



## December 2019 NAAFA Newsletter

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### Video of the Month



### Blowing the Roof Off

On an upbeat note, two beautiful fat women are in the final four of this season of The Voice. We fans have been waiting all season for them to pair these two powerhouse singers together in a duet. We finally got it! Here are Katie Kadan and Rose Short singing Madonna's "Express Yourself". I'm sure this helped get them to the finals! Enjoy!

[youtube.com/watch?v=aPTpUhxNC6I](https://youtube.com/watch?v=aPTpUhxNC6I)

### Quick Links

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## I Resolve to Make Myself Bigger

by *Darlene Howell*



It's getting close to the time when many will make New Year's Resolutions. The majority of people that think about NY

Resolutions think of things like losing weight, making themselves smaller. Their focus for the future is small and pinpointed. With this type of focus, we limit our thinking to be "all about me."

Very often we limit ourselves and our thinking to our immediate surroundings and don't consider anything that doesn't affect us directly. We have become a "ME" society; a land of what's in it for me, a world of selfies and "look at me". That needs to change.

**My resolution is to be BIGGER this year. I resolve to EXPAND my focus.**

I resolve to focus on the bigger picture and what I can do to contribute to changing the many problems that face me, my neighbors, my nation and the world. Issues such as the environment, gender equality, social inequity for people of color, equality at every size and so many more issues that need to see change not in the future but NOW. If you think that it's not possible or that one person can't make those types of changes, resolve to expand your beliefs in yourself and the influence you can have on others.

**For example:**

Think about one young girl in Sweden, Greta Thunberg, who started out to make a statement on the climate. See what that one act did to influence others and bring her to the floor of the United Nations Climate Change Conference. She expressed her anger and disappointment for what has been done to our world and to the future of all children. Then she challenged the world to do better. If one young girl can have that impact, what can each of us do?

Think about a young man named Elijah who is being called a real-life superhero for standing up against child abuse. He created the Child Abuse Awareness March because a classmate was abused and he wanted to do something to change things for others. He believes we all have a voice and that his voice can empower others to stand up for those that cannot help themselves. If one young boy is this determined to make a difference in the world to fight child abuse, what can we do to facilitate change?

If you want to see change in our world, **JOIN ME IN RESOLVING TO MAKE OUR FOCUS BIGGER IN 2020.**

## **Fat Fashion Focus: Size Queen Clothing**

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When Bertha Pearl started sewing as a teen, she had no idea it would lead to a multi-decade career in fat fashion. In high school, Bertha was in love with sewing, and she also loved the teacher who instructed and guided her and her classmates. "She was the first person who saw me as a person, my mentor and someone I adored," Bertha remembers. "Her husband was cheating on her and she tried to become beautiful for him. It resulted in the anorexia that killed her." That devastating loss was the beginning of Bertha being aware of thin obsession and body oppression.

After high school, Bertha went to the world-famous Fashion Institute of Technology. Life sidetracked her formal fashion education when she met her first girlfriend and dropped out of school. Soon, she moved to California. By the '90s, Bertha was living in a shared home in San Francisco. San Francisco was the home base of a vibrant and growing fat activist community, and Bertha's housemates were producing FatGrrl zine. She participated both behind the scenes and as a model in several issues.

A fat fashion show brought Bertha back to designing and sewing. The show was set to feature corsettes and other femme fashions, and Bertha felt there should be something available for fat butches. This launched her first clothing line, Big Daddy boxer shorts. The boxers were popular, and Bertha's love of design was rekindled. "I really felt my passion for fabric, and for sewing, and for making things. It did feel like a beginning," she says, "But I didn't know where it would take me."

Big Daddy became a part-time venture, but designing clothing for fat people would eventually become how Bertha would make her living. Bertha moved back to NYC to care for her mother, and while there, a more powerful Big Daddy sent her a cease and desist for using that name. She rebranded, and she also shifted focus as she saw that there were customers demanding other kinds of clothing. "Once I changed to Size Queen, it gave me room to do more femme fashion," Bertha says.

Decades later, Bertha's Size Queen is one of the most respected clothing lines in fat fashion, in part because of the designs, which Bertha sees as art, and in part because of Bertha's foundation as an activist who is committed to making sure *everyone* in fat community can have something fun to wear, not just smaller fats. "When I started it was really important to me that I do clothes up to 8x or bigger if somebody needed it", Bertha says. "If L is

considered a plus size now, you have to do L if you design for plus customers. But it was always more important to me to design in 6x and up because that's what's *really* hard to find." Bertha's bold designs are not for everyone. "I've never made mainstream clothes," she points out. "I definitely have a very different customer base. I have a lot more people who are flamboyant or who are doing costumes." Still, even those who don't wear her designs know her for her commitment to unapologetic fat living and to other anti-oppression work.

At age 62, Bertha is guided by a passion for intersectional activism that is sometimes related to the fat fashion she's best known for and is sometimes simply about supporting other marginalized communities. For example, when living in Portland, Bertha established Black Owned Restaurant Week in order to support African-American entrepreneurship. Inspired by a similar celebration in San Francisco, she worked with Black business owners to ensure that what she was planning benefited them and considered their needs. The result was increased publicity and business for those businesses.

In addition to her local impact, Bertha is thinking about the impact fashion has on the global community. Bertha has always used quirky vintage fabrics, but these days, she is additionally motivated by thoughts of her and Size Queen's carbon footprint. Environmental and labor exploitation issues in the garment industry are also a reason Bertha's plan for the future is to continue as an independent designer who hand makes clothes rather than looking to expand into manufacturing. "I'm looking at how fabric is made and what fabric is doing to the world," she says, "and I'm realizing why it's important for me to stay small." But we all know that no matter how small Bertha's operation is, her impact on fat community is huge.

FB: Size Queen Clothing  
IG: @berthapearlsizesqueen  
phone: 503-758-0783

## Help NAAFA While You Shop



You can support the National Association To Advance Fat Acceptance by shopping at <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7296874> and AmazonSmile will donate a portion of your purchase to NAAFA.

## Fine Art Collection

My name is Lindley (she/her), and I have one of the best jobs in the world: I photograph fat people.

I'd been a photographer for many years, and as I grew more active in fat activism I knew that when I someday pursued photography as a career, I wanted to use it to serve the fat community.

In 2015, ready to make the leap from a particularly awful office job to full-time photography, I began





studying portraiture. In my training, working with slightly larger-than-model-size bodies was presented as shameful, but necessary. One extensive online video course included a single lesson on posing larger bodies, presented as a regretful contingency when clients dared to show up in less-than-perfect bodies.

As a decade-long fat activist, this infuriated me. What kind of "artist" only sees the beauty in one kind of body -- an impossible one for actual humans to achieve, at that -- and forces and falsifies every other body into submission to that single ideal? From the start, my work was a direct and open rebellion against this false ideal. My work centered on visibly fat bodies. I learned to

make people in large bodies comfortable both in front of the camera and in every other part of their client experience, and proudly minimized my post-processing to showcase the honest, true beauty in each body.

For many people I've worked with, the finished images are a tool they use to learn to see their bodies as they really are -- and the beauty in those bodies. After seeing what a vital role the photographs played for those individuals, I felt that they could also make a difference for all fat people and our allies, so I spent 2019 putting together my first collection of fine art prints. I curated some of the images from my archives of stock and portfolio work, and planned new dedicated sessions with fat folks from the community to fulfill my new visions.

In June, I traveled from my home outside Seattle to Las Vegas for the NAAFA conference and in the process was able to photograph several amazing fat folks; a mother and daughter's closeness in Salt Lake City, a woman with perfect underarm wings in our conference hotel, and a plus-size pageant queen in the Nevada desert. All were involved with the NAAFA conference, and all were willing to vulnerably share the beauty of their precious bodies with everyone who needs to see the vast span of human embodiment -- which is, of course, everyone.

You can find my fine art photographs at [www.bodyliberationphotos.com](http://www.bodyliberationphotos.com)



*Lindley Ashline is a professional photographer based in Seattle, WA. She lives outside Seattle with her husband, two feline overlords, and far too much washi tape.*

## NAAFA Chronicles No. 47

As part of our monthly NAAFA Chronicles feature, NAAFA's 47th newsletter is a NAAFA 'XTRA for July 1981:

[http://www.naafaonline.com/newsletterstuff/oldnewsletterstuff/Chronicles/July\\_1981-Extra.pdf](http://www.naafaonline.com/newsletterstuff/oldnewsletterstuff/Chronicles/July_1981-Extra.pdf)

For more, click the "Chronicles" tab in the newsletter section of the NAAFA website.

## Media and Research Roundup by Bill and Terri Weitze

November 2019: China-based TikTok reportedly has a policy that limits videos of people that are considered at risk for cyberbullying to a maximum of 5.5 million instead views of the 1 billion audience TikTok reaches. This list includes people who are disabled, gay, and fat. <https://netzpolitik.org/2019/discrimination-tiktok-curbed-reach-for-people-with-disabilities>

November 20, 2019: Those with a subscription to the Wall Street Journal might enjoy this article. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/when-the-plane-seat-doesnt-fit-11574245801>

November 24, 2019: Flu vaccinations are important for everyone who can safely get one; however research is showing that the vaccines are less effective for fat people because of ineffective T cells. Also for unknown reasons, once infected, fat people tend to shed more virus than non-fat people. Development of more effective vaccines may take years. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/11/24/782079520/excess-weight-can-weaken-the-flu-shot>  
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1716561115>

November 27, 2019: According to a survey of 1015 adults by Gallup's Health and Healthcare survey, more people are reporting that they weigh over 200 pounds and that they are okay with it. Gallup thinks this is a failure of the war on obesity, while NAAFA believes that its

campaign against fat discrimination and bullying is working.

<https://www.newsweek.com/more-americas-weigh-200-lbs-body-acceptance-study-1474464>

December 2, 2019: This USA Today article includes input from Jeanette DePatie (creator of EveryBODYcanExercise.com) while discussing franchise gyms for workouts and what to look for to meet your personal exercise needs.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/2019/12/02/healthy-and-fit-new-year-fitness-franchise/4308214002>

December 4, 2019: Speaking to three fat influencers, Ashley Laderer gets answers to five important questions about fat acceptance.

<https://www.talkspace.com/blog/body-positivity-fat-acceptance-quotes>

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*Founded in 1969, NAAFA, the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance, is a non-profit human rights organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for fat people. NAAFA works to eliminate discrimination based on body size and provide fat people with the tools for self-empowerment through public education, advocacy, and member support.*

On the web: <http://www.naafa.org>

Comments: [pr@naafa.org](mailto:pr@naafa.org)

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