



September 2019 NAAFA Newsletter

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Follow Your Dreams

Video of the Month



With students returning to the classroom, it's a good time to take a fresh look at how we can prevent bullying. This video helps those being bullied understand how to solve their own social problems.

<https://tinyurl.com/yydcjl6t>

Quick Links

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Stylist: Anel Anaya Lecona; Photographer: Manz Plano

Supersize model and activist Lisa Gomez had a recent conversation with NAAFA Board Member Peggy Howell about her art and activism:

I am originally from Dallas, Texas and have lived here my whole life. I was a chubby little girl, made fun of and bullied in school. I've spent many years in counseling for the bullying at school and at home as well.

Since I was a little girl I always dreamed of being a model. For years I heard, "Lisa, you're so pretty but you need to lose weight". I always thought I was pretty but big. I had the opportunity to be in some pageants at age 14 but mom couldn't afford the costs involved.

I started accepting myself in my 30s. In 2008 when my mother passed away things began to change for me. Dad passed away in 2010 and my brother in 2014. With so much loss you realize you don't want to take life for granted. Life is too short.

The following year I found out I have multiple sclerosis (MS) and have been living with MS since 2015. I have good days and bad days when I can't function well. Sometimes memory is bad and confusion sets in. But at 42 years of age I am now happy in my skin.

Six years ago a photographer approached me on Facebook and asked if he could photograph me. My husband and I went to the studio in Dallas. There were several plus size women there, but I was the largest. The photo shoot went well and we worked together twice. I moved on and worked with more experienced photographers to fill out my portfolio.

[Instagram](#)

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During that same period of time a make-up artist also from Dallas by the name of Anel Anaya Lecona published the opportunity on Facebook for a random person to have a makeover. I was not the winner of that opportunity but we became friends. Anel offered to work on my make-up for photo shoots and we have become partners working together since. Together we develop themes for the photo shoots based on what I am going through with my MS. Not only does she do my stunning make-up, Anel makes all the fabulous headpieces worn in my photographs.

My dream is to become a supermodel that represents supersized women and women with physical impairments like MS. I can't wear high heels so some photographers don't want to shoot me. I know they prefer slimmer models but I want to inspire women to do what I'm doing and not give up. I now work with Glad Models, an agency located in DFW, who contact me with opportunities.

I'd like to leave you with this: Follow your dreams; keep pushing and you will get there.

How Fashion Became a Form of Activism for Me by Marcy Cruz



For the 41 years he was in my life, my dad always told me to never let others dull my shine. He spoke life into me daily, even when I became an adult, always reminding me that I am a queen and my voice should always be heard.

As someone who has been fat almost all my life, having my dad, a male figure in my life, be such a positive role model meant everything. He didn't realize it at the time but he was also helping me see my worth and shaping who I would become as an adult, especially when it came to how I let others, particularly men, treat me.

He knew I would run into issues throughout life as a fat girl and he wanted to remind me that being fat was not my complete identity. I was beautiful, smart, kind, caring and funny. He took the time to make sure I knew that I had so many positive qualities so that I wouldn't base my self-love journey solely on my weight or think that my fat body was wrong.

My mother spent much of her life on diets, telling me that I should always wear black because it's slimming. She introduced me to my first "faja" (Spanish for "girdle") when I was 12 and not a day would go by that I wouldn't wonder why I had to wear such a contraption and such a boring dark color.

My parents didn't realize it but they were sending me mixed signals that put me in a place of conflict and eventually taught me how to make choices based on my happiness. That meant not necessarily following the rules of what a "fat" girl should do, wear, or say.

That's how fashion became my form of activism. Fashion made me a rebel and gave me another way to have my voice heard. It allowed me to express myself, sometimes screaming to the world that I am here and can wear what I want. Who made these rules that you had to be a certain size to express your style anyway?

Fashion became my life's teacher and mentor during some of the most pivotal time periods in my life. My style reflected who I was at that time while still showing me authentically to the core. My style also put my vulnerability on display because it's a tough thing to step out of the house as a fat person wearing what you want in a world that will criticize and judge you.

There's just something about opening yourself up to expressing who you are in whatever form you choose that is vulnerable but also fearless and empowering. All it takes is that first step. For me, that first step also involved stealing my dad's Levi's and bedazzling the hell out of them.

For me, fashion is how I use my voice to make change within the fashion industry, be it challenging brands to expand their size ranges or just sitting in the front row of a fashion show and being the largest person in the room.

Fashion is art and so subjective. That, to me, is the beauty of fashion. You can dream up an outfit and make it come to life with the right designer or if you choose, design and sew it yourself! It reflects who you are, uniquely beautiful and unlike anyone else.

I believe fashion is for everyone and will keep screaming that until the day I die via any avenue I can access. I started out in this industry as a writer and blogger. I'm now a public speaker, a signed extended sizes fit model (State Management), an author, an educator and now an emcee/host.

I use fashion as a way to be of service to others, aiming to empower them to use it to express who they are, while making themselves happy because they are wearing what they love. To me, that's the epitome of self-care.

I know many fat folks think of fashion as a space they can't access or it triggers them in some way because of the history of fat-phobia within the industry. Trust me, I see you and get it.

But please remember that there is a place for all of us within the fashion world. We may just have to create our own lanes and spaces. As the amazing Shirley Chisholm once said, "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair."

Change of Address

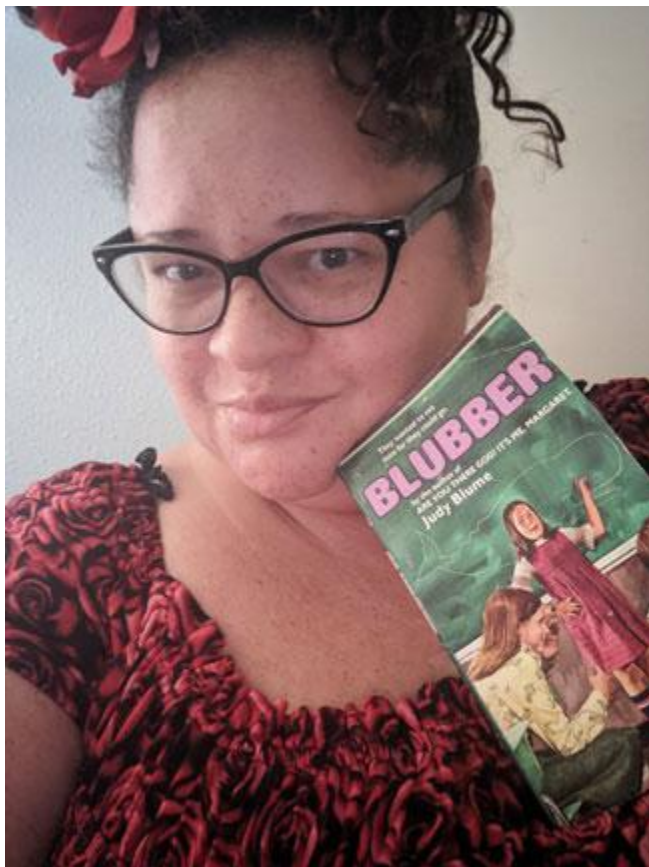


We've changed our mailing address! Our new address is:

PO Box 61586
Las Vegas, NV 89160-1586

Blubber and Bullying: Revisiting a Young Adult Classic

by Tigress Osborn



Content Warning: bullying

Judy Blume has been writing for young people since 1969. She's written acclaimed novels for adults but is best known for her funny books about sibling rivalry and her honest books about coming of age. She has spent her career writing about things that seem quaint by today's standards, but which were incredibly controversial when she was making a name for herself. For kids dealing with everything from first periods to parents' divorces, Judy Blume was an adult who got it, and young people have read her books by the millions for decades.

I reread one of Blume's most popular books, *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret* this summer. When I posted about it on Facebook, so many people commented saying how much it meant to them. But one person issued a warning: "Don't reread *Blubber*." I had picked up *Blubber* for 50 cents at a

thrift shop not long before. I was surprised to hear that reading it as an adult might be traumatic. I figured in the hands of Judy Blume, the bullying would be painful to read, but I'd feel better about the world in the end. Maybe I should have listened to the warning.

Blubber is the story of a 5th grade class and how they subjected a chubby classmate, Linda, to weeks of intense bullying after she does a presentation about whales. Weight stigma is real, and it starts young. We know this. But part of what's disappointing about *Blubber* is that after a hundred pages of Linda being a target, she joins in the bullying when the shoe is on the other foot and no one ever has to think about why bullying Linda for her body was wrong. The story is told from the point-of-view of one of the bullies, so young readers are never asked to think about how Linda feels.

Despite the recent success of books like Julie Murphy's *Dumplin'*, young adult literature is still a landscape where fat people almost never exist, and when we do, it's still too often as punchlines or victims. *Blubber* was widely acclaimed at the time of its publication by educators, librarians and critics for its unflinching look at bullying. But the fact of bullying and the content of bullying are two different issues. The book raises awareness of one but not the other. This is a story where no one ever tells Linda that her body is okay or tells the other kids that body shaming is not. Blume is so widely known for reassuring young readers about their awkward adolescent bodies, but in this story, the only body that's focused on is the one that's being terrorized. And no one ever says that's not right.

I hope this book feels dated to young readers who encounter it now. In the 45 years since *Blubber* was published, I hope teachers are more aware of body-related bullying and more likely to step in. I hope other kids have been more exposed, not just to anti-bullying messages but to explicitly body-positive messages that would make it more likely that a real-life Linda would respond to teasing in some other way than by dieting at 11yo. But I fear that *Blubber* is still just the way it is for too many kids. I never thought I'd be the grown-up advocating for

young people not to read Judy Blume, but I can't imagine giving this book to a child without the guidance of a fat positive adult with whom to discuss it.

NAAFA Chronicles No. 44

NAAFA's 44th newsletter, September-December 1980, is presented here for your enjoyment:

http://www.naafaonline.com/newsletterstuff/oldnewsletterstuff/Chronicles/Sept-Dec_1980.pdf

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

Media and Research Roundup

by *Bill and Terri Weitze*

August 16, 2019: A kidney specialist tells a new mom with high protein levels in her urine that it is weight related, and prescribes exercise and diet. Thankfully, the mom got a second opinion and found out she has a rare blood cancer.

<https://www.today.com/health/new-mom-said-doctor-told-her-lose-weight-she-had-t160809>

August 21 to September 7, 2019: Healthcare professionals (1st two links) and fat-positive writers (3rd and 4th links) discuss why WW's (formerly Weight Watchers) app Kurbo is not a good idea, and may yield long term harm to the mental and/or physical health of children who use it.

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/24/opinions/weight-watchers-app-for-kids-thomas>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/18/opinion/weight-watchers-kids.html>

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/weight-watchers-kurbo-kids_n_5d5c0dc7e4b0d1e113686be5

<https://health.usnews.com/health-news/blogs/eat-run/articles/for-healthy-kids-skip-the-kurbo-app>

August 22, 2019: Fat influencers who lose weight for health reasons sometimes find that they've lost their confidence and identity as fat people. Others claim that they were miserable while fat, undercutting their former fat positivity.

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/well/2019/8/22/20707557/anti-diet-movement-weight-loss-fat-acceptance-influencers-fraught-with-controversy>

August 23, 2019: As reported here last month and expanded on in the posts linked below, fat activists are coming together through the group Fat Rose to form connections with other liberation groups, including efforts to close the immigrant camps at the US borders.

<https://fatrose.org/2019/08/23/fatties-against-fascism-rise-up-to-close-the-camps>

<https://fatrose.org/2019/08/29/closing-the-camps-and-beyond>

August 26, 2019: *Teen Vogue* is killing it with their series The F Word, which celebrates what it means to be fat. Here, Ashleigh Shackelford discusses the power of reclaiming the word fat, including using fat acceptance to challenge racism.

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/fat-is-not-a-bad-word>

August 26, 2019: Next in the series, Plus size model La'Shaunae Steward is interviewed by her inspiration, Tess Holliday.

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/lashaunae-steward-tess-holliday-modeling-confidence-owning-the-word-fat>

August 26, 2019: In our third F Word link, Kate Harding lists some successes in fat representation and celebrates progress in fat acceptance.

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/how-far-have-we-really-come-for-fat-acceptance>

August 27, 2019: In this entry, The F Word discusses the fat tax, the additional cost for clothing, travel, health insurance, etc. for products that accommodate larger bodies.

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/the-price-of-being-fat>

September 2, 2019: A study finds that WLS (weight loss surgery) has an association with a reduction in major adverse cardiovascular events for patients with type 2 diabetes and "obesity"; however, the participants were only followed up for an average of 3.9 years.
<https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2019.14231>

September 3, 2019: Fat kids are missing from back-to-school advertisements and Jessica Richman thinks this should change, urging advertisers to show kids as they are instead of how they think kids should look, because representation matters.
<https://www.fastcompany.com/90396644/this-is-why-there-are-no-fat-kids-in-back-to-school-ads>

September 4, 2019: Despite being an excellent candidate for knee replacement, Theresa Alberti waited a year for her surgery because the surgeon felt that her fatness was an issue. Alberti shares her experience and how she hopes that she can help others to avoid the same problems.
<http://penandmoon.com/a-tale-of-advocacy-two-knees-and-a-surgeon>

September 5 to 7, 2019: At CurvyCon 2019, plus size brands, fatshionistas, shopaholics, bloggers and YouTubers came together to do some shopping and tackle topics like confidence, fashion, style, health, fitness, etc.
<http://www.thecurvycon.com>

September 6, 2019: Katie Balevic believes that fat bodies should be at the forefront of the body positivity movement and not internet influencers with socially acceptable bodies.
<https://www.dailydot.com/irl/bodypositivity>

September 6, 2019: The title to Richard Williams' opinion piece claims that we should both accept and fight obesity, but the content makes it clear that Williams believes that fat equals unhealthy and that all claims of fat people causing the world's ills are true.
<https://www.newsday.com/opinion/commentary/obesity-america-overweight-solutions-1.35970161>

September 8, 2019: The mural Ashley Longshore painted for New York Fashion Week is meant to reflect body positivity; however, among the affirmations painted is "You do not look fat", which seems at odds with body positivity and acceptance. Longshore has found the discussion surrounding her mural to be a chance to grow and better understand why this particular message is problematic to fat people.
<https://www.glamour.com/story/fat-mural-new-york-fashion-week>

September 13, 2019: A recent study finds that despite using supplements, five years post-surgery WLS survivors continue to have substantial nutritional deficiencies. The authors recommend periodic surveillance after surgery.
<https://www.healio.com/endocrinology/obesity/news/online/%7Bf7e62d0d-d706-4d89-8807-61aa6fbdec66%7D/supplements-may-not-prevent-long-term-nutritional-deficiency-after-bariatric-surgery>
<https://doi.org/10.1089/bari.2019.0009>

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>

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Any products or services mentioned in articles in this newsletter are for information only and should not be considered endorsements by NAAFA.

