

A Big Form of Bigotry

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Throughout the world and throughout time, there have been people who rose up and said "Enough" to discrimination. Discrimination based on gender, race, creed, lifestyle, mental capacity, physical ability, and size unfortunately and unbelievably still exists. Today, I am writing to add my voice to those who say, "Enough."

One form of discrimination is the prejudice against overweight people. Whether a person merely has a pronounced paunch or can't get out of bed because of their size, fat people must endure the scorn, even hatred, of others.

Obesity isn't a twentieth century invention. History records severely overweight people even from Roman times. So, as it turns out, fast food and preservatives and trans fats aren't entirely to blame for the obesity epidemic. Lack of self-control is still the main culprit.

It is this lack of self-control which angers people. We overweight ones see the disgusted looks and hear the insults and mockery from thinner folk as we try to fit into this world—"try" being the key phrase. This world isn't made for big people. We struggle to fit into "normal"-size chairs, car, airplanes, and restroom stalls. We must buy "plus size" clothing, so termed because it's out of the range of "normal"-size clothing.

A couple months ago, I went into the AmandaE store on Trafalgar Street. The salesgirl tried to dissuade me from trying on shoes, saying they didn't carry many in my size. She also said she didn't want me stretching their leather shoes—with my fat feet, of course. I was asked to leave because she said she worked on commission and since I couldn't fit into anything there, she couldn't make any money off of me. She then accused me of making the other customers uncomfortable because of my size. The manager voiced the hope that I wouldn't return.

To paraphrase their words: "You're fat; get out; don't come back." But the fact is, the salesgirl could have made money off of me. There were plenty of accessories which she might have shown me—if she had looked beyond my weight. But she didn't. To her I was just an inferior being. And that's what it boils down to: fat people are considered inferior. We don't deserve to be treated with respect.

On behalf of every overweight person, I ask you, "normal"-size and skinny people, to show the same respect to an overweight person as you would someone your own size. We don't deserve or ask for special treatment. We just want to be accepted—the "we" that's underneath all that fat, the "we" with great sense of humors and high intelligence and the same interests and likes and dislikes which you have.

It is unthinkable to deny minorities a job because of their race, or take away a woman's right to vote, or eject a handicapped person from a venue because their wheelchair gets in the way. So why is it acceptable to discriminate against a fat person? AmandaE, are you listening? Good.

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