

# CHEW ON THIS!

## HOW DO YOU FEEL FAT WOMEN ARE REPRESENTED IN THE MEDIA?

- “As fools and objects of disgust.”
- “We’re represented as being ugly, dirty, unable to control our eating. There are a few positive large women on tv, but only in sitcoms. In these cases they are ‘funny.’ There are no fat reporters on TV news.”
- “Hatefully. You almost never see positive representations of fat women on TV. If a woman is fat, she has to be: sloppy, ugly, funny—but self-deprecating funny, asexual, confined to her home or office, sitting in front of the TV eating bon bons, on a diet, on an exercise binge, sick because she’s got high blood pressure or she’s fat, (not because she’s sick from dieting, purging and yo-yoing to meet some impossible standard), hoping for Mr. Right to love her in spite of her ‘weight problem,’ made up, impeccably dressed. Even Oprah, who was for many of us a beacon of hope, subscribes to the US culture of self/body-hate.”
- “As undesirable and unnecessary members of society. As laughing stock, as being out-of-control. Almost always in negative terms. And if one likes a fat woman (like Roseanne for example), it’s in spite of her size and can’t possibly be because of it. They are all on, or should be on, diets (says the media).”
- “As pathetic, helpless slobs. Tragic, ugly, lazy characters w/no self-control, or the butt of other people’s jokes. In advertising, usually, the ‘before’ pictures. Or invisible. The only positive portrayal I’ve seen, in terms of advertisement, has been for pantyhose ‘Just My Size!’ and though there’s something to the message that fat women can be successful businesswomen with romantic love-lives, I couldn’t relate to the mainstream, middle-class, overwhelmingly \*straight\* message.”
- “Oh, god. If I see one more magazine cover with Cindy Crawford or some waif model, I’m going to buy a chainsaw and kill kill kill. I don’t think we’re represented at all, except in Jenny Craig ads, where you’ll notice there are no fat people really. (Lose 20 lbs??? tee hee...)”
- “Very poorly, if at all. Usually they’re portrayed as sick, lazy and slobs.”
- “Do you mean the lazy, depressed, unfulfilled women, or the scathing yet witty sensible mother types?”
- “Usually as feckless persona-non-gratas or women like Roseanne who want to emasculate males. Sexless, mediocre intelligence.”
- “As outcasts, freaks, undesirable, and without feelings. We’re portrayed as the butt of jokes and never in the true light of being living, breathing human beings with feelings, fears, desires.”

## HOW DO YOU FEEL FAT DYKES ARE REPRESENTED IN THE DYKE MEDIA?

- “Somewhat better, though I think the dyke media still has a way to go.”
- “...Yeah, right. We’re not. Lesbians come in lipstick or diesel only, period.”
- “I think we are very under-represented. LN, here in the LA area, is supposed to be news for SoCal dykes, but it is almost like Vogue does dykeville: all skinny dykes, no glasses, no body hair, few women of color, few Latinas, makeup, tans, very body-conscious clothing. At least half the dykes I know are big women.”
- “There’s still a sense that we should and could be thinner if we really wanted to, and that we ought to want to. Often portrayed as the bulldagger type. Sometimes an acknowledgment or awareness of the power of size, but often along with a fearfulness. Occasionally (by us) an appreciation of our bountifulness in all aspects.”
- “With shocking rarity. When I have seen fat dykes—in magazines, or in sex-positive ads—I have been very impressed, stimulated, excited. But fat women seem to be even more invisible in dyke media, since at least in mainstream media, there is \*negative\* representation. That is (thankfully) less acceptable, somehow, in homo-media. So fat women are just invisible, if not so ‘pathetic.’ Feminist lesbian journals have been a forum for making fat a political, sex-positive issue. But kink-negative and thus (to me) sexually repressive in the sometimes hard-line pc sexuality that seems fundamental to the journal editors and contributors. Fat-invisibility in dyke media makes me think dykes are ashamed of fatness, and afraid of lesbian stereotypes in the het world (you know, the fat-hairy-ugly-masculine lesbian image).”
- “I’ve seen some good stuff (Bad Attitude 7-5 has a piece on fat dykes, and the Brat Attack rant), but mostly, we’re ignored.”
- “At least they’re there, though the positive body image hasn’t gotten through. Dykes don’t think large women are sexy either.”
- “The lesbian media is better, in that an image of a fat woman doesn’t \*automatically\* come with snide or degrading commentary. I feel strongly that there is much more space in the lesbian community for women to have diverse appearances. I know I am far more comfortable in my body among dykes - of any size - than with straight folks. But I think this has more to do with the fact that among lesbians, there’s less of a tendency for women to judge each other on the basis of appearance - rather than that dykes think fat is beautiful. For example, lesbian porn images are still pretty thin oriented. In areas where looks are important, fat women are still excluded. I just think among lesbians, other things often matter, not just looks, so a variety of appearances are accepted.”

## IF YOU COULD, HOW WOULD YOU CHANGE THE MEDIA’S PRESENTATION OF FAT?

- “I would throw in some sexy and intelligent women who actually get an opportunity to do something and can handle stress without food. I really resent the idea that women have to plunge into the old binge routine to handle stress. Especially when it’s thin actresses who eat cheesecake and then discuss how it’s going straight to their hips.”
- “I’d like to see fat people treated as just, well, people. I’d like to see fat people in roles where their character had nothing to do with size.”
- “More fat women and men in TV news, etc. . . .”
- “More, more, more presentations of fat dykes, fat women, fat people, fat kids, doing everything everyone else does... only better.”
- “An acknowledgment that fat in and of itself is NOT UNHEALTHY, and that dieting in and of itself is far more unhealthy than a reasonably active, socializing fat woman. Being able and willing to identify women/portray them in the media, as all that we are and not just focus on size, or make up, or color, or all those things they usually do. Having really fun, happy, positive role model fat women characters throughout media representations, regularly, and not just unhappy, bizarre fat women.”
- “More visibility. More representation, and means of representation. MORE! Different sizes, shapes, ethnicities, sexualities, identities, backgrounds! Portrayed as real people, so that people can see beyond ‘just’ FAT and the stereotypes that come with it. I also want it to be sometimes confrontational. Dealing with the taboo. Like, new representation of fat women \*eating\*. Make people think, from different fronts.”
- “I’d like to see fat people as whole people, not just their bodies (sound familiar? insert “women”). I’d like to see fat women being sexual...preferably with one another (where’s that damn apricot hankie...? ;-))”
- “Employ us as actors, broadcast journalists, cool dressers. . . .”
- “Stop making a joke of it. Stop presenting fat as being a communicable disease. Stop making such an issue of body size.”
- “I’D STOP FUCKING OBSESSING ON THE FAT CONTENT IN FOOD!@#!#\$ Sorry, but I work with two completely \*obsessed\* women in regards to the fat content in food and they’re always reading those ‘women’s’ mags that talk about the latest and greatest diet and quite frankly, I’m sick of it.”
- “Depicting them as beautiful, loving women who are as worthy as any swimsuit model (more, actually).”

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