

We Tried, We Fucked Up, We Apologize

Dear **FaTGIRL**,

Discriminating against wheelies and other folks with mobility related disabilities by having the last release party in a "sorry not wheelchair accessible" space is a blatant act of ableism. There are no excuses to justify it any time any place any where. Even the not exactly radical U.S. government has a civil rights law, the Americans with Disabilities Act, that ensures equal access for people with disabilities.

Not only did **FaTGIRL** have this party, you also non-consensually rubbed my face in it by sending me a flyer advertising the inaccessible release party of the same issue that contained crip smut by me *Suzie, the Elm Tree and Me*. Do you realize that this story may well be the only published erotica that makes a wheelie quad with a service dog the object of desire? You used my story and tokenized me and crip smut, and then slammed a door in every wheelies face. Shame on you. But then again I've grown to expect this from women's community. For a while I thought you might be different. Wrong again.

So, I'm giving you an opportunity to correct the error of your ways. I get to be the top here, and I get to administer the discipline. So here it is. First of all, don't ever again hold a **FaTGIRL** sponsored event in a space that excludes wheelies. Repeat after me, discrimination against disabled people is to be abhorred and challenged. Next, hold a **FaTGIRL** collective discussion on ableism using the Anti-Ableism Discussion Facilitator Packet that I have written and sent to you. Read my two enclosed pieces, "Too Disabled for Women's Culture" and "United in Ableism's Web." Finally, use this encounter as an opportunity to welcome and include fat crip issues in **FaTGIRL** by printing an ongoing column by me, fat crip extraordinaire. This column is to be called "Radical Fat Crip Rages and Rants" and will be an amazing addition to your zine. This letter superimposed on the fateful discriminatory flyer, along with "Delayed Response" will be the contents of the first column.

I trust you will be in compliance with these directives, as I trust you ultimately want justice for all fat folks, not just walking fat folks.

In radical fat crip defiance,
Mary Frances Platt

Dear Ms. Platt

Thank you for your letter and enclosures. We read your letter at our last collective meeting and we plan to study and discuss the materials. We may devote a portion of a future collective retreat to discussion of disability issues.

The decision to hold our release party at an inaccessible site was not one we made lightly. We strive to make **FaTGIRL** events and the zine accessible in numerous ways. For example, we ask that event attendees not wear scents so that environmentally sensitive women will be able to come. **FaTGIRL** event admission is on a sliding scale and we turn no one away for lack of money. We have donated **FaTGIRL** to women who can't afford to subscribe. We send the zine to lesbian and gay archives and libraries so that more dykes will have access to it. We hope to have ASL interpreter for events in the future.

Because the issue of access is so important to us, we were willing to pay for an accessible site even though we would have had to borrow money to do this. We contacted Good Vibrations in Berkeley and San Francisco, The Brick Hut and La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley, The Women's Building and New College in San Francisco. Because none of these accessible sites were available, we examined other options. Kairos, an inaccessible site, became available to us because one of the collective works there.

FaTGIRL finances are such that we may no longer be able to publish. When Chrystos offered to read that Saturday night because she was in town visiting, we didn't want to let the opportunity to raise much needed funds go by.

In the future we hope to have our events committee start looking for accessible locations earlier. Because **FaTGIRL** is a labor of love and none of us get paid for our time, it is often difficult for us to do all the work necessary to produce the zine and the events. We did the best job that we could have at the time.

We will be printing your letter in our next issue along with *Delayed Response*. **FaTGIRL** would be very interested in having a column about disability issues. We would be happy to consider submissions from you or other disabled dykes on this topic.

Sincerely,
FaT GiRL

Note: The Americans With Disabilities Act, signed by George Bush, is a helpful law, but unfortunately it does not ensure equal access for all. It does not require all existing buildings to be made accessible, nor does it provide any government funding to facilitate the process. Typical San Francisco houses have a flight of stairs rising from 6 to 20 feet between the street level and the entrance. The combination of the loophole in the law and the city's architecture mean many San Francisco buildings remain inaccessible.