me. The undertone was- "if she can do that, than I can do (insert whatever thing they thought they were too fat and disgusting to do)"

So after I did this THING, yeah, I felt amazing and had gotten the huge catharsis that comes from doing what you once thought was impossible.

shorts or dresses that went above my knees. I went swimming in t-shirts. I WORE A FUCKING FLOOR LENGTH, LONG SLEEVED DRESS TO MY SENIOR FUCKING PROM. It was 100 degrees outside. The scariest thing in the world to me was the thought of people seeing my body. So this performance was a really BFD.

I have always used performance to explore. I have been fat all my life and I grew up like many of us fat (and not fat) kids feeling totally disgusted and hateful toward myself. I am also white and grew up in a rich household and





it was making me miserable and I was all alone, steeping in my own shit.

November 2013, when I was feeling my lowest about this project, all full of failure and shame, I happened to be at a weekend long training with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond and this amazing, brilliant man named Ronald Chisom said something that made me shift my entire framework for everything- he said, if you're doing your work totally alone, you're doing something wrong. Boom. Lightbulb moment. I went home and wrote an email to all the fat femmes I knew and said "Hey let's make a play." Which leads me to...

The best part about this experience has been building community through art making. The best part has been not crying by myself, but crying with people who empathize with my experience. Self-care is inherent to this process. I can be angry, (and I am) but I am sustained by this intense feeling of love and future building that can only be accomplished when there is more than one person in the room, dreaming out loud together, affirming and validating each other's truths. I feel like "FAT: the play" is everything I ever wanted but I never knew I needed until it was happening. And I'm terrified of it ending because I'm not sure I'll ever be part of something like this ever again. I'm not sure I will ever feel so held in community. But if this process has taught me anything it's that I'm gonna try to come from a place of abundance, not fear or scarcity. So here is to abundance: abundant bodies, abundant love, abundant art and abundant community.

But I was also lonely and annoyed. It felt like folks got to take this "inspiration" and they didn't have to do any work to examine their own stigma towards fat people. Out of a lot of anger and frustration I began another performance project exploring fatness by myself. But it's hard to make art when you're coming from a place of anger, especially when you're alone. It's hard to be creative without feeling openness and love. In this show, I was demanding myself to explore the most self-hating parts of myself and it was excruciating.

I moved to Austin and decided to keep working on it. But I couldn't. I avoided it at all costs. I thought I was just fucking up because you know, I'm like this fat lazy fuck who can't do anything, right?!? But looking back, I realize I couldn't work on it because

On Things We Will Hold Onto

ERIN: One thing I don't ever want to change is the amount of belly laughing that we do. Let's end with one thing we would never change.

NICOLE: The food and the fashion.

JULES: You took mine, Nicole!

CALEB: Seriously though, my fashion game has like really, upped because of this group of people-- (collective agreement). It's just really made me think differently about fashion, and clothing, and styling, and really appreciating intricacies and details and stuff.

NICOLE: Yes!

ALTHEA: I feel like if I've been taught anything it's to make bold choices and just going with it because this is something that has been terrifying and I was like, "if I could make it through this then I can wear a swimsuit as a shirt," like no one's gonna care, and i'm gonna look amazing. That's been so freeing, like make bold choices and be more yourself outside of like home.

DANNY: Black Cherry [a Revlon lipstick].

NICOLE: Black Cherrryyyy!

ALTHEA: Best lipstick I ever bought.

NICOLE: Sisterhood of the travelling lipstick.

DANNY: Sometimes one lipstick looks great on you and all of your friends.

ERIN: Also how many people sat on mirrors? (*Group laughs*)

CALEB: That has a couple of different meanings.

DANNY: I had to think about what [Erin] was saying. I was like, did we do that? I don't remember doing that, can we do that again?

CALEB: We weren't checking our genitals, we were just clumsy.

JULES: There were hand mirrors that were props and people sat on them.

(Group laughs)

ALTHEA: Not intentionally, it wasn't a goal.

CALEB: We are fat and we are clumsy.

JULES: The jokes! I would never change the jokes. And that's kinda [like] belly laughs, but like, fucking being able to make jokes and laugh and especially when we're talking about things that are so fucking excruciating. I definitely laughed more than I-- I think I laughed more than I cried, but I also had a lot of good cries, so I wouldn't change the crying either. Love a good cathartic cry.

CALEB: I think what goes along with the joking is like feeling comfortable with people to make those jokes and knowing and feeling good about where they're coming from.

SANDY: I learned a lot about trust in this group because I have a really hard time trusting people, like I don't even fucking trust myself and like learning to enter those vulnerable spaces and trust that people would be gentle and also vulnerable and that we wouldn't lash out and hurt each other, at least not intentionally or maliciously. Learning to trust other people's opinions about myself and I feel like that's really hard to do. It's really hard to trust when people say that um they want you around or that they want whatever, it's really hard to trust that they're being genuine when they say that. And I feel like this group really helped me to trust and respect those opinions and not have to constantly figure out if they were sincere or not and having to live in that headspace of, "should I really be here? do people want me here? are people just paying lip service to me for whatever reason?" and that is really fucking invaluable.

ALTHEA: We should start a cosmetics line called Lip Service.

ERIN: I also feel like there's so many moments where we paused to express gratitude to each other throughout, like that was never an afterthought. It was really centered throughout the process and something that I would never want to change. And that's something that really shifted for me since moving to Texas, honestly, is like really engaged in an active practice of gratitude on a really regular basis and it really shifted my mental health in deep ways. That was really beautiful to share with this group in particular.

SANDY: Sincere gratitude at that. (Collective agreement)

Excerpt from “FAT: the play”

Althea: I used to think that if I could change myself, wake up thinner and maybe a bit taller, I'd be happy and things would be perfect. But it was just a quest--like the one for the grail or the one to go where no man has gone before.

My quest took up so much of my time and thoughts it distracted me from finding the one place where I belonged: a fat community. People who taught me that I didn't need anything more or less than I was because they fill in my gaps with what they have.

(A step back, N step forward)

Nicole: I am beautiful because I am fat

Erin: (Touch N) I am resilient because I am fat

Dan:(Touch N) I am loved because I am fat

Althea: (Touch D) I am creative because I am fat

Jules: (Touch A) I am brilliant because I am fat

Caleb:(Touch J) I am revolutionary because I am fat

(White people sit down, POC come together)

Nicole: (Put arm out) Sometimes, I envision my fatness as a thread.

Caleb: (Hold N's hand) A thread that is woven through me, through my history and my body, tied to my brownness, stitched to my femmeness, my queerness.

Althea: (Put arm out) Some days the thread is strong and thick, the width of yarn, and the strength of hemp.

Nicole: (Hold A's hand) Other times, this thread is weak, pulling at itself, fragile.

Caleb: (Put arm out) Some days, it's coming undone, I can feel it almost breaking.

Althea: (Hold C's hand) When the thread is at it's thinnest, it seeks other loose threads to stitch itself to

Caleb: To weave itself into collective histories, communities of bodies and fatness

Nicole: Tying itself to them, to their histories, their feelings, weaving together our stories and love and our power.

Althea: (Step through) This thread is strongest, most powerful when it it meets other threads like it woven into a tapestry, ornamented by our bodies

Caleb: our brownness,

Nicole: our queerness,

C, A, N: our resistance.

(C, A, N drop hands, step back, J, D, E step forward)

Caleb: For so long we have been told that our bodies need to be “gotten past.”

Erin: Rather than a part of me that makes me who I am

Nicole: That cannot be separated from my thoughts,

Jules: My humor

Dan: My intelligence

Althea: My style

Erin: I have a fat spirit.

Jules: I take up as much energetic space as physical space.

Dan: I cannot sort my fat from my soul.

Nicole: What if I made my fat as crucial as any other organ?

Althea: What if my ideas,

Caleb: My dreams

Erin: My visions

Jules: My moments of deep enchantment

Nicole: Came not from the cerebral cavern of my skull

Caleb: But from the lumpy and asymmetrical stretch of soft skin

Althea: From the skewed belly button

Dan: From the plush inner thigh,

Erin: From the rolls on my back

Caleb: From the tender underarm?

Nicole: What if my fat became the most treasured part of my physical self – honored, celebrated, photographed.

Jules: What if electrical pulses of desire for myself, my notions of the world I want to live in, the connections I make – came from my sweet, simple, fat cells and I learned to love them for this?

Althea: What if my fat was as vital as my breath?

(Everyone holds hands and takes a deep breath)

BLACKOUT

How to Be Fat

(In A World That Wants To Destroy You)

by Caleb

Writers note: these are some things I have learned after living for more than two and a half decades as a fat person. This list isn't, by any means, comprehensive or relevant to every fat person. Some things might be relevant to people who aren't fat. That's great. But don't forget that this is by and for fat folks. Some things I am still trying to learn. Some things you probably already know but it just helps to have someone else say them. I hope you find use in some of these things. I hope you can teach me more.

- 1) Never justify your body to anyone ever again. You have a right to exist. Period. Your humanity needs no qualifiers.
- 2) Being fat in this world is difficult. Sometimes it can be sad. It will make you strong. But let yourself feel your feelings. When you are sad or happy or hungry or angry or full or exhausted or frustrated or exhilarated or loved or in love. Feel them. They are all valid. You are not a burden.
- 3) Look at yourself. Make eye contact with you in the mirror. Look at yourself. From the side. From the back. Naked. Sitting down. Standing up. Lying down. Legs over your head. Know yourself from all sides and try to remember they're all valid. All your stretch marks and scars and cellulite and acne and moles, the discoloring and the rough skin.
- 4) Re-learn how to take up space. Fat people-- especially fat women-- are taught to be ashamed and embarrassed of the space we take up. Fuck. That. Don't be afraid to assert your needs. If the booth at that restaurant is too small your abundance, ask for a table. If that chair breaks under your brilliance... well, fuck that chair. That chair sucked.
- 5) Make fat friends. Stop hanging out with people who make you feel bad about yourself, either intentionally or not. Don't hang out with people who shame you for eating what you want. Who want to take you shopping but only go to stores who don't carry your size. Who treat your fatness and your beauty as if they are mutually exclusive. Who take you to bars where you never get hit on and pretend not to notice. Who diminish your feelings because the fucked up asshole cashier just did some fucked up subtle microaggressive fat hating bullshit and try to make you think it was about something else. Spoiler alert: it wasn't.
- 6) Listen to your body. Be aware of its limits and don't be ashamed of them. Just because your body works differently than others doesn't mean it's wrong. Stairs are bullshit. Everyone knows it and if

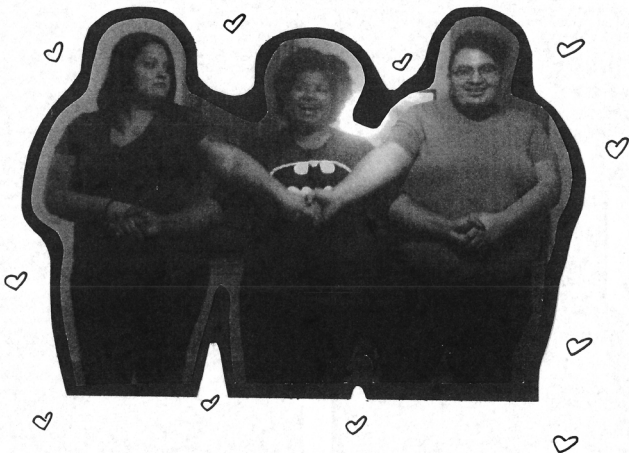
they don't they're lying to themselves. It's ok to take the elevator. Unbutton your pants when you need to. Even in public. Pants are a social construct.

7) Walk with your head high. Feast on the insecurities of those who would hate you for it.

8) If you're into sex and/or dating: have sex with and/or date other fat folks. Find beauty and eroticism in another fat body. Find beauty and eroticism in your own. Don't hold the attention of thin folks as a higher form of validation than attention from fat people. Plus, fat sex is just hot.

9) Reclaim your body. Take ownership of it. Tattoo it. Pierce it. Wear sleeveless shirts, short skirts, bright colors, crop tops. BE in your body. Make it your own. Fuck everything you thought your fatness prevented you from doing.

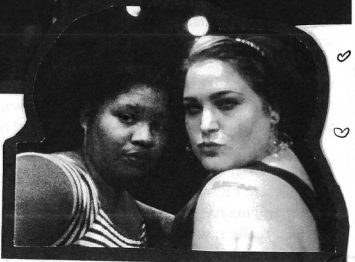
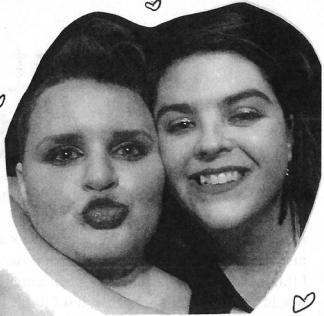
10) Rethink anything negative anyone ever told you about your body. Know that problems with your body are not inherent to your body but a result of a world that wasn't built for you. Know that this isn't your fault. Your body is exactly how it was meant to be. Humanmade structures weren't meant to contain natural beauty.







FAT
BABE



On What We Might Do Differently

JULES: So what would anyone do differently?

ALTHEA: I think, um, if I were to do this again, I would want a safe word or something when it's just too much for me to handle right now, when I need to stop and move on or do something else. I think that would be really helpful. Sometimes I would just start panicking about a subject but I would want to talk about this, but I don't think I'm in a space to talk about it right now and I think having a safe word being like "I can't share," or do the thing, or like listen to this, would be really helpful. Even if like, I say this word and go outside and someone come get me when it's over, that would be helpful.

JULES: We can do that. Like we should do that.

ERIN: Yeah, that's a great idea.

CALEB: The word is diet.

JULES: That will stop any conversation.

ERIN: Something I would do differently is take my writing more seriously. I feel like I drafted stuff and it was, like, for my levels really sloppy and I never went back to it. I didn't really sit down alone intentionally, ever. When there was a deadline to send you stuff, I was in Mexico at my best friend and her partner and her baby's [home] like writing stuff very quickly and like letting that stream of consciousness as if that's what I really wanted to be in the play. And some of that stuff was in the play! I should have actually thought about what I wanted to say and what's important to me before I just sent that off and I almost felt, like, caught in it, like I couldn't be like, "that's not up to my own standards of my writing, it's not poetic enough." And I had a total freak out at one point about that, but then I got convinced that it was good enough and that it was powerful enough and that it was worth saying it out loud over and over and over and over again.

DANNY: I feel like oppositely [about that]. It solidified flying by the seat of my pants for me, which maybe wasn't always the best thing, but also, what you said, it was hard, but it was frank and honest and maybe it wasn't a fucking poem-- and your writing is really beautiful and poetic-- but it was just really raw and honest, which probably made it really extra hard. I feel the same way about the things that I wrote, like this is in the play? [to the listener] I'm scrunching my face. I think that

the thing that I really... there's a few things. I had never done anything like this before so I had no frame of reference for anything like this like collaborative art/writing/play stuff, you know? So yeah I would try to be calmer more, you know? Like, there was a lot going on emotionally and I just take that with me everywhere, that's just part of who I am, but I would probably try to like put myself in a better headspace before like walking in the door to like come do this kinda stuff because my feelings are really big and take up a lot of space. So maybe it would have been nicer for me to take up a little less space for other people to take up a little more space. and also for the [Feminist Action Project panel at University of Texas] and [Treasure City Thrift store performance and talkback]-- I wish that I had at least sat down for at least 15 minutes and written about something about going there and doing it. So at least I would have something to say instead of just babbling like i'm doing currently.

ALTHEA: But also like thank all of you for sharing like those vulnerable bits with all of us. Like it's so important to this process. Knowing that we were hurting and knowing that it was a difficult process and still getting through all of that shit.

NICOLE: Yeah, on top of everything else we do, you know? We are involved in other collectives, we-- you know, it's really outstanding actually, that we were able to do this and devote so much time. Even though that's also something that I would've changed about this process, or something that I would do differently would be to devote more time to writing and developing my parts, like my writing, and just kind of challenging myself more and pushing myself more to go to the places that were just a little too scary to go to. And I went to scary places, I mean I spoke about trauma that I've been carrying on my body and in my body for 26 years, but there were moments where I could have pushed myself a little bit further and I think it would have been, it would have made the difference. But I didn't. And so maybe, I really like having this conversation because as we work towards reworking the script and expanding it, these are all things that we can obviously do differently.

JULES: Also the idea of doing things differently, like, I feel like people start shaming themselves a lot and I feel that a lot, that tendency in my head to be like, "well, I fucked this up, and I did this wrong, and that really sucked," and like we couldn't have known any better. So the idea that our writing or-- we were committed, everyone in this room was committed in a huge way. Like no one was not doing the work, there was just other work that had to be done, which was emotional, which was caregiving, which was letting yourself being taken care of. Of course you couldn't like sit down and be like, "i'm just gonna casually sit down and write about this shit" IT'S NOT CASUAL. And part of, for me at least, how I talk myself out of my shame spiral every morning, it's like remembering that like yeah, I could have done more of that work, I could have like been more organized, I could have whatever! There's so many things I could have done differently and I will do differently now that I have made more, like we had to do all that other work. And that's part of what this was, was building this. Of course everyone is valid in that feeling of "I could have done this better," but everyone was working their fucking ass off. no one wasn't doing work.

DANNY: That's what I think about it, like, how could it be better? It's so, like, perfect, and lovely, and honest. And that's what makes it-- the fact that it's honest and really--

SANDY: Really raw.

DANNY: Really raw! And also the way we performed it, we performed it so authentically, that it was our real, raw writing said by real us. Like, that's why we won Frontera, that's why so many people came out to Treasure City, that's why people are asking-- every single time I go out, people are asking about it. I mean, I don't know how it could be any better. That's what I mean, that's what solidified that it was a good idea, like [Bunny] said, that stream of consciousness, how do you get more honest than that? How do you get better than being that honest?

CALEB: Yeah I feel like editing means like, is kind of a code word for putting walls up.

JULES: Yeah, that's part of that word, right?

ALTHEA: I think, also, if I were to do something differently, I'd want more dog therapy. The dogs were so fucking relaxing all the time. It was nice to have my dog around and it was nice to take a mental break and be like, "I'm just going to pet my dog now."

JULES: I think something I'm always trying to figure out is-- I would like to, I don't want this to be as much of like, The Jules Show, like at meetings and I would like to figure out like a way to create a structure and it's not just me, and I'm like, facilitating it. as we move forward, that's something I'm really excited about, is like diversifying leadership and diversifying leadership in different projects and whatever that looks like.

SANDY: Well, what I would do differently, would be like... to be here?
(Group laughs)

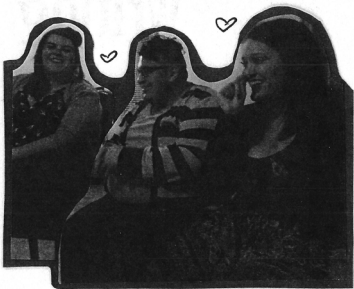
SANDY: But also that like the idea of performing still like makes me feel like really fucking anxious and it's still fucking scary and the fact that I had already made a plan was a really easy way of being like "well, now I don't have to do this" because being in front of people to perform something as raw and vulnerable as this sounds really fucking hard and I can't imagine what yall went through not only performing it once, but also multiple times and to different audiences and to like people who may not have been fat and maybe had no idea what the fuck yall were talking about and like that's fucking scary.

JULES: None of those are mutually exclusive.

CALEB: I wanted to add about doing differently, I really want to talk about the difference in our experiences based on size and even like changing throughout time and just how-- I think, Jules,



belly on belly...



you brought this up-- the audience was presented with like, we do all have our different identities that we bring to it and we're not just fat people, but it was kinda presented as fat, like a homogenous identity and there are so many different variables within that. I really think it's important to talk about that.

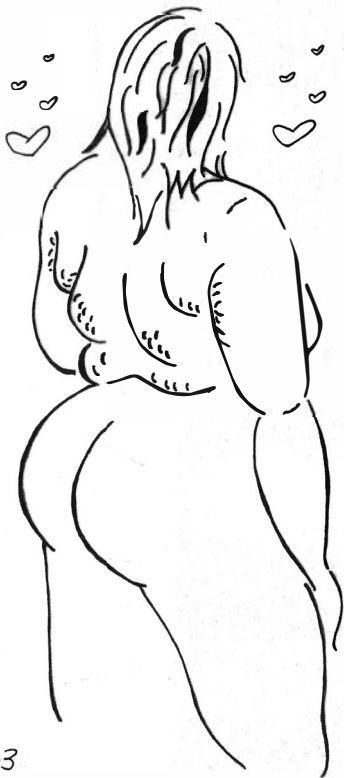


Writing Prompts

- Today, my fat is....
- Before my fat was....., now my fat is.....
- My fat helps me.....
- My body is like a.....
- My favorite part of my body is....
- The fattest parts of me feel like....
- Growing up fat made me...
- A moment the world told me I was fat was when...
- When people touch me, I...
- What are some things you are proud of yourself for?
- What have you forgiven yourself for?
- When do you feel filled with peace?
- What are some things you would say to a six or seven year old you?
- What are some things to thank your body for?



Resources



FATs Tumblrs:

fattheplaythe.tumblr.com
queerandpresentdanger.tumblr.com
afewofmyfavoritefriends.tumblr.com
holyfuckmeinthe.tumblr.com
imafatbitch.tumblr.com
queerfemmebabe.tumblr.com
dannyyintheunderworld.tumblr.com
bunny-burrows.tumblr.com

Online Resources:

fatpocfashion.tumblr.com
fatnudes.tumblr.com
fuckyeahchubbyguysofcolor.tumblr.com
fatpeopleofcolor.tumblr.com
calloutqueen.tumblr.com
fuckyeahhistoricalfatladies.tumblr.com
fyehvbo.tumblr.com
fuckyeahfatdykes.tumblr.com
www.virgietovar.com

<http://charlottecooper.net/b/oral-history/a-queer-and-trans-fat-activist-timeline/>

It's a Big Fat Revolution by Nomy Lamm -
<http://tehomnet.net/nomy.html>

Fat Sex: What Everyone Wants to Know but is Afraid to Ask <http://persephonemagazine.com/2012/03/fat-sex-what-everyone-wants-to-know-but-is-afraid-to-ask/>

Books (if yr into that sort of thing):

Am I Thin Enough Yet?: The Cult of Thinness and the Commercialization of Identity by Sharlene Hesse-Biber

Bodies out of Bounds: Fatness and Transgression edited by Jana Evans Braziel and Kathleen LeBesco

Fat Studies Reader by Sondra Solovay, Marilyn Wann and Esther Rothblum

Revolting Bodies?: The Struggle to Redefine Fat Identity by Kathleen LeBesco

Fat!So?: Because You Don't Have to Apologize

for Your Size by Marilyn Wann

Hot & Heavy: Fierce Fat Girls on Life, Love and Fashion edited by Virgie Tovar

TV/Movies:

Huge

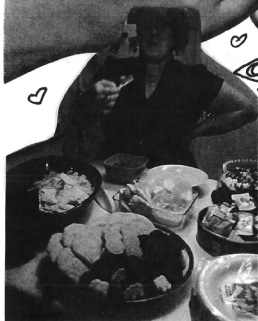
My Mad Fat Diary

Hairspray (1988)

Organizations:

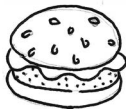
NOLOSE: is a vibrant community of fat queers and our allies, with a shared commitment to feminist, anti-oppression ideology and action, seeking to end the oppression of fat people! nolose.org





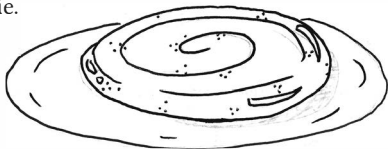


Fat Snaxxx



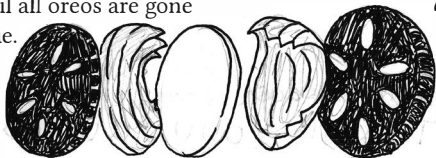
Fried Honey Bun

1. Heat up a fuckin frying pan and add plenty o butter
2. Put a fuckin honey bun on that shit
3. Fry that shit til its crispy (think creme brulee)
4. Eat that shit while its warm and gooey and revel in your (and your fried honey bun's) glory
5. Take a selfie.



Oreo Chipwich

1. Take an oreo, preferably the double stuff kind, even better mix-matching with gold and regular oreos
2. Open that pit up
3. Put some of yr favorite fuckin chips in it. We spearheaded a Ruffles version but we're not married to it
4. Put that shit together and eat that shit
5. Repeat until all oreos are gone
6. Take a selfie.



Smash
that
shit
together

YUM



A Big Fat Thanx



Morgan Robyn Collado
Enakai Devereaux
Raquel Rodriguez
James McMaster
Beverly Bland Boydston
Mónica Gallego

Roberto Sandoval
Rachel Gilbert
Mike Lacourse
Treasure City Thrift
Feminist Action Project

Frontera Fest
Hyde Park Theatre
Vanessa Bowling (for zine cover and fat babe
tattoo inspiration)

Jessica Gardner
Ivy May Doyle
Alyse Archibald
Kanoa Bailey
Ellen Pashall

Rebecca Karpovsky
Chris Guzaitis
Jessie Dress

Sonya Sowerby
Eli Butternut Westbrook

Doug, Judy, Sally, Amy, Joanne Burrows
Sarah Binky Berger

Alex Albers
Emma Cummins
Andy Cofino

Glenn Marla

Special Thanx: Kaz Redden

Taueret Manu
Michelle Lewin
Lynn Hoare
Alan Blumenfeld
Gemma DeChoisy

Rachel Gitlevich
Arthur Clemons
Robin Clemons
Melanie Clemons
Mitch Patenaude

Ashton Harding
Mugzy Ündemir
Antonia Verdi
Erica, Kelly, and Alex Arteaga

Ri Kopala
Ece Saltan
Michael Pascual
Daniel Elliot
Evan Etcetera

Jesa Rose
Michelle Ramirez
Kim Katrin Milan
Nico Gumbs
Nicole the Celestial Femme
Athia

Bradford Von Braddington
Raeann Mason
Ellis Andrews

Kathryn
Cristoina
Kiki

Pep Pep



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