

5/7/21 Fatizen: Fat Heroes in the World of Graphic Novels

featuring Author Philip Barragan

11:04:38 Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to you wherever you are in the world. I am Tigresss Osborne. I'm the Chair of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance, otherwise known as NAAFA, and welcome to today's edition of the NAAFA webinar series.

11:04:53 We are joined today by author Philip Barragan.

11:04:57 And we are also joined today by Susan and Neil from pro bono ASL. You can learn more about pro bono ASL on their website, which is probonoasl.com.

11:05:12 You can learn more about NAAFA at our website, which is naafa.org; n a a f a dot org.

11:05:20 If this is your first time joining us for a NAAFA webinar. Just a moment about NAAFA and a couple of announcements before we bring on our special guests. NAAFA is a 52 year old fat rights organization working through advocacy, education and support to pursue

11:05:37 Equality at Every Size.

11:05:54 The NAAFA webinar series is just one of our educational programs. We also have a Community Voices Blog on our website.

11:05:47 A Fat Community Project Grant program which gives small grants to others in fat community who want to be enabled and empowered and financially supported in producing events in their local areas or online.

11:06:04 Pardon me, and we're soon to be introducing a new series on Instagram, called the Fat 15 which will tell you in 15 minutes or less about some very special fat positive Instagrammers.

11:06:16 We are also super excited that this is the first Fat Liberation Month, May 2021, and we have so much programming for you.

11:06:27 Lots of fantastic guests coming up, educational things entertaining things, but all in the name of understanding the fat liberation movement, and empowering fat people.

11:06:42 The next two events for Fat Liberation Month are tomorrow's Fat Magic and Taro event with Bree XVI from healedAF. That one is at 2pm tomorrow Saturday May, 8. 11:06:53 Pacific time.

11:06:54 And then next Tuesday, Bruce Sturgell from Chubstr, which is a lifestyle and fashion website for men and masculine individuals, will be joining us to talk about their 10 year anniversary and all of the things that they have seen change in fashion for

11:07:10 men and masc folks. That session will be on Tuesday, May 11 at 3pm Pacific. You do need to register for NAAFA webinars if you want to join us live, and you can do that at naafa.org. And with no further ado, I'd like to introduce you to our very special guest

11:07:27 today.

11:07:28 Philip Barragan grew up in the San Fernando Valley, California, and has worked with post incarcerated youth, runaway teenagers and adults living with HIV AIDS, both as a frontline caseworker and director of a social service agency.

11:07:44 Currently he works for the local health department, assisting disenfranchised populations to maintain access to their health care. Philip is a writer of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry.

11:07:55 He received his MFA in creative writing from Antioch University in 2011.

11:08:01 His debut novel *Fatizen* 24602, was published by Branch Field Publications in 2015, and is the basis for *Fatizen* the graphic novel Parts one and two, subsequently released by Embonpoint Publishing.

11:08:17 He is currently working on a series of essays, examining the intersections of fat, ableism and adoration of the skin you're in.

11:08:26 Phil was the co founder of Girth and Mirth in Long Beach in 1995, and has worked as an advocate and activist for fat community for much of his life. He lives in Long Beach, California with his husband, Mason Arrigo, where they publish their unique

11:08:41 graphic brand, their unique brand of graphic novels under their Embonpoint imprint. Ladies and gentlemen, and friends of all gens. Please welcome Philip Barragan to the NAAFA webinar series. Hi Phil. Hello Tigress it's so good to be here with you.

11:09:13 I'm so excited to talk to people about Fatizen. Now before we get into the book, I do want to let folks know, well actually, tell folks what Fatizen is about and then I'll say what I was about to say.

11:09:14 So I was thinking about what is Fatizen and in the years since I wrote it. I learned that Fatizen is several things.

11:09:24 Fatizen is a belief that we as individuals are entitled to love and adoration, and affection at the size we are now. That we as fat citizens, are afforded the rights, and privilege afforded our thin counterparts.

11:09:39 Fatizen as also a statement that we shall not be denied personhood, because our bodies break the mold of what is deemed acceptable in society.

11:09:50 Fatizen is an affirmation that we will fight society's efforts to force us to reduce our bodies through dieting or acts of surgical mutilation just to fit in.

11:10:03 Fatizen is also a warning that there are strength in numbers that the world has humbled and shamed us, but in truth

11:10:25 we're a worldwide army with an untapped power bestowed upon us. Ultimately, Fatazine a work of fiction.

11:10:20 It's a story about a woman and her family, fighting back against an anti-fat government, and inspiring hope and a rebellion. And beyond all of that,

11:10:30 it's a story of othering. It shows how quickly we can minimize the humanity of others, that may look different than ourselves until we don't see them as human at all.

11:10:43 Subjugation of others becomes more digestible, more acceptable for some

11:10:50 when we remove a person's soul and categorize them as less than human.

11:10:59 Thank you. I just like I feel like we could just stop there like that was just such a wonderful declaration of fat liberation.

11:11:08 We're going to show the trailer for Fatizen and Phil the team at Embonpoint have developed a video to promote the book. So we're going to show that. Before Phil starts the video I just want to make sure our audience knows that Fatizen is about a dystopian

11:11:36 future in which fat people are even more severely oppressed than we are now. And, and I want to make sure that you're prepared for that and also if you buy the book if you haven't read the book yet.

11:11:41 If you get the book, and even in this trailer, there are a couple of scenes where there are some very graphic violence included so we just want to give that trigger warning before we,

11:11:52 before we start the video. So let's give folks just a minute to turn you off or turn away from their screen if they don't want to see that. And while they do that, Phil,

11:12:08 let's talk a little bit about who we're going to see in this trailer. Tell us a little bit about the heroine of Fatizen. So this is a story about Delilah

Palomino,

11:12:20 a plus size woman, a fat woman and her family. And in this universe, the diet industry has become the ultimate power of government in the United States, and through passing of anti fat laws, the rights of fat citizens have been eliminated slowly until

11:12:45 they have no rights at all. And if you exceed a certain BMI, the Office of size compliance places you in a concentration camp, which you never escape from.

11:12:55 And

11:12:55 so Delilah, is the hope and the inspiration for the ensuing rebellion against the Office of Science compliance.

11:13:06 Thank you for that synopsis, Phil. Okay let's go ahead and show everybody your trailer. It's way more exciting than anything I can tell you about. The volume may be a little loud

11:13:14 so people may need to adjust your volume....trailer...

11:14:26 Yay! So now the folks are a little bit more grounded if they didn't come in already familiar with Fatizen.

11:14:32 Let's go back a little bit, a little closer to the beginning. Did you always know you are going to be a writer?

11:14:40 I didn't always know, I knew that I loved writing in school, and I got a lot of positive feedback from my teachers. And I honestly, growing up I didn't know if I was smart enough to pull it off.

11:14:57 But as I stayed in school and then returned to school as an adult,

11:15:03 I found that my love of reading and writing was, there was no pulling away from that I, I felt so compelled to explore and study and continue through grad school, and it just it's, you know, I think some of us just have that calling of what we're drawn

11:15:28 to do. Whether it's visual arts or writing or any, you know whatever our hearts desire is what we feel like we're put here to do.

11:15:42 And did you always know that you were going to be outspoken about the lives of fat people? Have you always been fat?

11:15:52 I grew up chubby. And I got thin as a teenager, but I've always been drawn to people of size, and I mean even as a child.

11:16:04 It's an ascetic that I've always been drawn to.

11:16:09 Whether it myself or others, and somehow I knew I was going to be working with the fat community I just didn't know how. At one point I thought I would have a clothing store dedicated to fat people.

11:16:27 And then I realized okay that's probably not, you know I can't really sew that well,

11:16:32 and that's...I'm not a retail person so you know that pretty much went away quickly. But it just, it just developed.

11:16:43 So, when did your love for fat folks and your love for writing first come together? Is Fatizen your first fat focused writing project? It is. It started as an essay in grad school and about 25 pages

11:17:00 about various scenarios. And my professor said, these others not so interesting but this Delilah character, that's really where you want to focus. And so, thank God for that Professor.

11:17:15 Do you want to give that Professor a shout out?

11:17:17 Yeah, his name is Leonard Chang, and he was one of the professors at Antioch University when I was there.

11:17:24 And so you began developing this in grad school. What was the reaction

that you got from your classmates that you were writing this novel about this fat heroine?

11:17:35 I was initially a little unsure about the reaction, because it was so extreme. I mean the storyline, I really wanted I wanted to put a story out there that, okay, if the diet industry is going to be this in our face,

11:17:51 what happens if we take it to the ultimate extreme and shows what what happens to a society if you said you couldn't be fat. And what would be the development, and I was, I was really unsure about presenting it. And the more I spoke about it with

11:18:08 my colleagues,

11:18:10 I kept hearing the feedback,

11:18:13 No, just go for it. Let it out. Don't, don't hold back, just let the story of flow.

11:18:20 And how did you how did you get from grad school project to a published novel?

11:18:25 Well, this ended up being 100 pages at the end of grad school, and I thought that there's so much more to the story. And so after grad school I kept writing and writing, and it turned into, you know, nearly 400 pages, exploring what would happen in the

11:18:44 evolution of a society that tried to criminalize obesity.

11:18:51 And then I met my husband and he has been grounded in graphic novels and comics, his whole life. And he said, I want to draw it.

11:19:01 And I said, Okay, not being that familiar with graphic novels and, and he'll talk about it when he joins us later but it just, it became,

11:19:12 it became the fanthom project, became much more than just the prose novel, obviously.

11:19:18 And so, when you were trying to shop around the prose novel, what was the reaction that you got from the publishing world? That was not easy. I got a lot of "noes" a lot of rejection.

11:19:32 So many publishers just didn't want to touch it. Whether they were the agents or the publishing houses,

11:19:41 no one wanted a story that was fat positive, and they were very subtle in their rejection. But it's not, it wasn't an easy sell and I ended up finding a very small imprint, who were interested in putting it out there so they saw the relevance of the story.

11:20:02 And I was so happy to find them. But the large houses just weren't ready for it,

11:20:08 because the character,

11:20:11 unlike many other fat characters we've seen in fiction, Delilah doesn't start from a meek and mild starting point. She gets it she is self assured from the very beginning.

11:20:25 She has no qualms about her size.

11:20:28 So much of what we see in other stories like ShriLL and like Diet Land that have made it to the screen, large and small,

11:20:39 they start with characters who are very timid very unsure of themselves, not happy with their bodies and it's an evolution of that character coming into their own. My character from the beginning, Delilah, she's like this is who I am, I love who I am.

11:20:56 I don't need to be smaller, and you're not going to stop me. I wanted to show that not all fat people start from a point of,

11:21:06 I don't fit in, I don't belong here. I wanted someone to say, I love who I am, there's nothing wrong with who I am or how I look.

11:21:18 And I think that that's a hard sell because that's not what mainstream expects or wants from a fat character.

11:21:27 Yeah, and in fact we're, we're so unused to seeing that, that even even fat writers often do not write fat characters at all.

11:21:40 Exactly. It's such a taboo and,

11:21:44 and I know now why that can happen at least for me in that

11:21:51 there are so many aspects of this.

11:21:56 I have found that writing on this subject has unleashed a torrent of opinions from others.

11:22:05 Even individuals who are supportive of the project, and the subject matter, have had a hard time with my story because it doesn't hold back, I don't hold back I, I allow my characters to be tormented in a society that's unwelcoming in many ways it's

11:22:27 not a feel good story. It is what would happen if this occurred in our society and even reviewers of the book said this was really tough, really tough to go through.

11:22:42 People who I knew who embrace the whole project said, Well, I felt like, people were going to run through and open my door, my bedroom and yell at me for reading this because it was so challenging.

11:22:57 And we don't even have to get into the trolls out there who had an awful lot to say that I'm glorifying obesity by putting the story out there with characters who aren't apologetic who aren't wanting to downsize their body.

11:23:14 And I found that the pushback is significant.

11:23:20 From every, every corner every group of of society, and

11:23:27 it let me know how passionate people are even friends of mine who I didn't know had issues about size came out and said, I'm just I'm not comfortable with the 50 pounds I'm carrying and so then you know it just, it really let me know how pervasive

11:23:47 fat issues are among so many people.

11:23:51 Well, what about the supportive feedback? What kind of positive feedback did you get when the book came out?

11:23:59 There were so many individuals that, let me know, thank you for writing something like this, putting characters out there like this, people who aren't apologetic showing you know how hatreds of others, especially of fat, how it has affected them.

11:24:22 And so many individuals who are fat in our society have gone through so much and I've heard back from at least those who have read the book that they appreciate it, a story of where they can see themselves in it,

11:24:36 parts of themselves even, and that there's not enough fat characters in fiction, that there's not enough representation.

11:24:58 And there still isn't. I mean there's Faith, which is a character known as Zephyr in Valiant Comics that has come out. And it's a little fluffy. It's nice that that image is there, but it's so few and far between. And so often fat is just ridiculed,

11:25:09 and even people who were supportive of my project before they read the book,

11:25:14 they were kind of laughing saying so what is this a comedy? I said, Why don't you read it and tell me how much you laugh.

11:25:22 It is not, it is not a comedy and we're so used to being the trope of comedians, you know fat is butt the end of a joke. And I wanted to show
11:25:36 it's anything but. We're talking about real people, real individuals, and that it is not an easy journey.
11:25:45 So, so, do you think we're on the way to the future that you described in your novel?
11:25:54 I think that the diet industry remains incredibly powerful we're talking, you know, billions of dollars every year.
11:26:03 And our society is so geared toward weight loss in the workplace and family members and among friends. It is pervasive. And as much as they're starting the, the tide is moving in the direction of having fat characters out there and like,
11:26:24 Sarai Walker's Dietland that was turned into one season show.
11:26:29 And that was really kind of in your face.
11:26:33 We're starting to see glimpses, you know, even within fat liberation, fat acceptance, more out there and more visual representation.
11:26:44 There's still, still, there's a huge barrier that we face in terms of what's acceptable in society, even going out myself, my own experience,
11:26:59 you know, I see the stares and the whispers and the glances and so it is, I don't think we're anywhere close to where, you know, hopefully we will get to, but I think we're moving in that direction.
11:27:14 It's just, it's a challenge and I think we all. I want to clarify, you think we're moving in the direction of more empowerment not in the direction of the dystopian future that you've described.
11:27:27 Yes. Okay. Yes.
11:27:31 There is a hopeful ending.
11:27:34 You know, you know with all of the things that have been happening in politics recently,
11:27:39 you know, I think we see glimmers of what hate can do, What othering populations can lead to.
11:27:51 And I think, you know, like any other dystopian story that isn't is a warning that we could go down the wrong path.
11:28:02 Depending on the powers that be. And I think we need to be aware and alert and not get comfortable.
11:28:11 I think we see what happens in the world in general when we think we've made success in a certain area. And then we see the backlash growing behind the scenes off camera, of, of the other forces, the darker forces, that are trying to eliminate certain aspects
11:28:35 of freedom.
11:28:38 We, we should say that part of what we hope for from Fat Liberation month is to fortify fat community because we know it's time for us to get more actively involved in the fight to have legislation that protects our rights to prevent the kind of future
11:28:56 that you're talking about in Fatizen where the legislation is eugenics legislation essentially.
11:29:03 And we know that for those who are unfamiliar with this, there are only a handful of places in the world where it is illegal to discriminate against people based on their body shape or size.
11:29:15 You can find more information about that, under the, I think it's under the Learn More tab on the naafa.org website.

11:29:23 And there are a couple of places in the US right now where folks are working towards more such legislation, and we'll be talking more deeply about this at the end of the month with Brandie Sendziak Of FLARE which is the Fat Legal Advocacy, Rights, And Education Project.

11:29:37 So, you know, we are trying to do some work to prevent this kind of future.

11:29:43 But in the meantime, let's, let's talk about what more is in the story and also let's bring Mason on to talk about the visuals.

11:29:55 Mason Arrigo is going to join us. He is not just Phil's fabulous husband but he is also the illustrator of Fatizen.

11:30:03 So let's talk about that moment when y'all decided that this shouldn't just be a prose novel, this should be a graphic novel.

11:30:13 Well I told him that.

11:30:12 I read it.

11:30:14 I just, I read it and it was so visual to me. I thought it needs to be a movie and I started drawing Delilah and he's like no, that's not what she looks like and so I did some more drawings of her and then it just the story just.

11:30:30 It's so visual when you read it, that all the scenes just kind of were very easy to lay out. So, he wanted, he went along with me and he went ahead and did it.

11:30:41 And it's been really a ton of fun to do it, to do all the art for everything. And just such an enjoyable process. But, if it wasn't for him, writing it, it never would have happened.

11:30:56 He's just a very visual writer, so you really fall into the story and you know what everybody looks like.

11:31:04 It was fun.

11:31:05 And I was looking at...my turn.

11:31:09 I think making it a graphic novel

11:31:13 opened up the population of society that have access to it, that wanted to read it.

11:31:18 There were several individuals that looked at the book and it's really thick, and they said there was an awful lot of pages, too many words, I thought, you know, if we make it graphic, if we illustrate it, it would definitely open up who wants to read

11:31:34 it, who had access to it. So we've put chapters on comic ology as we're moving along in the project, and just wanted to, to get it out there more, and we started going to different Comic Cons and different comic book conventions.

11:31:51 And that really opened hugely those parts or segments of society that could then have access to the story.

11:32:03 And also I think the,

11:32:06 we know that we don't get enough visual depictions of fat people that are not before pictures, that are just, this is what we look like. Mason, had you been drawing fat characters before this?

11:32:20 No, I was in, I worked for Neiman Marcus and it was a makeup artist, and I was just a Marvel Comics fan. And I just loved all those types of things so I was always drawing that type of stuff doing makeup drawings, that kind of thing.

11:32:38 So, no, but in the course of 30 years and the makeup industry, you meet a lot of women, and a lot of guys too that have eating issues.

11:32:51 And it's really frightening, what some people put themselves through.

11:32:57 And at Neiman Marcus they were changing the health insurance, and you had

to come in and have your BMI measured to get a lower rate on your insurance, And they just lined up all the employees that wanted to do it.

11:33:14 And in front of everyone. They took your weight, yelled it out to the person writing it down, and then measured your body fat with one of those pincher things.

11:33:27 And when you work with a lot of women who were working with mannequins.

11:33:32 There was a lot of women screaming and saying no I don't wear 90 pounds I weigh 80 pounds, and I worked with a lot of women with eating disorders.

11:33:40 And it was frightening, because they were lovely people, and you're seeing them kill themselves.

11:33:48 So, how did that inform the, the way that you created images for the book.

11:33:54 Um, I drew things out.

11:33:59 And you know in that first book there's a lot of nudity, and we have a lot of fat female friends. And every time I drew something, I took it to them and said, Is this positive?

11:34:13 Is it negative? Am I doing this correctly? You know, if you saw this woman naked, would you look at this picture and say this is a joke or would you know it's serious?

11:34:23 And they all,

11:34:25 They were all, I ran it past women, to make sure I was doing it correctly. And it was really funny, the things they said in response.

11:34:36 And I remember showing it to Monica, you know.

11:34:41 Yeah, and she looked at it and she goes, that's exactly how my tits hang when I don't have a shirt on.

11:34:47 And it made me feel like she says no, you're doing a good job. So I continue, yes, there's a, I have a formula for the way I drew the women.

11:34:59 But it is a comic book. And a lot of times there's symbolic things you do in a comic book and keeping everybody, the way they should look for that body type.

11:35:11 So, the characters, even though he wrote them in all different sizes. I tended to keep them looking like a group. Also,

11:35:23 when he had them doing things that there's limitations, sometimes physically, to something that an extra large person can do. So I did them at a size, so that what he was writing could be physically possible.

11:35:42 You know, yes you can have a 350 pound woman doing athletics, but someone who's 600 or 700 is not going to have those mobility abilities. So I wanted to make sure that I drew them in

11:35:57 what to me, what's realistic and not make fun of anybody, not make them look foolish. Make it believable. And we had to make sure that the artwork,

11:36:10 we weren't creating pornography, so we didn't want pornographic images. I didn't want anything sensationalized in it at all. I wanted it just to be a reflection of what real body types could look like.

11:36:23 So, you mentioned, you mentioned Mason, being a Marvel fan and I know Phil when we first talked,

11:36:29 you mentioned a set of characters from the Dread comics.

11:36:34 Can you talk about those characters a little bit and just like the two of you, I know, beyond Marvel just like in the world of comics and graphic novels,

11:36:49 where do fat people show up, other than Fatizen?

11:36:46 So, one of the storylines in Judge Dredd involves a group called the League of fatties, and they are a very politically incorrect group of fat Kamikaze, and they are very militant about getting food and eating food and having food

contests in a very dystopian

11:37:09 world that is the Judge Dredd universe.

11:37:14 And I looked at that and I thought, what would happen in a world that pushes fat people underground, and what would happen if the mob got involved in trying to own that situation, trying to make money off subjugating an already subjugated people. And I just

11:37:37 kind of folded that into my universe and thought, well let me explore that a little bit.

11:37:42 But in terms of the world of comics, and we can probably speak about this more,

11:37:49 I think a lot the fat characters are always mostly either negative or comedic.

11:37:56 Yes.

11:37:59 Yeah, like Etta Candy and Wonder Woman, you know, she was a very cute little chubby woman, but she was just Wonder Woman's sidekick and she was there for comedy relief, no matter how heroic her deeds were, she was the comedy relief.

11:38:16 And the fat best friend, the funny fat best friend. Yeah.

11:38:22 They're never usually the lead.

11:38:22 There is the kingpin. That is a big mob boss. Yeah, but there again, he's a villain. Yeah. So it's never, never the hero.

11:38:34 Never, the one to champion the rights of others.

11:38:41 Unfortunately. So I'm going to ask Mason and Phil, a couple more questions but for those of you who are here with us live, now's a great time to start entering questions in the chat if you would like me to ask something on your behalf.

11:38:53 Please type the word question at the beginning of your questions so that I know you're not just talking amongst yourselves in the chat.

11:39:01 Um, so let's let's, while we give folks a minute to put their questions in let's talk about how you ended up with Embonpoint.

11:39:10 So when we were getting ready to publish the graphic novel and started sending it out,

11:39:19 there were just crickets, I mean no one wanted to touch it. It was not what was seen as commercially viable, because there there just hasn't been a market for this in any way.

11:39:32 And I wasn't about to change the story to accommodate publishers.

11:39:39 And we decided well,

11:39:42 how hard can it be to be your own publishing company? So I looked for, well, I did all the research I could about doing self publishing and the name means,

11:39:56 "Embonpoint" is plump in French. And I thought, that as a really nice ring to it.

11:40:01 And we decided to go ahead and publish the graphic novels ourselves, and we have two titles, which is Fatizen and then we have Blanc Noir which is a female detective character that Mason developed.

11:40:20 And we have, we did it on our own. And it was an incredible learning experience over the last five years that we've been doing this.

11:40:32 It is a lot of work. Publishing, if anyone's interested, it is a huge task. It's worthwhile. We've learned an awful lot. But it takes a lot of resources, and we have decided we did four issues of Blanc Noir,

11:40:50 and we have a third issue of Fatizen that will be out later this year. And

then we may put Embonpoint to rest in terms of putting any new content out.

11:41:00 So we can work on other projects, because it is absolutely consuming of all time in our lives to get these issues out.

11:41:15 Have you, did you think about also publishing other folks or is it just too much work to take on other folks? we have looked at publishing other individuals, but the more we learned about publishing our own graphic novels, we realize there's just no time,

11:41:33 because I have a day job and Embonpoint consumes all of my evening and weekend hours, and we have said no to so much. I mean outside of the pandemic,

11:41:47 it's just, it's all a time consuming and so we're possibly doing another project through a friend of ours. But for the most part, it's just, it's too much work because it is the two of us and that we've had a primary colorist, his name is Chris Link. He did

11:42:08 the coloring for Parts One and Two of Fatizen. Thank you, Chris. And then we've had some other colorists who have helped us as well. Robert Blondie and Caleb Paulson, who have been instrumental in helping get Part Two out.

11:42:26 But it's just, it's overwhelming when it's small and I realize now, why publishing houses have so many departments of stuff to get everything done is needed and necessary and it's doing graphic novels specifically is a tremendous amount of work, joyful

11:42:48 and rewarding.

11:42:51 But all encompassing. And not not rewarding enough not financially rewarding enough to quit your day job so that you can focus full time?

11:43:00 Fatizen has been a work of love.

11:43:06 Work of passion. It is a project that is not, it's never really been about the money, it's never really been about, you know, how rich we're going to get. The story, I felt had to get out there.

11:43:17 The message had to get out there and we've never really done an analysis; return on our investment, of time, in terms of what sales have been. But again that's, that's not the priority.

11:43:32 This was a story that had to be set forth in the world and I'm so excited that it is out there, and it continues. It's, the waves of reception come sporadically, but regularly.

11:43:48 And I love hearing the positive feedback. Negative feedback we've learned from, taking what we could but moving forward. It really has been rewarding to hear how it has impacted other individuals in their lives and their thoughts about what fat is.

11:44:08 And that was the goal. The book,

11:44:12 the thing that a lot of the trolls, when they put out comments,

11:44:18 I really wondered if they even read it.

11:44:21 Because when I read it the first time I was like, Oh my god, this is about the Holocaust. This is about World War Two. Oh, wait a minute. No, this is about slavery in the United States.

11:44:33 No, it's about the way we treat other religions. No, it. Going just past the fat characters, there's also this whole encompassing of all forms of prejudice and bigotry against what Phil...you know others, all others.

11:44:51 And if people read it and they don't see that, they've missed a big point in the book.

11:44:59 Yeah, I think there are people who would just, you know, look at the cover. See, this is the cover of, Part Two of the graphic novel.

11:45:12 But would look at Delilah's silhouette on the cover of Part One or look at this picture, and just be like, well, assume it's the villain because as you said in the world of comic books the fat person is often the villain.

11:45:20 And, you know, but if you look at the description I just want to read the description, it echos some of the things Phil said at the beginning about what Fatizen is.

11:45:28 And it's one of those things that like anyone who cares about social justice should read this description, and be interested in this story in some format or another, right? Fatizen is an exploration into the systemic dehumanization of people. Whether

11:45:44 it be our nationality, sexual orientation, color of our skin or the size of our bodies, societies have leveraged attacks on their fellow citizens throughout civilization.

11:46:01 The othering of our fellow human beings has led to some of the darkest periods in history and continues today. Fatizen shows one family's journey and how they stand up for their rights and inspire courage, hope and a revolution. Like, Who doesn't want

11:46:09 to be inspired to revolution to change the world? Exactly, exactly. Do you hear stories from from your readers about things that they were inspired, like specific things they were inspired to do because they were empowered by your tale of Delilah and her

11:46:24 family?

11:46:25 I have heard a lot of people commenting on Delilah who, I mean that character. I'm so excited that she has touched individuals to think about how seeing her and beyond just want to her as their best friend. How it made them think about themselves, and how they fit into society it always pleases me to hear that.

11:46:56 I, I think that those individuals, you know are.

11:47:04 We're kind of prime for a character hungry, for

11:47:10 a visual representation of what fat positivity is, and the impact that she had on them.

11:47:18 So, that is the most frequent comment that I've heard back, and I just smile every time when I hear them.

11:47:28 I want to share a couple of things that folks have said in the chat. First of all, gratitude. I just want to say how much I appreciate the honesty and openness of the speakers.

11:47:39 And then secondly as we were talking about the possibility of, of you quitting your day job.

11:47:48 Sadly, as many fat people as there are in the world there are very few businesses dedicated to the fat community, that become successful enough to support the business owner.

11:47:59 Have you found that fat community or fat people whether they're engaged in sort of collective community or not,

11:48:08 that, that they are the majority of your fan base or do you see folks from all across the body size spectrum, who are supporting Fatizen and Embonpoint, Embonpoint.

11:48:31 Okay.

11:48:23 We were having a laugh the first time we talked over me stumbling over the French pronunciation and so now I have a particular point of pride in trying to say it. It sounds better when you say it.

11:48:37 We have had the biggest reception at size positive events.

11:48:44 The biggest sales that we've ever had in a single location happened at a bi-annual event in Las Vegas called Bigger Vegas, and that's for a community of fat men, gay men and their admirers.

11:48:59 And we had a whole suitcase of our books, and they sold like hotcakes. It was empty when we brought it home. It was amazing the reception. And I always wanted to make it back to like a straightforward BBW event, which we haven't had the opportunity to do. Covid

11:49:20 kind put a smash on those plans but I really think that the size community, the fat community is ready for this and when they hear about it,

11:49:32 there is a lot of excitement. It's just with being small that we are in terms of the size of our company which is us,

11:49:42 there's not a, there's no marketing department, advertising budget. And if nobody knows about it. It's not going to sell.

11:49:53 People don't know the word about it, if it's if it doesn't come across the social media and.

11:50:01 And I see and I know the benefit of marketing campaigns.

11:50:08 Because it's vital to get the word out of the fact that it exists for individuals to then have access to it, purchase it and enjoy it.

11:50:19 I want to go back to something from your bio because you just mentioned, you just mentioned the fat positive events and in your bio, we, you talked about being one of the co founder of Girth and Mirth in Long Beach.

11:50:32 Can you tell our audience who doesn't know Girth and Mirth what, what's that all about?

11:50:38 So the Girth and Mirth movement was founded, actually in the late 60s by Charlie Brown, a fat advocate, who's still around gratefully and I've gotten to know him.

11:50:51 Girth and Mirth is a social organization that had chapters across the country,

11:50:58 part of the affiliated big men's clubs. And a lot of it was pre internet.

11:51:07 And these chapters provided a monthly gathering for fat individuals and their admirers in the gay community. And we created the Long Beach chapter, due to the need that we saw in the community.

11:51:23 And again, I say pre internet, because the success of the group, before the internet, really hit was incredible. And it was really the only place in Southern California for fat gay men to gather, meet other people, establish friendships, begin relationships.

11:51:38 It was vital and I was so excited to be part of that kind of organization that geared itself toward creating a safe space for fat individuals to not feel judged, to be acknowledged, admired and adored.

11:52:06 And I think, you know, Phil, my, my entry point to fat community and to fat activism was also from nightlife. I used to run a nightlife event, a POC centered

11:52:18 Hip Hop party in Oakland California called Full Figure Entertainment.

11:52:23 We had a lot of

11:52:27 folks who thought if we talked too much about the politics that that meant we couldn't party, and we're doing my party by the way it was a good party.

11:52:36 How How did politics and and social life intermix in in your chapter of Girth and Mirth or as much as you know, other chapters. So, there wasn't a lot of politics or advocacy going on in the group.

11:52:52 There was such a hunger for that safe space to meet people, lifelong

friendships followed from that organization, and of course many relationships, but we didn't do a lot of programming, a lot of

11:53:10 workshops. Those happened more at the annual convergence, where all the affiliated big men's clubs gathered in one location once a year, and we have workshops for the community.

11:53:26 That's really where that kind of programming happened, and put out a newsletter monthly for the group, and I fit in all the related social justice that I could for the community.

11:53:41 But that's pretty much where it stopped. People wanted to dance. People wanted to meet, people wanted to date, because the avenues available at that point were fairly limited. And I was happy that at least I met that need, which was so vital.

11:54:03 And then the internet hit, and we all know what happened with that.

11:54:08 Folks found other ways to find each other, and the information gatherings changed a lot. We, it's a very similar pattern, when you look at the history of NAAFA and chapters, local chapters and now being a mostly,

11:54:22 you know, centered online kind of organization.

11:54:28 And, and what, so you were so deeply immersed as an activist and as a party organizer event planner. In, like specifically a fat Gay Men's community. Why didn't you write a novel about a fat gay man?

11:54:44 I've often been asked about that.

11:54:47 And I wanted to write, away from myself. I didn't want to write an autobiography, which I'm actually doing now, my book of essays.

11:55:00 I wanted to make it a little more distant, and I didn't want to make it about the fat gay community. I thought okay if I'm going to enter into the literary canon,

11:55:13 I want to put a story out there that wasn't me and Delilah is not me in drag. People have asked me, you know, is this really you with a wig on? No, I actually, I spent a lot of time,

11:55:28 it's true and I get why people ask that.

11:55:31 I spent a lot of time talking to women. My mother, other women that I knew, to find out how do women react to different things. And where I went to school, Antioch is a very social justice oriented University.

11:55:48 And and I, I learned, even before that point, you know, how men and women view the world is very different.

11:55:56 The things that we're afraid of, things that we're aware of.

11:56:01 And I found in my research before I wrote the novel that I couldn't just, in my head, I couldn't just write a female character. I really wanted to explore how does the, how does a woman react to different situations.

11:56:20 And I learned it.

11:56:23 I learned a lot about women in writing the book and the character, as any other would tell you, as you as you develop the character and your writing,

11:56:37 they come to life, and they start informing your writing and Delilah let me know who she was in no uncertain terms. Like I am not you. You can't put me in the situation and force me to do what you want. I'm going to tell you what I want to do. And she did it.

11:56:54 So, a lot of how the story developed was Delilah saying, This is what would happened and I just said, Okay, then we'll make that happen.

11:57:04 So it was a learning experience for me.

11:57:08 I know sometimes folks who are not creatives think that we sound a little

strange when we started talking about the characters speaking to us but in fact, a lot of writers have that exact experience of like, I am channeling what this character wants,

11:57:23 what they want to do, not what I want them to do.

11:57:27 Um, let's talk about getting your work into people's hands if folks who have not already read the book or read the graphic novels,

11:57:36 how do they get their hands on that?

11:57:39 So you can order it through your local bookstore. I'm always, first and foremost, go to your local bookstore and support independent bookstores.

11:57:49 They can order it. It's available through every, every main bookstore. you can order through Barnes and Noble, as well.

11:57:59 And you can go to Amazon, which is the easiest I think for many individuals, and just search for it there.

11:58:09 Amazon has a funky feature that wants to change Fatizen to citizen, and it will look for citizen, and will try to sell you a watch. So, you have to be sure to click back on

11:58:25 No, search for Fatizen, and it'll bring it up, or you can go to our website which is embonpointpublishing.com and follow the links from our stuff there and that will take you right to the Amazon page to buy the books.

11:58:40 And I'm buying the graphic novel in two parts now or is it serialized? How do I get, can I get it like a comic book or I get it like a book? How does it work? So, the book is the novel, The graphic novel is in three parts.

11:58:57 We've, you're holding Part Two. Part Three will be available later this year. And once we put out Part Three, we will put together a compendium which will be about this big,

11:59:18 of all three parts together. People want to buy the whole thing at one point.

11:59:14 If you have access to ComiXology,

11:59:17 You can go to ComiXology and buy the issues there.

11:59:23 If that's more convenient.

11:59:25 Part One is available as an E book, and Part Two will be available as an E book soon as well, if people choose to do it that way.

11:59:35 But that is the easiest way to get it.

11:59:39 And and what is a, what is ComiXology for people who don't know what that is. Thank you. ComiXology is like a Kindle program but for comic books, and you can download the program.

11:59:54 ComiXology is an Amazon company like Kindle, but it's not for a Kindle. You can watch it on any smartphone or tablet. And you have to download, I believe, a program for ComiXology.

12:00:11 And there's an app, and then buy it on the ComiXology site, which is, there's a link to it on our Embonpoint webpage.

12:00:22 Can I say something about the first book, Part One? When you mentioned the cover. That's actually a friend of ours, a woman we know and she's a large woman. She gets a lot of exercise, and someone, a friend of hers,

12:00:38 she was up on that hill above LA and someone clicked that picture of her, and she was silhouetted and I said to Phil, I said oh my god this is such a great picture of Joanne I've got to draw it.

12:00:50 And I got it all done. And I said to him, I said, we should make this the cover. And I said, but well I gotta run it past Joanne first to see if it's okay to use, you know, her image.

12:01:03 And so I took it, we were, she was at his mom's house and I saw her and I brought it and I said, Is it okay if I use this as a cover, and she's like yeah it's great God I wish I was built like that.

12:01:14 And I said, That's you.

12:01:17 That's from that photograph you put up on Instagram, that is you. And she's like, I look like that from the back? I said it's your photograph.

12:01:25 And she was like, Yeah, she goes. Finally I'm a cover girl. And it's so cute but, yeah. So it was one of those things that

12:01:38 was a positive result because that's exactly how she's built, there's no,

12:01:43 you know, I didn't change it at all except for the clothes she's wearing because she had on sweatshirt jogging pants. Thank you, Phil, for bringing up the image there. I read the first one as an E book so I didn't have the first one to hold up.

12:01:58 But now you can all see it, see it on your screen.

12:02:05 That's fantastic.

12:02:08 Um, is there anything we haven't talked about anything else we haven't talked about that you would really like our viewers and listeners to know?

12:02:18 Ultimately that this is a story to help people be more aware, more alert. That,

12:02:29 that being fat is is a state of being. That there should be no shame in who we are, whether you're small or big. That there is room for everyone in the world,

12:02:44 regardless of your size. And that that love and success is available to all of us, regardless of our size, and there should be no shame in being any, any size that you choose to be, whether it's larger or smaller. That you know happiness is available

12:03:12 and we all are entitled to access that happiness.

12:03:14 I don't want to ask anything else because I want us to end on that note that was beautiful. Thank you so much for joining us today. Mason Arrigo the illustrator of Fatizen and Phil Barragan, the author of both Fatizen the prose novel and Fatizen the

12:03:30 graphic novels.

12:03:32 Again, you can find their work at their imprints site Embonpoint Publishing.

12:03:44 And, And, and you can find NAAFA online on your favorite social media. We are NAAFAofficial on most social media and on Facebook, we are [facebook.com/equalityateverysize](https://www.facebook.com/equalityateverysize).

12:03:59 And of course you can visit the NAAFA website at [NAAFA.org](https://www.naafa.org), We are able to bring programming like this to the community free of charge, through the generous support of our members and other donors.

12:04:11 If you would like to financially support us and being able to continue doing this kind of programming please go to [NAAFA.org](https://www.naafa.org) and, and click on the contribute button. Contributions are how we are able to bring this incredible lineup of Fat Liberation Month speakers and presenters for you and we have lots of programming plans throught the rest of the year. Thank you for your support. Thank you Phil and Mason for being with us today. We will see you tomorrow for Fat Magic and Tarot with Bree XVI of HealedAF.