

# NAAFA NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION TO AID FAT AMERICANS, INC.

P.O. BOX 745

WESTBURY, N.Y. 11590

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Acting Editor: Joyce Fabrey

## CONVENTION '74 - GOING...GOING...

NAAFA's fifth annual Convention is being held as scheduled on Saturday and Sunday, October 26th and 27th, at the Skyline Inn in New York City.

If you're coming, your tickets are in the mail. They are your receipt and you need them to be admitted. Admission is by ticket only; NO tickets will be sold at the door.

We hope that those of you who are unable to attend this year can join us next year!

---Florane Sclar  
Chairperson

## "HILDA"

Our HILDA calendar for '75 has arrived! She's cuter than ever and a great compliment to every NAAFA-minded home or office. \$2.50, post-paid.

**NAAFA**  
FAT CAN BE BEAUTIFUL  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION TO AID FAT AMERICANS, INC.  
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## MY FIRST TWO YEARS WITH NAAFA

Natalie Allon, Ph.D.  
NAAFA Advisor

&  
Assistant Professor of Sociology  
Hofstra University



To whom it may concern,  
a heartfelt thank you!

My intellectual and personal career on behalf of NAAFA was launched when I presented my paper "The Stigma of Overweight in Everyday Life" at the National Institute of Health's Conference on Obesity in October, 1973. As the only professional sociologist who stressed that the so-called "handicap" of obesity was as much or more in society's derogatory labeling of fatness as in the fat person him/herself, I encountered fruitful and challenging discussions with research scientists and medical doctors who specialize in obesity. I was delighted to find that there is much disagreement among these experts about how to define "fat" and just how "bad" fat is. In their raising a few eyebrows to me, they fully acknowledged that fat is certainly complicated by direct and subtle social discrimination.

I got catapulted through United Press International releases as the "average weight" Fat Power spokeswoman and of course, was misquoted! I partook of radio and telephone interviews across the country, talking up the open-minded, tolerant position of many NAAFA members, stressing that multiple body sizes and shapes can be beautiful and healthy and happy. In New York, I was on the Pat McCann radio show on WOR, and the Pat Collins morning television talk show. Nationally, I was taped for an NBC-TV Today show and an NBC national special "You're Too Fat!" The National Observer, the Science Digest, and Today's Health magazine have quoted me and represented my and other NAAFA members' points of view.

The important point about all this fanfare is that people are beginning to listen and care about the issue of fatness and are questioning the ideal of thinness as a symbol of body perfection. I have gotten warm thank-you letters from fat people all across the country who are now thinking that they can be worthwhile and productive individuals. More research is being carried on which shows health in weight stabilization, even at an elevated weight, rather than the see-saw up-and-down weight patterns

(continued on page 2)

so common with many dieters. Most significantly, lawyers and business leaders have written to me directly on the issues of civil rights and freedom of body-speech for fat people, whether clients or employees are plus 5 or plus 150 pounds above what the usual charts say they should weigh. More people seem to admit that academic competence and job performance cannot simply and directly be related to one's weight.

I was invited to present a paper for the Southwestern Sociological Society in Dallas, Texas in March, 1974 - a paper which I titled "Typing and Stigmatizing Fat Women and Fat Men." My review of much medical and popular literature has suggested that contemporary American society tends to stress health and longevity factors of overweight for men, and beauty factors for women. More emphasis is placed upon the physiological aspects of overweight for men than for women; there is much discussion about the psychological and emotional implications of overweight. More research needs to be done to spell out such sex role stereotyping in scientific and popular images.

This August, 1974, in Canada, I have presented some of the sociological aspects of overweight to the American Sociological Association in conjunction with the Society for the Study of Social Problems.

I want to thank heartily all NAAFA members for their open and eager encouragement of my work; a special kiss goes to the two Fabreys. I have become charged up in enthusiasm to study the issue of fat in years to come, with a special eye toward noting the courage, strengths, and happiness of many fat people, who constantly must buck social pressures against them. My meeting with the world-reknown psychiatrist, Dr. Hilde Bruch, places her clearly on NAAFA's side in the sense of not condemning nor even trying to change fat people.

As a sociologist committed to social action, I hope to continue to raise consciousnesses and questions among people who tend to take for granted the dictum: the thinner the better, in all ways. NAAFA: Please keep up the first rate, critical and practical work. Thanks so much for your support to me personally and professionally.

[ED: Dr. Allon has been active as a NAAFA Advisor for two years. Her original paper presented in October of 1973 is in the process of being reprinted by NAAFA, and will be available soon.

At press time, Dr. Allon is in London. She has been asked to attend and speak at the First World Congress on Obesity.]

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#### VICTOR BUONO'S BOOK NOW AVAILABLE

The talented actor and poet, Victor Buono, put his thoughts into verse recently; the results: IT COULD BE VERSE, a little book in which Mr. Buono tells what he thinks about fat. As seen on several TV talk shows. Some members think that he should be NAAFA's poet laureate! List price \$3.95; available now from the NAAFA Book Service at \$3.35 postpaid.

#### EDITORIAL

Because I am only "Acting Editor" of this Newsletter, my "power" is limited; however, I feel obliged to comment on the contents of this issue of the Newsletter: I do not like it. I feel that too much space is used discussing points that have little or no relevance to the hardships incurred by Fat People. I feel that more efforts of NAAFA should be put in the direction of increasing the self-esteem of the fat person and that other "liberation" groups should take care of their own fights with society. If we expand our interests too greatly, we will have very little impact.

--- Joyce Fabrey

#### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Bill Fabrey



#### THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

I have been observing the women's movement with keen interest for many years; partly because I find all such struggles of interest, and partly because there are some parallels between the women's movement and the "fat liberation" movement.

In this Newsletter is an article written by Karen Jones that expresses, for the first time, the point of view that the two movements have so much in common that in some respects they are inseparable.

Karen's article raises some very real issues in a very controversial area. It expresses a point of view that is well thought out and well presented. Some NAAFA members will not be receptive to what she is saying; others may be in sympathy with her argument, but may feel that NAAFA should avoid taking any position with regard to the issues she raises.

I urge you to read her article carefully, and to give what she is saying some serious thought. Thus far, the Board of Directors has not taken any official NAAFA position with regard to the issue of (Fat) Women's Rights, except as they are included in NAAFA's general purposes. In any future discussion, the Board will be receptive to any arguments pro or con from NAAFA members. The question may occur: should NAAFA add (Fat) Women's Rights to its list of concerns, or is NAAFA's present purpose sufficient to cover it? What do you think?

#### THE FAT UNDERGROUND

I recently met with two members of this fat liberation collective in Los Angeles; despite the difference in emphasis and approach between NAAFA and their group, I feel that we are allies in the struggle against oppression of fat people in this country and in Canada. Our differences would prevent any formal association between the two organizations; indeed, we could conceivably be in con-

flict on some issues in the future. However, I am hopeful that good will come out of continuing the dialogue between the two; and that they can accomplish in Los Angeles some of the things that NAAFA is not set up to do, because of being a national organization, essentially. Conversely, NAAFA may be able to accomplish some things that no local group could succeed in doing.

Those NAAFA members in the Los Angeles metropolitan area who are interested in having a more conventional chapter again, are welcome to write to the Chapter Coordinator, Karen W. Jones, at 44 Lakeside Dr., Andover, Conn. 06232.

## FAT AND FEMALE -- ONE WOMAN'S VIEW

by Karen W. Jones  
NAAFA Chapters Coordinator

Being a fat person today, as every NAAFA member knows, imposes a heavy burden of discrimination and social prejudice. For women, the penalties are doubly severe: among other things, being fat and female means that your chances of being accepted in a college are less than a fat man's chances and only half those of a slim woman, with equal qualifications; most job opportunities, even in traditionally women's fields--teaching, secretarial, clerical, nursing--will not be available to you because of arbitrary weight restrictions. If you can get insurance coverage at all, you will probably find yourself listed under Medical Disability, regardless of the state of your health, and have to pay exorbitant premiums; vital health services including birth control and prenatal care may be unobtainable, and if you should be raped (and fat women are raped), no policeman will take your attempt to report it seriously.

Obviously, these issues all involve discrimination based on weight, but they are feminist issues as well. My own consciousness of this began, I think, when I first became aware that diet ads--whether on TV or in a magazine, they held a kind of morbid fascination for me--were all aimed at women. The only men in them, in fact, were there to motivate or reward the (female) dieter. I began to see how diet ads perpetuate sexism: not only is their premise--that one must be slim to attract a man--wrong, they reinforce a dehumanizing scale of values by which women are judged primarily in terms of attractiveness. Since the predominant aesthetic automatically judges fat women not attractive, by our society's standards we are not "real" women!

Women's bodies contain more fat biologically than do men's, and proportionately more women than men are termed "overweight"; women are also more likely than men to become fat, due to metabolic and other changes during pregnancy. Yet, despite this, a double standard still prevails by which a certain amount of paunch is socially acceptable on a man but even smaller-than-average women feel they must lose weight.

With these new perceptions, things started clicking into place for me. The cause-and-effect

relationship between sexism and my oppression as a fat woman became clearer--why, for example, I had never been able to find clothes in my size when a man bigger than me could walk into any of several stores in my city and pick out things in his size. By the same token, however, I realized how fat men are oppressed by sexism, too: the "macho mystique" that correlates virility with muscularity and equates fat in men with a lack of masculinity is simply the other side of the coin, the male counterpart to sexist myths oppressing fat women.

Thin men (I call them "F.A."s, for Fat-Admirers) who go out with and/or marry fat women often find their masculinity called into question as well. With the possibility that they prefer such women ruled out by assumption, the only explanation left is that of deficiency--they must be real losers to be scraping the bottom of the barrel like that! That's what society would like us to believe. The dehumanization of fat women creates a sort of reverse double standard that makes any man who chooses them guilty by association, while the opposite situation--a thin woman choosing a fat man--elicits little social disapproval. All of which shows just how far-reaching the effects of sexism are. Fear of fat, programmed into all women virtually from childhood, is used to manipulate us, to pressure and harass us into the self-destructive "reducing" schemes which take thousands of lives every year. It is time we recognized the basis of this manipulation for what it is: sexism.

Fat women are now, finally, beginning to come together within the Women's Movement to voice our concerns. We are working to make the Movement recognize fat as a legitimate feminist issue and support women's right to be fat. As feminists, we know we must expose the dangerous reducing fallacy (less than 2% of dieters lose weight permanently) that makes us see our weight as a personal failure rather than a political issue and allow our bodies to be abused for the profits of the powerful diet and reducing industry; and we must debunk the myth that we are fat by choice or gluttony, to create a positive image for ourselves based on an acceptance of the fact that it is as natural for some women--and men--to be fat as it is for others to be thin.

It has been said that every woman is one man away from welfare; for fat women, stripped of the benefits of male chivalry, this is all too often literally true; the condition of fat women reflects the true position of women in our society. In my opinion, everyone who shares a commitment to ending discrimination based on weight should recognize the sexism it is founded on--we in NAAFA, especially, have a BIG investment in eliminating sexist biases if we are to tackle weightism.... and win!

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: I'd like to have readers' comments on the above article--please send them to me at 44 Lakeside Dr., Andover, Connecticut 06232.)

[ED: The above article represents the opinions of the author and does not represent any position officially adopted by NAAFA.]

NEW FAT LIBERATION GROUP FORMED IN LOS ANGELES

A new group called the FAT UNDERGROUND has been formed; late last fall a group of the more militant NAAFA members in the Los Angeles area split from the NAAFA chapter that then existed in Los Angeles and formed a radical militant collective. The forming group included, among others, Aldebaran, Judy Freespirit, and Verne Thomas.

Aldebaran, the former chairperson of the NAAFA chapter, and Judy Freespirit authored the document that formed the basis for the group's existence: the Fat Liberation Manifesto, which compiled a list of grievances against society and what should be done about them. The Manifesto concludes, "Fat People of the World, Unite! You have nothing to lose...."

The activities of the past year have included the publication of a series of "position papers" on various aspects of problems faced by fat people. The list of papers includes such titles as, "Health of Fat Women...the Real problem", "Furniture in the Public", "Sexism", "Health of Fat People: the Scare Story Your Doctor Won't Tell You", and many others. The series of papers is being distributed through several radical bookstores in Los Angeles. Copies of their Fat Liberation Manifesto are available from the FAT UNDERGROUND, c/o Westside Women's Center, P.O.Box 597, Venice, CA 90291, if a stamped self-addressed envelope is enclosed. Also, according to a spokesperson, a complete packet of literature is available for a donation of \$1 or more.

Recently, another group called F.A.C.T. split from the Fat Underground, and began publishing its own set of position papers. According to Ray Simpson, its spokesperson, both groups are fighting against exploitation of fat people; the primary difference, according to Ray, is in the emphasis in approach to solutions to the problem. His group is more conservative in approach, whereas the Fat Underground tends to be more radical in its solutions.

Several months ago, representatives of the Fat Underground, along with Ray Simpson, appeared on the nationally televised show, "The Fat of the Land" with William Conrad (star of TV's Cannon series).

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IS THERE NO LIMIT TO DISCRIMINATION?

One of NAAFA's functions is to document cases of all kinds of discrimination against fat people. All kinds of horror stories have come across our desks, but two in particular have recently come to our attention. One NAAFA member was denied workmen's compensation for back injuries incurred while on the job; the doctor at the hearing testified that her weight made the injury more severe, and no compensation payments were allowed! Another member, on her psychiatrist's advice, signed herself into a mental institution for treatment of nervous exhaustion, and was confined there for a period of time against her will by her psychiatrist! He suddenly was unwilling to sign her out of the hospital unless she lost 40 pounds. Only after she convinced hospital authorities of her sanity was she allowed to leave. Is there no limit to the degree of persecution of fat people?

LETTERSJEAN NIDITCH: OFFENSIVE QUOTE

Dear NAAFA,

I am sure that you have already been informed of this because of the Reader's Digest's wide circulation, but in case you haven't been, I thought I should bring it to your attention that in the October issue on page 217 there is a very offensive quote by Jean Niditch which ends:

"I can go to a restaurant now and tell you all about the violinist who played there; fat people don't even hear the music."

I can't see why this magazine would choose to repeat such a quote, although since this is how the woman makes her money I can see how she'd say it.

It is very frustrating to see things like this in print, especially where so many people will read it. I was just hoping maybe there was some way you could tell people about the ignorance of such statements. I know there's really very little you can do, but there's even less I, as an individual, can do; which is why I joined your organization.

Marjorie Milligan  
University of Rhode Island  
Kingston, Rhode Island

I Am A Fat Woman

by Ms. Nancy Hughes  
Bayshore, N.Y.

The title of my poem was very difficult to write.  
It is an admission, declaration and for me very right.  
It's been so hard to live with my self hatred and my shame  
Instead of facing who I am with pride instead of blame.  
The world that's all around me has given naught but pain.  
The doctrines that surround you make you feel like your're insane.  
It's drummed into your head, it's shown upon your screen,  
That to be accepted your figure must be lean.  
You dare not be a different type and buck society  
A fat woman who is beautiful, that's notoriety.  
You must not flaunt your attributes as there's too much of you  
So we must take a backseat, for us that's nothing new.  
The time has come for this to change and we must make it go.  
Our work is cut out for us, with this formidable foe.  
So let's unite and win this fight the truth shall set us free.  
Fat Pride will give us power to make the others see.