



October 2019 NAAFA Newsletter

In This Issue:

1. [Pluses and Minuses of Plus Fashion, and Why We Need to Support Our Own](#)
2. [Fat Fashion Focus: Myles Ahead](#)
3. [ICYMI: Change of Address](#)
4. [Fat Halloween: Costumes as Visibility Activism](#)
5. [NAAFA Chronicles](#)
6. [Media and Research Roundup](#)
7. [Video of the Month](#)

Pluses and Minuses of Plus Fashion, and Why We Need to Support Our Own

by *Tigress Osborn*



Although fat bodies are far from being fully represented in mainstream fashion, the last couple of months have included many important moments for fat people who follow the fashion world. This summer's world-famous New York Fashion Week

Video of the Month



Dying Fat: Your Funeral Options

CONTENT WARNING:
DISCUSSION OF
DEATH

Although many of us are living proof that the fat don't all die young, we will all eventually have to face this reality. Talking about the hard stuff now helps prepare us for what's ahead and lowers the burden of all those decisions on our family. This episode of Ask a Mortician answers some questions you didn't even know you had.

[youtube.com/watch?v=71Z677IXUak](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71Z677IXUak)

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was more size inclusive than ever, with multiple designers featuring plus models and some even walking visibly fat models down the runway. (Historically, models have been considered plus at sizes as small as 10, but this year's show saw models of all genders at higher sizes). September also saw the debut of a Calvin Klein billboard in Times Square featuring a visibly fat model. While some activists noted Calvin Klein's history of anti-fat attitudes, many consider this major advertising campaign a sign of progress and change.

Yet even with these very important moments of visibility, fashion is still a world where fat bodies are overlooked and undervalued far too often. And as mainstream fashion declares themselves "for all sizes" when they only go up to 3x, the popularity of brands that only carry smaller plus sizes is hurting those brands that go to the bigger end of the size spectrum. Cybershopping trends are also hitting plus size retailers as they have in other industries. For example, Avenue, which in many parts of the country was the only major retailer other than Walmart to carry sizes up to 5x, shuttered their 200+ retail locations last month and will now sell online only. More online options can be great, but not at the expense of being able to try things on in person or have a positive shopping experience involving human interaction.

While the mainstream fashion industry may be up and down when it comes to serving fat customers, there are independent designers, models, fashion writers and more who always have our backs. We need to help them thrive the way they help us thrive. One way we at NAAFA will do that is by giving them more exposure and helping you get to know them better. **Each month, starting with this edition of our newsletter, we will feature one or two standout fashion insiders who will give us insight into their experiences in the industry.** We kick off this series this month with a spotlight on Jody Myles of Myles Ahead, NAAFA's longest fashion partnership. In the next few months, we'll feature friends of NAAFA and introduce you to some new friends, too. If you would like to suggest someone, let us know!

Fat Fashion Focus: Myles Ahead

Thirty years ago, Jody Myles was a young designer making cute jogging suits when she met a client who would change her life. Ellen was a young professional celebrating a big promotion, but she couldn't find appropriate work clothes in her size. Jody was furious for her. A smaller plus size woman herself, Jody knew firsthand that plus sizes were often relegated to the basement or the back corner of the few stores that carried them. But she'd never considered that people in even larger sizes had even fewer options. Her fury fueled her fire for what would become a lifelong obsession with making beautiful clothing for people of all sizes. Myles

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Ahead was born!

A few months later, Ellen changed Jody's life again when she invited her to a NAAFA convention. Jody's NAAFA vendor debut was a sellout smash. Although Jody credits her NAAFA success with her open-mindedness about using the word fat, she doesn't always use it in her business, taking her cues from each customer regarding terminology they prefer for their own body. Her first NAAFA con showed her just how passionate shoppers could be about finally finding fashions they like. "I will never forget watching women pull clothing out of each other's hands!" she remembers. "I am grateful to NAAFA for the lifelong friends I made, and for all the hard work they do to raise awareness, and at the same time for validating the importance of my work," she says.

Jody is excited about the fashion industry's increasing expansion of plus size options, especially in the last five

years, although many brands position themselves as "inclusive" and "for everybody" even when their clothing lines end at a women's size 24. When Jody says she makes "high quality, beautiful clothes for every curve," she means *every* curve. At Myles Ahead, the philosophy is, "Life doesn't end at size 24!" In addition to plus and supersize clothing, Myles Ahead offers custom sizing so that literally anyone who likes Jody's design style can have a garment they love.

In addition to making sizes others don't, Jody has always featured her clothing on people who actually wear that size. When she started in the industry, stores and catalogs that sold plus sizes were showing photos of the plus clothing on smaller women. Jody even called around to many catalogs asking why they weren't using plus models for their plus clothes. Businesses kept telling her that consumers want to see clothes on the thinner bodies they wish to have. Myles Ahead's 30-year success using plus and supersize models demonstrates what fat shoppers have always known-- not everyone wishes to be smaller and we want to see clothes on bodies like our own so we know how they will actually look on us.

After three decades of making fashion accessible, Jody isn't finished yet. She plans a capsule collection made from luxurious fabrics, more couture pieces, and even expanding into bridal. And, of course, Jody will continue making the signature professional and special event designs she has come to be known for. "The role I play is empowering women to feel confident and beautiful," she says. "Everyone deserves clothes they feel good in"

www.mylesahead.com

Facebook: [facebook.com/mylesaheadplussizes](https://www.facebook.com/mylesaheadplussizes)

IG and Twitter: [@mylesaheadplus](https://www.instagram.com/mylesaheadplus)

Call or text 954-478-8856

ICYMI: Change of Address



In case you missed it, we've changed our mailing address! Our new address is:

PO Box 61586
Las Vegas, NV 89160-1586

Fat Halloween: Costumes as Visibility Activism

by Tigress Osborn



If you are a rock guitar aficionado, you know who Slash is. And some of you would recognize him via pop culture as That Guy With the Hat. Slash and I share some physical traits, most notably our hair. This was important to me in the late '80s as a mixed-race teenager in the land of feathered bangs for white folks and MC Lyte mushroom cuts for Black folks. Sharing hair with a famous dude gave me a little bit of media visibility that I didn't have elsewhere.

But what Slash and I definitely don't have in common is body type. I'm fat (surprise!). Even as Slash has aged and thickened up a bit from the lean guitar god he was in his 20s, I still outweigh this man by at least 100 pounds. That didn't stop me from taking on his look for the first Halloween event of the season, and this is a friendly reminder to anyone else who needs it: **fat people get to dress up as whoever we want to be for Halloween!**

Not everyone agrees with me on this. Costume makers who specialize in Halloween ignored plus-size customers for decades. Many are still more likely to make tacky fat-suit joke costumes for thin people than to make things for actual fat people to wear. And when plus size costumes are available, trolls and bullies (especially online) make their usual attempts to dictate what fat people can and can't do. One year, some joker even changed the name of Walmart's plus size costume page to Fat Girl Costumes. I embraced that, and have used #fatgirlcostumes since then online, but we all know that not all fat folks have embraced being referred to as fat. Many people simply never consider dressing as characters who are usually thin or muscular because they can't envision themselves in those costumes. There are also people who don't want to dress as iconic fat characters because they don't want to remind people that they're fat.

But here's what I know: if your costume is excellent, the number of people who love you for it will absolutely outweigh any Halloween scrooges who try to rain on your parade. When it comes to avoiding fat characters because people will identify you with them, guess what. They already do. People can see you. They know you're fat. If they hate fat people and you dress up as Ursula, they still hate fat people. If they don't hate fat people and you dress up as Ursula, they will just love you as Ursula. Let the poor unfortunate souls with their tiny minds waste their time worrying about your costume while you spend your time dazzling people with your creativity.

And this is what else I know: we don't all have to be Ursula. We're not limited to the characters that match our body types. I've been Ursula, Rose Quartz, and Princess Fiona because I love those characters. But I've also been Cruella Deville (and if I outweigh Slash by 100 pounds, I think I outweigh Cruella by about 210). If you nail the costume, and most importantly, if you HAVE FUN, that's all that matters. Halloween (and cosplay for those who love to dress up year-round) can be about making a photo-realistic version of a character or role, but it can also be about capturing the spirit. And spirit has no size. I'm not saying anything goes (watch your costumes for cultural appropriation, ableism, and classism) but I am saying that creativity creates. So get creative!

If you need a little inspiration, the internet is full of fat cosplayers and fat people who've owned Halloween (you can see lots of mine at @iofthetigress on Instagram if you're curious). I can't wait to see all your holiday looks!

NAAFA Chronicles No. 45

NAAFA's 45th newsletter is the NAAFA 'XTRA for February 1981, presented here:

http://www.naafaonline.com/newsletterstuff/oldnewsletterstuff/Chronicles/Feb_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

September 2019: Volume 8, Issue 3 of *Fat Studies* (an interdisciplinary journal of body weight and society), a special issue on fat in theatre and performance, is now available.
<https://tandfonline.com/toc/ufts20/8/3>

September 16, 2019: A study in Japan finds that high intake of free (naturally occurring) sugars is associated with long-term weight gain in Japanese men, while among women, intake of any type of carbohydrate has no such association. The average gain was 20 oz over 10 years.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jn/nxz227>

September 18, 2019: Sonalee Rashatwar (@thefatsextherapist on Instagram), a queer, nonbinary fat person growing up in a South Asian immigrant household, has a lot to say about why fatphobia persists.
<https://www.phillymag.com/be-well-philly/2019/09/18/fat-sex-therapist>

September 20, 2019: Tracy Cox discusses her arrest as a protester and how, despite a position of relative privilege, police protocol placed her in physical danger because of her fat body.
<https://thetracycox.com/showpony/fat-people-face-extreme-and-unnecessary-danger-in-police-custody>

September 23, 2019: Kimberly Dark compares how a tall very muscular man on a flight, and who does not fit comfortably in his seat, is treated versus how she as a tall fat woman is treated.

<https://time.com/5683972/big-people-on-plane>

September 24, 2019: Ameer Sevenson does an excellent job of breaking down the arguments for dieting and weight loss and explains how the anti-diet movement addresses these arguments.

<https://greatist.com/health/the-anti-diet-movement>

September 26, 2019: The ACLU is recognizing the life work as a disabilities rights activist of attorney Carrie Ann Lucas and awarding her the Carle Whitehead Memorial Award posthumously.

<https://www.cpr.org/show-segment/aclu-posthumously-honors-colorado-disability-rights-activist-carrie-ann-lucas>

September 26, 2019: Researchers find an increase in patients seeking mental health services following weight loss surgery; particularly if they had prior psychiatric illnesses or had complications and required further surgery.

<https://www.medpagetoday.com/primarycare/obesity/82412>

<https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2019.2741>

September 26, 2019: Our own Terri Weitze talks about why it's been a struggle to get an accurate blood pressure reading at the doctor's office.

<https://thisfatoldlady.com/2019/09/27/this-fat-old-ladys-fat-friday-blood-pressure-machines>

September 30, 2019: Remembering how going to Weight Watchers as an 11 year old, Your Fat Friend talks about the long lasting harm of the body shaming and fear of food learned at those meetings, and why WW's Kurbo will have the same effect on fat children now.

<https://www.self.com/story/kid-in-weight-watchers>

October 1, 2019: An article for *Bariatric Times* looks at prior research to explore the increased risk of suicide and self-harm after WLS (weight loss surgery), providing a list of WLS side-effects and complications while exploring causes of this risk.

<http://bariatrictimes.com/understanding-postoperative-suicide-self-injury>

October 8, 2019: Blogger Your Fat Friend takes the recent pro-fat shaming rant of Bill Maher and explains how fat shaming is alive and well, and that it can harm the mental and physical health of fat people.

<https://www.self.com/story/fat-shaming-is-still-bad-for-public-health>

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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