



**national association
to advance
fat acceptance**

NAAFA Newsletter

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Black History Month



by Tony Harrell

When I started thinking about whom to write about regarding Black History Month, I quickly realized that even among Black People of Size, I had almost "too many" choices. I think back to African continental history where in some tribes a fat person, especially if it was a wife, was seen as a sign of prosperity. Perhaps that positive way of thinking filtered its way into the subconscious of many in the African-American community as people of size are

accepted and even revered more so than in most any other racial or ethnic group.

Louis Armstrong (1901 - 1971): One of the most influential people in the world of jazz, this trumpeter and singer balanced his mainstream success with taking a full term. By that time, he had already become a wealthy landowner in Mississippi, taught at Oberlin College and established a school for Blacks in Hannibal, Missouri. At the 1880 Republican National Convention in Chicago, Mr. Bruce became the first African-American to receive nominating votes for Vice-President. Mr. Bruce would later serve under President James Garfield as Registrar of the Treasury which made him the first Black person whose signature appeared on US currency. All of these are remarkable achievements for someone who was born into slavery.

Blanche Kelso Bruce (1841 - 1898): When Mr. Bruce represented Mississippi in the US Senate from 1875 to 1878, he became the first non-white Senator to serve a full term. By that time, he had already become a wealthy landowner in Mississippi, taught at Oberlin College and established a school for Blacks in Hannibal, Missouri. At the 1880 Republican National Convention in Chicago, Mr. Bruce became the first African-American to receive nominating votes for Vice-President. Mr. Bruce would later serve under President James Garfield as Registrar of the Treasury which made him the first Black person whose signature appeared on US currency. All of these are remarkable achievements for someone who was born into slavery.

Michael Clarke Duncan (1957 - 2012): Behind this seemingly imposing figure was a gentle, talented man who appeared in numerous films including his Academy Award-nominated role in *The Green Mile*. Sadly, a heart attack robbed Mr. Duncan of his life and potentially lengthy career much too soon.

Aretha Franklin (1942 -): If anyone deserves R.E.S.P.E.C.T. then it would be the Queen of Soul. One of the most successful musicians of all time, Ms. Franklin has sold over 75 million records, won eighteen Grammy awards and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987.

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A Fat Girl Dancing

February Video of the Month

Producer Whitney Thore of radio station 107.5 WKZL (Greensboro, NC) practices her dance moves to Jason Derulo's "Talk Dirty to Me" in a video that spread like crazy across Facebook. It's one in a series of dance videos featuring Whitney, and they're all to promote her No Body Shame Campaign.

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=Tbcoh5hre74>

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Madam C.J.Walker (1867 - 1919): Born Sarah Breedlove, Ms. Walker was the first child of her six siblings to be born into freedom. She developed a hair straightening system which she initially sold door-to-door. Her cosmetics business became so successful that she went on to become what the *Guinness Book of World Records* proclaimed to be the first self-made female millionaire. She contributed her wealth and her support towards philanthropic and civil rights efforts with the NAACP, YMCA and numerous Black schools, organizations and individuals.

While giving these famous Americans their deserved kudos, I would be remiss by not also mentioning Lisa Tealer and Phyllis Warr - NAAFA Treasurer Emeritus and Secretary, respectively - who have each contributed their expertise over many years working towards the goal of size acceptance for people of all races and ethnicities.

Fat People Don't Wear Seatbelts?



by Peggy Howell

As the Public Relations Director for NAAFA, I was contacted to comment on a recent study that concluded that seatbelt use is significantly less likely in obese individuals compared to their normal weight counterparts. As a result, obese individuals are more likely to suffer fatal injuries. My first response was to wonder about the motivation for conducting such a study. Are "they" trying to prove that fat people break the law more than thin people? Or will the next step be to charge fat people more for our insurance because we don't wear our seatbelts and have more catastrophic or fatal injuries . . . or be profiled by police to pull us over to see if we are wearing seatbelts. I don't get the motivation for this study.

The study's lead author is Dr. Dietrich Jehle, director of emergency services at Erie County Medical Center and vice chairman of Emergency Medicine at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Jehle said he would like the study to prompt car manufacturers to make longer belts (our own Elizabeth Fisher has worked on this project: <http://ifisher.com/honda.asp>) and for safety regulators to use larger dummies in crash tests. [http://www.ajemjournal.com/article/S0735-6757\(14\)00016-3/abstract](http://www.ajemjournal.com/article/S0735-6757(14)00016-3/abstract)

I decided to consult NAAFA Advisory Board Member Dr. Deb Burgard, who sees this study as problematic, ". . . we are taking a highly specialized set of events here where there was an accident, where there was a death, and then looking at how likely the driver was to be wearing a seatbelt based on their BMI . . . This study shows that in the specific situation of a crash where someone has died (not necessarily the driver), there was a statistically significant higher chance that the highest-weight drivers were not as likely to be wearing a seatbelt as were drivers with lower BMIs. But that is a very specific situation, not everyday life."

"There are obvious factors that could skew this specific situation, for example, income. Financial resources make it more likely that you will have a newer car that has more safety features, and therefore less likely that you or your passengers will die if you are in an accident. Because income is inversely related to BMI, people with less safe cars (and perhaps even cars that are older with fewer functional seatbelts) are going to be more likely to have a higher BMI. The authors did not have data about income and so it is understandable that they did not control for this factor; however, it would be an obvious explanation for the data: Safety is more related to having economic resources than to BMI.

It is also certainly the case that people at the highest weights have fewer options in terms of access to a working seatbelt that fits, as well as to airbags that are calibrated to deploy effectively for a higher-weight person. It is good that the authors call for more attention to auto design for a diversity of weights, but they also try to blame higher weight drivers for this lack of equipment and 'obesity' for the understandably worse health outcomes of a medical system that is suffused with weight bias and discrimination. They commit the all-too-common error of blaming higher-weight people for the outcomes that are really traceable to stigma and discrimination."

Starting Gently



by Cinder Ernst

When you're trying to increase flexibility, it's so easy to do too much. When you overdo a stretch, you end up hurt or hurting and then you quit. The answer is to start gently. When you're getting started or re-started with any exercise, you will be more successful in the long run if you start gently because you will not hurt yourself and so you will stay with it.

Stretching is a great tool for reducing or eliminating knee, back and hip pain, but it's also easy to overdo it. You always have to pay attention to what you're feeling when you are learning or re-learning a stretch.

When you do the stretch ask yourself "does this feel small, medium or large?" It should never be more than medium and small is best. Keep it small and your muscle can relax and let go.

One of the best stretches for reducing knee pain, as well as back and hip pain, is a hamstring stretch. The hamstring muscle is the back of your thigh and it's connected to your knee and to your pelvic bowl. The problem is when the hamstring muscle is tight it can pull on those joints. So give this stretch a try but remember . . . GO GENTLY! <http://youtube.com/watch?v=F4v7mw4GCvY>

Get more fat friendly fitness tips at <http://lesskneepain.com>

Thanks and love,
Cinder

Media and Research Roundup

by Bill and Terri Weitze

[Check <http://naafa.org> and <http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/naafanews/conversations/topics> for the latest news.]

January 13, 2014: New York Times blogger Jane Brody says (we're paraphrasing) diets don't work, so here are some diets that work. At least she doesn't haul out that idiotic old saw about using smaller plates . . . really? . . . I'm being told that she does. Click below at your own risk.

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/13/the-empty-diet-claim-season>

January 14, 2014: The title says it best: "Fat-Shaming Trolls Need to Get Over Gabourey Sidibe's Weight". The article by Demetria L. Lucas goes on to explain that, as noted by Ms. Sidibe herself in a recent tweet, her continued success should put the trolls in their place.

http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2014/01/gabourey_sidibe_at_the_golden_globe_awards_why_are_we_still_talking_about.html

January 15, 2014: Study after study has shown that, among people with many chronic diseases, fatter patients do better on average (the "obesity paradox"). Even anti-fat guy Kenneth Krause admitted it (second link). But one (admittedly large) study comes out showing that this is not the case for type 2 diabetes (first link) and the media act as if that debunks the whole idea of fat as being protective (third link). This is especially annoying since another recent study confirms the "obesity paradox" for diabetes (fourth link).

<http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1304501>

<http://fattiesunited.wordpress.com/2014/01/14/skeptical-inquirer-and-fatties-part-2>

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/15/can-heavier-people-really-be-healthier>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24408674>

January 17, 2014: Fat hatred hurts more than just fat people. Athletes are pushed into disordered eating, not to improve fitness for their sport, but to conform to unhealthy beauty standards (first link). Meanwhile, showing a group of lean and "overweight" women a video in which a fat woman is stigmatized for her weight increased the viewers' stress levels (as measured by salivary cortisol reactivity) compared with women who were shown a neutral video (second link).

<http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2014/jan/17/sportswomen-glamour-deeds-survey>

[http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/bias/Physiological Stress Stigma PsychosomaticMed 1.14.pdf](http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/bias/Physiological%20Stress%20Stigma%20PsychosomaticMed%201.14.pdf)

January 20, 2014: A study by researchers at the University of Hawaii shows that the more times someone has tried to lose weight in the past, the more that person will lose in self-help groups. Notably, the dropout rate was high, the maximum treatment period was 24 months, and (despite saying so in the title) the study had no truly long-term (that is, post treatment) follow-up. It therefore proves nothing about permanent weight loss, showing only that people with a history of weight cycling get pretty good at weight cycling.

<http://hpg.sagepub.com/content/19/2/253>

January 26, 2014: A study of all-cause mortality finds that being overweight does not increase the risk of death for people 65 years or older.

<http://www.stoneheartnewsletters.com/bmi-and-all-cause-mortality-in-older-adults-a-meta-analysis/bmi-2>

January 27, 2014: Abby Ellin tells of her personal battle with the scale and why she stopped weighing herself. Her article isn't especially fat-positive, but it does show how weighing oneself can be detrimental to a person's wellbeing.

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/27/me-versus-the-scale>

January 29, 2014: More and more retailers are moving towards using mannequins that look like their customers, including tattoos, thicker waists and even back fat. While we applaud the use of realistically sized mannequins, saying that the new mannequins "show the imperfections of getting heavier" tells us that there is still a lack of appreciation for the plus size customer.

<http://business.time.com/2014/01/29/mannequins-are-getting-back-fat-tattoos-and-thicker-waists>

January 29, 2014: NPR interviews the lead author, Solveig Cunningham, of a study that claims that fat children's risk of obesity starts in the child's earliest years. Joanne Ikeda and Linda Bacon provide some insight as to the dangers of targeting fat children, while Cunningham claims that she is not recommending putting children on diets.

<http://www.wbur.org/npr/267829554/adult-obesity-may-have-origins-way-back-in-kindergarten>

<http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1309753>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/30/science/obesity-takes-hold-early-in-life-study-finds.html>

February 6, 2014: Blogger Phillip Strange at The Guardian asks why body builders and others are taking a deadly chemical to lose weight. DNP is being sold over the internet as a "research chemical" with the tacit understanding that the buyer can use it to lose weight. Several have died using it for this purpose.

<http://www.theguardian.com/science/the-h-word/2014/feb/06/dnp-deadly-weight-loss-drug-science-history>

February 7, 2014: The "reveal" on the weight loss TV show The Biggest Loser is usually a time of celebration, but in the case of Rachel Frederickson it sparked a conversation on social media on how much weight loss is too much. Leaving aside Ms. Frederickson's size, which should not be demonized either before or after weight loss, we think the controversy reveals that these shows are about creating a spectacle rather than health.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/09/fashion/Biggest-Loser-Rachel-Frederickson.html>

Founded in 1969, NAAFA 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>

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