



**national association
to advance
fat acceptance**

February 2020 NAAFA Newsletter

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Video of the Month



Register and Vote!

There have been many extraordinary black women of size in the past who have fought for freedom and equality (Mary McLeod Bethune, for example), and this month we present the testimony of Fannie Lou Hamer, a leader in the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

Ms. Hamer was the co-founder and vice-chair of the Freedom Democratic Party, which she represented at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, as well as co-founder of the National Women's Political Caucus, an organization created to recruit, train, and support women of all races who wish to seek election to

Black History Month

by Tony Harrell



Editor's note: A version of this article appeared in the February 2014 NAAFA Newsletter.

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 your wife, was 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 have been accepted and even revered more so than in most any other racial or ethnic groups.

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 stand in favor of desegregation of Little Rock Central High School. Perhaps his most famous tune was "What A Wonderful World" which highlighted his voice rather than his brass.

Blanche Kelso Bruce (1841 - 1898): When Mr. Bruce represented Mississippi in the US Senate from 1875 to 1878, he became for the first non-white Senator to serve a full term. By that time, he had already become a wealthy landowner in Mississippi, had 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. Mr. Bruce would later serve under President James Garfield as Registrar of the

government office. Pres. Lyndon Johnson preempted Hamer's televised testimony at the 1964 DNC

([youtube.com/watch?v=07PwNVCZCcY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07PwNVCZCcY)) but

the TV networks broadcast her testimony later that evening. Here is a recording of that testimony:

[youtube.com/watch?v=IRCUUzpfV7k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRCUUzpfV7k)

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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 - 2018): 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.

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 be 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 Board Member Tigress Osborn, Director of Community Outreach as well as Lisa Tealer and Phyllis Warr - NAAFA Treasurer Emeritus and Secretary Emeritus, respectively - each of whom have contributed their expertise over many years working towards the goal of size acceptance for people of all races and ethnicities.

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Fat Fashion Focus: Peggy Lutz Plus by Peggy Lutz



At age 39, Peggy Lutz was a woman with a passion for fashion and day-job doing freelance work as a legal secretary. She had always loved clothes, and she'd been making them for years, but she had no idea she was about to set out on a lifelong adventure in the world of plus size fashion.

In the late '80s, sergers (a sewing tool that cuts and sews at once, and is great for working with stretch fabrics) had just moved from being available only in industry to being available for individual designers and seamstresses. Peggy had been sewing for most of her life, but the introduction of a serger into her repertoire had fired up her passion even further. Around that same time, a friend was celebrating her 29th birthday with a

30 Dykes for Lunch party, and she asked Peggy to use her fashion flair to plan a fashion

show for the luncheon. Sweatsuits were in fashion, so Peggy decided to challenge herself to make sweatsuits from everything *but* sweatshirt fabric, including newspaper, plastic and brocade. This inspired moment -- which foreshadowed the fan-favorite Unconventional Materials Challenge on popular TV show *Project Runway* -- was a hit with the crowd. Soon after, Peggy was invited by a couple who had attended the party to create more plus size versions of her fun suits for their soon-to-open boutique. "That was the first time I ever heard the term 'plus size,'" Peggy says.

The couple broke up and the boutique was a bust, but Peggy turned the \$1500 worth of sweats into the beginning of what she would come to see as her life's work. She hit the streets, made connections with local boutiques, sold clothes at house parties, and built a word-of-mouth following that she still benefits from to this day. Peggy became well known for her Upscale Sweats made from fabric imported from Paris. She went from selling those sweats in other people's San Francisco-area shops to opening her own location in the city. Peggy Lutz Plus eventually expanded to include a "5 easy pieces" set of basics, as well as special occasion wear and "wearable art" pieces.

Peggy eventually settled in the wine country north of the Bay, where she worked with other talented local seamstresses and designers to build a foundation for better understanding fat people's bodies. She and her colleagues were pioneers of sizing beyond 12. By creating a database of the measurements of hundreds of people, they came to understand something that most designers still do not understand to this day -- namely, that fat bodies come in a variety of forms, so simply upsizing smaller patterns doesn't meet the needs or capture the nuances of the variety of ways plus size bodies can be shaped. Although she's been asked over the years to create more clothing for smaller people, Peggy has remained steadfast in concentrating her effort on the customers who need her most. "We created a unique pattern system to fit all shapes and sizes from 14 to 36 and above, and really focused on the higher end of the size range, making sure women over size 28 could get beautiful clothes," she says.

Peggy was also a pioneer of using the worldwide web to make clothing accessible no matter where her customers lived. Her early presence on the internet is evidenced by her domain, www.plus-size.com, which others in the industry greatly envy. Her first online order came from an American living in Japan, and she's been selling all over the world since. Peggy Lutz Plus was doing great, "but then the crash came," Peggy says. "Couture clothing was not on people's list" during the economic downturn in 2009. That rough period was followed by a major shift in Peggy's business when family life required her undivided attention. She moved to Mississippi for several years to support a sick family member, and her business essentially went on hiatus during that period.



Now, Peggy's back! She's busy in Northern California with a lovely workshop in Santa Rosa (if you're in the area, call her to shop!). Thirty-three years after that birthday fashion show, Peggy has one of the longest-running plus size fashion businesses in the world, and she has been consistent throughout the years in running her small business with a basis in fat-positive politics. She is heartened by some changes in the plus size fashion industry, but she knows that plus size consumers are still an untapped market and that larger brands don't serve their clientele the way small, independent designers do. "Now that I'm 72, I'm really enjoying getting back to my roots, as it were; the things that brought me into the rag trade in the first place," Peggy says. She continues her long-standing mission of helping fat people stay stylish, and she knows how having quality clothes enables self-confidence and body love. Peggy embraces activists' efforts to destigmatize the f word. "It will be a great day when the word 'fat' is liberated and kudos to NAAFA for taking on the task," Peggy says. "I market online where it's of the utmost importance to use the keywords that are recognized by most people. I focus on the keywords that get people to my website: plus, plus size, etc. and will include fatshion in my keywords from now on. It will be very gratifying to see fatshion and fat fashion take their rightful place, 'cause everyone has a right to feel beautiful!"

Peggy Lutz Plus by Peggy Lutz

<https://www.plus-size.com>

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Meme of the Month

**BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH**

Honoring Black Women of Size in History

Ida B. Wells-Barnett

A fearless anti-lynching crusader, suffragist, women's rights advocate, journalist, and speaker. Ida B. Wells-Barnett stands as one of our nation's most uncompromising leaders and most ardent defenders of democracy.

[Source: people.duke.edu]



1862-1931



***#CelebrateDiversity
#EqualityAtEverySize***

NAAFA Webinars

NAAFA Webinar Series 2020

Fat Positive Event Planning for Beginners

A conversation with Redstreak Girl
and Fat Girls Hiking Phoenix Chapter

Hosted by Tigress Osborn,
NAAFA Director of Community Outreach
Co-sponsored by PHX Fat Force

Live from Palabras Bookstore in Phoenix, AZ

Saturday 2/29
4pPST/5pMST/6pCST/7pEST

naafa

NAAFA Chronicles No. 49

For our ongoing NAAFA Chronicles feature, here's NAAFA's 49th newsletter, November - December 1981:

http://www.naafaonline.com/newsletterstuff/oldnewsletterstuff/Chronicles/Nov-Dec_1981.pdf

There's more at the "Chronicles" tab in the newsletter section of the NAAFA website.

Media and Research Roundup by Bill and Terri Weitze

January 15, 2020: A study tries to tie physical movement by infants to risk of being fat later in life.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/oby.22738>

<https://thisfatoldlady.com/2020/01/31/this-fat-old-ladys-fat-friday-leave-the-babies-alone>

January 20, 2020: A New York Times article discusses some of the (many) problems with childhood obesity research.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/20/upshot/childhood-obesity-research.html>

January 29, 2020: Fashion designer Christian Siriano, known for designing for various sizes and body types, says that size inclusivity in fashion is not that hard. (Although most designs on his website stop at size 18, custom sizing is available.) Siriano also has released a collection through Lane Bryant.

<https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/christian-siriano-size-inclusivity-not-hard-150530057.html>

<http://www.christiansiriano.com/FAQ.php>

February 2020: Center for Discovery provides a brief history of the fat acceptance movement, starting with the origins of NAAFA, as well as how fat phobia intersects with the eating disorder community.

<https://centerfordiscovery.com/blog/the-origins-of-naafa>

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

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