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What a Fat Girl Wants

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Briana “Bri” Lee

Dr. Rebecca Wee

ENCW 203: Creative Nonfiction

Winter Term 2016/2017

Personal/Reflective Prose

“What a Fat Girl Wants”

Thesis: I'll admit it; I'm obese. A five-foot three and 7/8th inch woman who weighs 176 pounds. Oops, I just disclosed my weight; I should be ashamed of myself. Last time I checked, a woman of my stature should not weigh that much. Let the body shaming commence!

I was bullied immensely for my weight throughout my childhood and adolescence, and that bullying and harassment has caused me to feel very insecure and self-deprecating towards myself. It was difficult to think back to the painful memories I had in the past; I cried as I wrote "What a Fat Girl Wants", and I am not ashamed to admit that tears were shed. I tried to be as honest and as brutal towards myself as possible in order to make the piece more genuine and heart-wrenching. Yet, writing about my weight struggles enabled me to get the pain off of my chest.

This piece was written to be critiqued by my peers in my creative nonfiction class. When I read the piece in class, I stumbled a bit with the wording, but also with my composure. I got to the end of reading it, and of course with my luck, the waterworks kicked in. I felt so ashamed of tearing up, but also very relieved after reading it. I did not expect the reaction that I received from my peers. I was expecting more criticism for the piece, but a lot of my peers felt that the piece was powerful; it apparently caught the attention of everyone in the room. A lot of my critiques stated that it was a very relatable piece as well as a heart-wrenching piece. It tugged on the heartstrings of those who read it, and a lot of people cried or teared up as they read through this piece.

This was not only a piece to represent the countless girls who have insecurities about their weight, but it also gave me a sense of closure with my past experiences. However, I will still carry that pain with me, and I will still struggle to feel comfortable in my own skin. But, I do not want other girls to grow up believing that her self-worth and beauty is determined solely by whether or not she fits into a pair of Target leggings. Or that her body proportions looks exactly like the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition cover. My weight should not define me, nor should it define other young girls and women who can relate to this struggle. These cultural expectations of an ideal female body has not only given me physical scars from getting beaten up at school, but also traumatic emotional scars from the constant exposure to media portrayals of ideal female bodies. Countless young girls and women strive to internalize the gender norms for body image in American society, but it is the American society itself that needs to mend its own flaws on female beauty norms, and understand what they are causing teenage girls to internalize through the ideal female body image.

I would like to thank you so much for your time to read this piece.

What a Fat Girl Wants

What this fat girl wants is to not be constantly reminded of her weight. Yes, I am aware that I am obese and I should not be this large for my stature. I know how it feels to be pressured from every corner to do something about it already. I am aware of the constant drag of having every conversation with a doctor revolve around my weight. I know all too well how it feels to have someone gaze at my face for a few seconds before staring at my wide and chubby thighs. My body is constantly depicted as an “epidemic”, and people don’t want to be associated with this plague. I am defined by a number derived from a scale, and people tend to see that number excessively all over my body before getting to know me.

What this fat girl wants is to not have people in restaurants and cafeterias constantly stare at her dinner plate. They do not need to spectate each forkful I put in my mouth, or the portion sizes. I do not have a huge sweet tooth; I cannot stand the taste of chocolate and several other types of candy, nor the carbonation in soda. Never mind a severe tree nut allergy that prevents me from going to bakeries, ice-cream shops, and various restaurants. So I don’t eat out much. I love almost all fruits and vegetables, but it’s strange for the spectators to be bewildered by a fat person eating a salad instead of a greasy slice of pizza.

What this fat girl wants is to feel comfortable in a clothing store. I’m tired of having to constantly go through rack after rack of clothes, only to find that each top is only available in a size extra small, small, and medium. The general scenario for trying on clothes seems to be that it’s too tight, or the color brings more emphasis to my body fat, or my body type can’t pull it off.

Plus, looking at myself in the fitting room mirror further mocks me. I can only pull so much off in terms of styles while girls who are not obese have infinitely more options.

What this fat girl wants is to forget painful moments of her past. I never wanted to get beaten up with a baseball bat by a group of guys in middle school for being a “fat-ass”. They wanted to beat the fat out of me so badly, only for bruises with hues of blue and black to swell all over. I started to struggle with my weight when I was in elementary school. I developed large hips and curves, then gained more weight over the years. I was constantly harassed and bullied for my weight, and those memories are being frequently repressed into the back of my mind. People find me to be an easy target to shoot at, especially when I’m a large one.

What this fat girl wants is to not be underestimated. When a professor informed me that fat people are incapable of writing and I do not have potential as a fat person in this society, it was something that I internalized deeply. But it also added more fuel to the fire, and that remark drove me to prove them wrong. Hey, who knew that a fat girl like me was capable of writing and being literate?

What this fat girl wants is to never see advertisements in the media about the ideal body type. I’m confused by the encouraging ads you see on TV about loving who you are for your own shape and size. They show thin women, hinting that there is something wrong about having short legs, stomach rolls, or a large chest. I do not need society telling me something that I am already aware of, and I do not wish to have to compare myself to those beauty standards that I have internalized all my life.

What this fat girl wants is to not feel so insecure and angry with herself. I find myself even less attractive physically, and at this rate, my self-esteem is shot. It’s hard not to feel

inferior to those who are skinnier or have less weight to deal with. I can't even smile when I get a glimpse of myself in the mirror anymore because I know that I'm fat, and I cannot completely conceal it with make-up or shapewear. I hate being the fat elephant in the room and taking up so much unneeded space. I hate having to still fight the mirror. The scale. The bitch of a voice inside my head that creeps in and tells me that I am not good enough, that I'm not beautiful. The anger I have for myself is for not being obsessed with going to the gym or eating salads, but also for ever expecting anything different to change about my body when I wake up in the morning.

Will this fat girl ever be able to get what she wants? Not a chance. I will always have insecurities about my body. There will be people who stare and mock my body. There will still be times where tears stream down my face as my reflection shows in front of the mirror. There will still be advertisements of photo shopped models popping up on the cover of magazines and on the T.V. screen.

To the countless young girls and women who feel insecure about their body type or beauty, you are beautiful! I have walked in your shoes, and have endured your pain. It will come to an end at some point, but you need to be proud of who you are and let the world know what YOU want. Do not change yourself because of what society wants you to be. Do not change yourself because society tells you that a size 16 dress is too large to wear. Do not change yourself because society tells you that a flat chest is not pretty enough. Do not change yourself because society tells you that chubby thighs should be covered at all times. Do not change yourself because society tells you that starving yourself is the only resort to losing weight, and keeping it off. Love yourself regardless of your body type and regardless of what the scale tells you.

To my peers who bullied me in the past or still bully me to this day, I just want to thank you. You gave this fat girl something to cry about, something to think about, and something to write about. It is because of your ignorance and belittlement that I'm willing to share my story and that I'm still standing, all 176 pounds of me!

The only hope is that with increased awareness, medical advancements, and human empathy, people will learn to understand the pain that countless girls endure with body shaming. But for me, the damage has been done. I will likely stay uncomfortable in my own skin, even though I know that it's just a number derived from a scale.