



## June-July 2019 NAAFA Newsletter

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### Fat Fashion at NAAFA50

*by Tigress Osborn*



It was my pleasure to organize the fashion show for the NAAFA 50th Anniversary Celebration. My first exposure to NAAFA was as a college student, but my first real involvement with NAAFA came when I was invited to produce the fashion show for the 2012 NAAFA Conference near San Francisco. NAAFA and fashion have always gone hand in hand for me, and I know the show is a highlight of the conference for many people, even those who are not generally particularly interested in fashion. Fun with clothing in a space that embraces true body diversity and fat liberation is a rarity in our world. It has been a thrill to be part of the tradition of creating that space at NAAFA conferences

### Video of the Month

#### Fat Babes Club

NAAFA members were responsible for the first swim party for fat people back in the 1970s. Last year the Netflix series *Shrill* featured a pool party that sparked interest in more events like this. One group of friends organized the Fat Babes Club of Columbus, and their first event was a pool party that was featured on the Today Show. Enjoy!

<https://tinyurl.com/yxjeo9xn>

### Quick Links

[NAAFA.org](https://naafa.org)

**Facebook**

[Main](#)

[Toronto, ON, Canada](#)

[Capital \(DC\)](#)

[Clark County, NV](#)

[SF Bay, CA](#)

[Los Angeles, CA](#)

[Orange County, CA](#)

[End Bullying Now](#)

[Twitter](#)

over the last few years.

At the beginning of this year's conference, I reminded participants of some Girl Scout wisdom via song: "Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver and the other is gold!" The fashion show was a shining example of this, from our hostess to our models to our designers.

This year's show followed our semiformal banquet, so the room was looking pretty snazzy to begin with as conference participants arrived in some of their own favorite fashions. Local BBW party fave [DJ Kelly J](#) warmed up the crowd with fun music during dinner. Our special guest emcee, Marcy Cruz, helped us get the party started with some insights on the importance of fat visibility in fashion. Marcy is the blog editor for [Plus Model Magazine](#), as well as a blogger and public speaker in her own right as the owner of [Fearlessly Just Me](#). Having an expert of this stature join us to talk about fashion was an honor and a privilege, plus Marcy was one of the most fun folks at the conference, so you know the crowd had a blast with her helming the show.

For our 50th Anniversary Conference, I wanted to make sure this year's show returned to the tradition of having conference participants star as the models (I'd previously used my own modeling team). The fashion show featured 14 volunteer models ranging from runway newbies doing their first show to fashion vets with dozens of runway walks under their belts. Some were new to NAAFA and some had been NAAFA members and other types of size acceptance activists for years. The whirlwind of getting volunteers matched to outfits on the day of the show presented some challenges for me as the coordinator, for the fashionistas, and for the designers. But we pulled it off, and we had lots of laughs along the way!

We also made new friends and kept the old in terms of the designers showcased in the show. Three of our designers were long-term vendors who've been showcased at NAAFA many times over the years, with Jody Myles of [Myles Ahead](#) having racked up 30 years of NAAFA experiences! We kicked off the show with Myles Ahead and closed it with [Size Queen](#) by Bertha Pearl, another longtime NAAFA fave. [Big on Batik](#) by Satu Vuorenmaa (who was also doing double-duty as our official conference photographer) rounded out our list of familiar designers. We also introduced the NAAFA audience to sustainable clothing champion [Swankety Swank](#) by Yabette Swank of San Francisco and the trendy styles of [Lorenza James by Elle Dove](#), who was unable to join us in person but sent us seven looks from Atlanta. Bertha Pearl's very popular booty shorts also made a special appearance on the runway with "These Curves Tho" tees from [Fresh Out the Cocoon](#), designed by our keynote speaker Dr. Joy Cox.

We'll have fashion show footage online eventually, but in the meantime, please check out our Instagram feed for a taste of some of the looks our conference participants got to see. You can find us at [instagram.com/naafaofficial](https://www.instagram.com/naafaofficial) (if you're not an Instagram user, you can still look at the pics online from any device with internet access, but we encourage you, as we encouraged our conference participants, to get to know the world of fat fashion on Instagram by downloading the app to

## [Instagram](#)

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Mailing  
List

your phone and creating an account of your own).

P.S. Supersize model and #FatAndFree creator Saucye West and designer Bertha Pearl joined me in 2017 for a NAAFA Webinar on fat fashion as activism. Check out that webinar here: <https://fccdl.in/XZL5zYpJq>



## Glorious Fat People: My Gratitude for Finding Comfort in an Uncomfortable World

by Dawn Clark



I have been fat most of my life, and if there were one word to describe my fat life thus far, it would be "uncomfortable." I say "uncomfortable" partly because I have always been identified by my fatness first and foremost (at least to much of the world); I also say "uncomfortable," because the world constantly reminds me that *I don't fit*, and I'm not *supposed* to fit, either.

It seemed to start in the womb. I was 23 inches long and over 9 pounds when I was born. From then on, I was "the fat kid" -- singled out for my size and how I did not fit. For the first 12 years, I was always the tallest

and biggest in school. I got my period and my breasts way before everyone else. Overall, I was a pretty active kid, playing soccer, basketball, and volleyball -- and all this despite being told that I was "too big to play sports." Despite my athleticism, fitting into the uniforms was like trying to stuff myself into a sausage casing; finding the right footwear was always a challenge. The shin guards were too tight; the elbow pads never fit. Though there were some benefits to being taller and more powerful than my peers (I could really kick a soccer ball, and I blocked a lot of goals!), I mostly experienced this as uncomfortable and alienating, isolating me from my smaller peers. Again, the message was loud and clear: "*You don't fit. You don't belong* [in sports, in school, with other fourth-graders, etc.]."

I was only 10 years old when I first remember a doctor mentioning my weight. He recommended I start exercising, even though I was already engaged in sports. Later, after I had a bad accident playing soccer my 8th grade year, the orthopedic doctor again talked about my weight. All of these interactions made going to the doctor not only uncomfortable, but something to be dreaded and avoided at all costs. Every medical interaction from the time I was 16 years old never focused on *me*, just my *weight*. As a child, I remember being told that I would be dead by the time I was 40. They talked about all the horrible things that would happen if I did not lose weight. Well, I am 42 now and the biggest I have ever been. And I'm

not dead yet. Sadly, though, they were right that my fatness would affect my health -- not because my fatness was pathological, but because of how it was treated by my physicians. My clinical depression was missed for years, because I would be told that if I simply lost weight, I would feel better. The cost to my health of my fatness has been stigma and poor medical care.

I can go on and on through my life and it always comes back to being uncomfortable, not fitting in the world -- or the world not fitting me. Clothes, chairs, airplanes, transit, work, friendships, relationships, family, and just being fat in public.

However, this story does not end with another fat person simply living an uncomfortable life; I am writing this because *this discomfort has started to shift*. In 2017, I started getting exposed to fat activism. I had the privilege of attending the International Weight Stigma Conference with my best friend, and later in 2018, we attended the Association for Size Diversity And Health conference. My eyes were opened to the idea that, perhaps, there was nothing wrong with how I looked. This idea inspired me. I started to engage in more of my own activism. I wrote a blog about my ASDAH experience, that was a first for me.

Then came NAAFA! I had only heard about the organization in passing and did not know much about it. But after hearing about their conference in Las Vegas, I was able to attend, and let me tell you, it was truly *life changing*. As good as ASDAH was, this was different. It was a room full of people of every shape and size. But mostly fat people. Glorious fat people. I had never been in a space before where most people were fat. Usually I am the fattest in the crowd. In this space, I was not. I saw fat people and thin people; I saw people comfortable in their skin. I had found my people -- old fat people, young fat people! I found humans I could look to for inspiration and support, people who truly knew what it is like being fat in the world. I heard amazing stories of 50 years of activism for fat acceptance. We talked openly and honestly about intersectionality. We waded into the tensions in the field, talking about the need to be more than just body positive, and actively fight for body liberation. I got to be surrounded by people who truly believe that all bodies are good bodies.

Meeting all these people who have gone before me to fight for a world that I can be *comfortable in* was a truly amazing experience. I also met people who are new to the fight like myself. To be in a room knowing that there was zero judgment for how I looked made me cry a few times, I will admit.

And, I'll tell you something else: this uncomfortable fat girl participated in the *fashion show*. I never before dreamed of doing anything like that. And, you know what? I had *fun* doing it! I was told that I was beautiful, and I *believed* them.

I am still digesting my first experience at NAAFA. I think the biggest change for me post-conference has been that I came home and for the first time, *talked about* all my experiences. I did not tone it down for my friends, family, and coworkers. I didn't try to accommodate *their uncomfortableness* in how I look or choose to talk about my body. I have used the word "fat" at work when discussing the conference; I have been bold and unbothered. I had that usual suspect say, "you shouldn't use that word to describe yourself" and I actually clapped back with, "but that is what I am -- I am FAT."

I have all of you to thank for that courage. And I have all of you to thank for being in a space that was comfortable, at least for a little while.





## Regina (Geena) Washington



It is with a heavy heart that we report the passing of Regina (Geena) Washington on July 5, 2019. Geena passed away in her sleep and the cause is yet undetermined.

Regina served for many years as the President of the Capital Chapter of NAAFA in the Washington DC/Virginia area. She was always willing to serve in whatever capacity she was needed. Everyone remembers Geena for her huge smile that would light up the whole room when she walked in. She was hard working, generous and touched the lives of many.

Regina Washington will be interred at Harmony Cemetery in Landover, MD. Memorial services for Geena will be held on Friday July 19, 2019 at 11:00am at the Snowden Funeral Home, 246 N. Washington St. Rockville, MD. The viewing will start at 10:00am.

You can read Geena's obituary at <https://www.snowdencares.com/notices/Regina-Washington>

## The Reviving Hilda Project

by Amy Pence Brown



In 1969 the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA) was created, which I've read somewhere began with a "Fat-In" in New York City's Central Park, with a group of fat folks gathering together to eat ice cream and burn posters of Twiggy. In actuality, NAAFA had much less sensational beginnings; it was a radical group protesting discrimination and unfair treatment that fat people were receiving everywhere, from the public to professional realms.

Brown & Bigelow, the marketing company who owns the copyright to the plus-sized mid-century pin

up girl Hilda, saw a story on NAAFA in The New York Times and made the connection that since Hilda was chubby, there might be a sales prospect for the calendar, which already existed.

According to original NAAFA board member and activist Bill Fabrey, "Our board of directors was lukewarm about it but agreed with me that it might be a way of promoting size acceptance and NAAFA. (This was, of course, before the Internet!) We sold it for several years." As for the board's lukewarm reception of selling the calendar: some thought she was cute, some felt she was objectifying women, and some felt that a non-profit shouldn't be selling a "pinup" calendar, and some suspected Hilda was really a spoof of fatness.

This original 1973 Hilda calendar was rolled in a tube 47 years ago and mailed to NAAFA members around the country and recently Bill remembered he still had a few lying around and sent me one from his home in Woodstock, New York, because if anyone needed one, it was me, he said. I may have squealed with delight when I opened this up.

Happiest birthday to NAAFA, who just celebrated fifty years doing the good, important, hard work and paving the way for others like me. So much gratitude. And thank you to Bill for this extraordinary gift of art and for being a continued supporter of mine and colleague -- I'm so honored to know you.

My Reviving Hilda project is suddenly going a bit viral on Facebook right now, as my gallery of images was shared 500 times yesterday alone! You can see them here:

[https://www.facebook.com/pg/idahostyle/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=932217570252491](https://www.facebook.com/pg/idahostyle/photos/?tab=album&album_id=932217570252491)

## NAAFA Chronicles No. 42+

This month's Chronicles are NAAFA's 42nd newsletter, March-April 1980, plus a March 1980 Extra edition:

[http://www.naafaonline.com/newsletterstuff/oldnewsletterstuff/Chronicles/Mar-Apr\\_1980.pdf](http://www.naafaonline.com/newsletterstuff/oldnewsletterstuff/Chronicles/Mar-Apr_1980.pdf)  
[http://www.naafaonline.com/newsletterstuff/oldnewsletterstuff/Chronicles/Mar\\_1980-Extra.pdf](http://www.naafaonline.com/newsletterstuff/oldnewsletterstuff/Chronicles/Mar_1980-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*

February 2019: Dollar Shave Club provides insight from a bunch of big dudes who dread travel, especially flying, because of their size.

<https://www.dollarhaveclub.com/content/story/all-the-ways-travel-is-a-nightmare-for-big-dudes>

May 6, 2019: Researchers find that vertical sleeve gastrectomy (a type of weight loss surgery) rapidly reduces bone mass through demineralization and decreased bone formation.

<https://doi.org/10.1172/JC1128745>

May 14, 2019: A study out of Canada looks at orthorexia, a little-studied eating disorder of obsession with and fixation on eating only "healthy" foods.

<http://www.eatingwell.com/article/291814/is-there-such-thing-as-too-healthy-a-new-study-says-yes>

<http://news.yorku.ca/2019/05/14/when-does-clean-eating-become-an-unhealthy-obsession-new-findings-on-who-is-at-risk>

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2019.05.005>

May 15, 2019: Blogger *Your Fat Friend* provides a list of passenger-of-size policies, by airline; as well as some other useful information for flying-while-fat.

<https://medium.com/@thefatshadow/a-toolkit-for-fat-flyers-232aac093739>

May 16, 2019: A recent study shows that five years after Roux-en-Y gastric bypass (weight loss surgery), adolescents and adults lost approximately the same amount of weight; also, 1.9% of the teens participating died while 1.8% of the adults died. The teens had better remission of hypertension and diabetes, but significantly more reoperations.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/16/health/bariatric-surgery-teenagers.html>

<https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa1813909>

May 22, 2019: *The New York Times* discusses the increasing diversity among hikers, campers, and other types of nature lovers. As Jenny Bruso comments, "Nature doesn't care about your size, gender, race, ability, gear."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/22/travel/unlikely-hikers-hit-the-trail.html>

May 23, 2019: Online studies suggest that a high percentage of people in the US, UK, and India actually dehumanize fat people.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2019-05-23/many-dehumanize-people-with-obesity>

<https://doi.org/10.1002/oby.22460>

May 25, 2019: Like diets, most self-help books blame the reader if the book's advice doesn't solve their problems. Michael Ungar discusses resilience and how "social, political and natural environments are more important to our health, fitness, finances, and time management than our individual thoughts, feelings or behaviors."

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-put-down-the-self-help-books-resilience-is-not-a-diy-endeavour>

May 29, 2019: A recent study finds that children who experience weight-based teasing are more likely to have more weight gain than their peers who are not teased.

[https://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2019-05/nksn-bta052419.php](https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-05/nksn-bta052419.php)

<https://doi.org/10.1111/ijpo.12538>

May 31, 2019: Giorgia Cristiani explains why fat people are starting to respond to health concern trolls who think fat equals unhealthy with "so what?"

<https://www.volup2.com/articles-and-blog/2019/5/21/i-do-not-owe-you-health-fat-movements-rethinking-equality-by-giorgia-cristiani>

June 2019: Katie Greenall explains why she feels the fat acceptance movement is important



and why she is not interested in participating in the current version of body positivity.  
<https://www.bustle.com/p/the-body-positivity-movement-isnt-for-me-so-ill-be-seeking-fat-acceptance-elsewhere-17933570>

June 1, 2019: Dr. Darci talks about her struggles during the summer when she tried to keep her fat body covered up; and how she is impressed and motivated by the students on her campus who are rocking shorts and crop tops and feeling fat pride and fat visibility!  
<https://www.twofatprofessors.com/blog/i-see-you-fat-grrl-fat-pride-and-fat-visibility>

June 3, 2019: *Vol Up 2* magazine features fashion photos of Lexy Lu, taken by Velvet d'Amour.  
<https://www.volup2.com/editorials/lexylucolors>

June 3, 2019: A recent study looks at the link between fatness and perceived weight discrimination and physical conditions (measured through cardiovascular, metabolic and immune function), finding that stigma may play an important role in explaining fat-related disease burden.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797619849440>

June 5, 2019: Nutritionists provide a list of phrases that make them cringe, with the top of the list being good/bad food. The upshot is food is nutritious, should not be associated with guilt, and the language used about food matters.  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/theres-no-such-thing-as-bad-food-four-terms-that-make-dietitians-cringe/2019/06/05/b10d7058-8238-11e9-bce7-40b4105f7ca0\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/theres-no-such-thing-as-bad-food-four-terms-that-make-dietitians-cringe/2019/06/05/b10d7058-8238-11e9-bce7-40b4105f7ca0_story.html)

June 6, 2019: Fat actress and former SNL writer Paula Pell talks about her life trying to fit into other people's vision of who she should be and wishing she could tell her younger self that she was always "the whole big sparkling iceberg."  
<https://www.glamour.com/story/paula-pell-essay>

June 8, 2019: Novelist Jessica Knoll is not a fat woman. However, she does consider herself to be a feminist and after a lifetime's poisonous relationship with food, has come to realize that the wellness industry is the diet industry with a new name.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/08/opinion/sunday/women-dieting-wellness.html>  
<https://newsroom.heart.org/news/yo-yo-dieting-may-increase-womens-heart-disease-risk>

June 10, 2019: An ongoing (not completed) study finds that, even with twins, the reaction of a body to a food varies, and suggests that one-size-fits-all nutritional guidelines are problematic. The second link is an abstract about the study and how the information is proposed to be used.  
<https://time.com/5600706/personalized-diets-study>  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/cdn/nzz037.OR31-01-19>

June 10, 2019: Nike agrees to use plus size mannequins and journalist Tanya Gold, apparently, goes ballistic, giving the world a front row seat on what fat prejudice looks like. The second link is award-winning blogger and author Stephanie Yeboah's thoughts concerning the mannequins and the resultant outcry.  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/nike-plus-size-mannequin-fatphobia-body-positivity-telegraph-a8952411.html>  
<https://metro.co.uk/2019/06/17/my-fat-body-is-my-own-business-nike-fatphobia-fat-shaming-9925805>

June 10, 2019: A study finds an association between sleeping with artificial light at night (a nightlight, TV in the room, light outside the room) and an increase in weight for women ages 35 to 74.  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-obesity-sleep/sleeping-with-lights-or-tv-on-tied-to-obesity-idUSKCN1TB1YB>  
<https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2019.0571>

June 10, 2019: According to a study, if a WLS (weight loss surgery) survivor needs to lose



more weight, the drug liraglutide can be effective regardless of the type of WLS. It should be noted that (a) the effectiveness of liraglutide was only measured for a year after the drug was taken, (b) 2/3 of the subjects dropped out, and (c) this shows that WLS alone can be ineffective.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/cob.12323>

June 24, 2019: The BBC's program on the history of the fat acceptance movement is available for download.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3csywxj>

June 24, 2019: An edited excerpt from the forthcoming book *The (Other) F Word: A Celebration of the Fat and Fierce* explains what fat acceptance is and isn't, and why we need it.

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/peace-justice/fat-acceptance-movement-20190624>

June 26, 2019: A recent study out of Norway finds an association between high BMI (body mass index) and weight gain and a low risk of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, "Lou Gehrig's disease").

<https://doi.org/10.1212/WNL.0000000000007861>

July 2019: An eating disorder therapist shares three steps she uses with high-weight clients to help with internalized weight stigma.

[https://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/exc\\_0719.shtml](https://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/exc_0719.shtml)

July 1, 2019: Stephanie Yeboah responds to Teen Vogue's efforts to dispel myths about the body positivity movement, by explaining that yes, originally, it was supposed to be just for fat girls, and why the commercialization and co-option of the movement is a problem.

<https://metro.co.uk/2019/07/01/the-body-positivity-movement-is-not-for-slim-bodies-already-accepted-by-society-10081795>

July 8, 2019: Linda Bacon and Ameer Sevenson urge research into fat stigma and its effect on the body, as it may be more destructive to health than fat.

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/fat-is-not-the-problem-fat-stigma-is>

July 10, 2019: A study finds that patients receiving a type 2 diabetes diagnosis may have better long-term clinical outcomes if their primary physician treats them with empathy.

<https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2421>

July 11, 2019: The State of Washington's Supreme Court has decided that obesity is a protected class under the State's antidiscrimination law.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/washington-court-obesity-covered-by-antidiscrimination-law>

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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.*

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

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