

#FATFEMINISMS

#NOTYOURGOODFATTY #BOPO

#Bopo Body Positivity is a current women's lib phenomena, shaping social media with its challenges to diet culture, bodily heteronormy, and oppressive norms of beauty. On the surface, #bopo appears to sit at the core of feminist fights against sexist inequality and oppression. But while many white feminists have taken up the mantle of body positivity as a way to promote their own bodies and feel good about themselves, they have also used it as a way to gatekeep against others with the wrong bodies (Johansson 2021; Shackelford 2015). These wrong bodies are usually Black bodies, Brown bodies, bodies with disabilities, trans bodies, and fat bodies. In truth, #bopo is just one site of a long historical tradition of the exclusion of bodies deemed inappropriate in *white* feminism: for most of the time, fat hasn't been a feminist issue.

— First wave feminism in the United States is a striking case in point here, demonstrating that it was the normative ideal of thinness that *white* feminists co-opted in their fight for self-determination and citizenship. Since the nineteenth century—when the ideal, self-responsible subject of enlightenment was tied to a distinct physique, citizenship status was connected to bodily self-discipline which was increasingly read as antithesis of fatness (Mackert 2015). As Katharina Vester (2010) shows, the first commercially successful weight-loss diet advice had, in the late 19th century, targeted primarily *white* men. Women were deemed to be naturally plump and incapable of the rigid self-discipline associated with successful dieting. Then, when fighting fat thereby became a site of claiming self-responsible citizenship, weight-loss diets evolved into an arena of feminist struggle, and first wave feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton claimed the right to dieting for women as a path to political participation and full citizenship.

— They did so precisely because this meant to perform their *whiteness* and exclude Black women from this kind of feminist struggle (Vester 2010). At the same time, anti-fat attitudes in the United States were being rooted firmly in *white* supremacy (Strings 2019). Demarcations of racial differences between *white* people and People of Color had long included body size, with thinness being increasingly linked to *whiteness* and fatness to non-*whiteness*. As first wave feminists embraced dieting and thinness as markers of status and citizenship, many women,

especially Black women and fat women, were left behind in their suffrage work.

——— And this trend is noticeable today. While body positivity can locate its origins in fat liberation, it has largely been “co-opted by the mainstream and become increasingly depoliticized” (Johansson 2021: 115). #Bopo is dominated by *white*, non-fat women, some who have “all the curves in all the right places” (Kadish / Trainor 2014). Common postings include non-fat *white* women who have bent over to produce belly rolls with an affirmative message of self-love.

——— In juxtaposition to BOPO, we find #notyourgoodfatty. #notyourgoodfatty began in April 2014 after a conversation between two fat activists (@mazzie and @fatbodypolitics) as a way to highlight how the normative ideal of a good fatty is yet another way to demarcate between good and bad bodies (in this case, less bad fat bodies and bad fat bodies). Put simply, a good fatty is one who tries to make their fatness palatable for the world around them. This may be done through attempts at weight loss, regularly apologising for the space they take up in the world to those around them and ensuring to never be seen eating anything other than salads in public (or private) (Bias 2014). Fat people who do not engage in such a performance are then positioned as bad fatties; they are undesirable, unacceptable, and no good.

——— #Notyourgoodfatty tweet examples include, “Got game by the pound”, “I’ve unapologetically broken six chairs in the past 9 months”, “I’m all your fat stereotypes. I’m your fat fucking nightmare”, and “I will take.up.space” (Pausé 2014). If #bopo represents a *white* feminist version of liberation, where liberation is only for a few and for those who have the right kinds of bodies, then #notyourgoodfatty is for the many and for anyone in a fat body. All fat people can make use of the #notyourgoodfatty tag, as it provides a collective space for fat feminists to reject *white* feminism, desirability politics, respectability politics, and other *white* supremacist patriarchal capitalistic values that reproduce fat oppression.

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@fatbodypolitics.

@mazzie.

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