

BOOK GUIDE TO  
**Acceptable Prejudice?**

**Fat,  
Rhetoric  
and  
Social  
Justice**



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## **Chapter 1 HOOKS' IDEOLOGY OF DOMINATION**

Why might we want to use the term “kierarchy” instead of “patriarchy”?

Provide some examples of a “colonized mind.”

## **Chapter 2 RHETORIC & FAT**

Why is it important to study rhetoric when studying fat?

We “have our being in words,” bell hooks argues. Why is this argument important when studying rhetoric and domination?

“Language is also a place of struggle,” hooks says. What do you think she means by this?

## **Chapter 3 FAT, FAT ACCEPTANCE, FAT PRIDE & FAT LIBERATION**

Brainstorm euphemisms for “fat.” Why are each of these problematic?

What is problematic about the term “fat acceptance”? Is there a better label to use?

## **Chapter 4 BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT**

No questions.

## **Chapter 5 THE MYTH OF JUSTIFIED OPPRESSION**

Have you tried to lose weight? If yes, did you gain the weight back? Chart your weight throughout your life, noting the times you dieted.

Have you ever experienced fat prejudice in a health care setting? Do you know someone who has? If yes, has it impacted your health in some way?

Have you heard of Health At Every Size before? If no, do you think the HAES approach might improve or hurt your relationship with your body? Why?

## **Chapter 6 IS IT PREJUDICE?**

Do you think fat prejudice really exists? Why or why not? Have you ever seen or experienced such prejudice? Explain.

Do you think being fat affects people’s employment opportunities? Should it?

Do you think fat people are fat because they are poor or poor because they are fat? Why? Why does it matter?

## **Chapter 7 COMPARING PREJUDICES & THE DYNAMICS OF PREJUDICE**

What is the difference between co-opting experiences and learning from the experiences of others?

How is fat a substitute for other forms of oppression? How is it an outgrowth of other oppressions?

Why is studying intersectionality important?

How can intersectionality complicate the concept of beauty? The concept of health?

Have you ever experienced healthism? Have you ever seen it happen to someone else?

Can we determine someone's health by how they look? What kind of issues are created when we judge people's health based on their looks? What kind of issues are created when we judge people's health?

State some examples of how women are more affected by fat prejudice than men.

## **Chapter 8** FAT PEOPLE AS INFERIOR

Think over the last 24 hours. Have you received any messages, either through media or through talking with people, that fat is bad? Give examples.

As a child, what kind of messages did you get about fat from your family? From the outside world? Give examples.

Have you seen fat prejudice in a religious or spiritual arena? Give examples.

Have you ever experienced fat prejudice from a health-care worker? Give examples.

Have you seen fat used negatively in a political context? Give examples.

Have you seen or experienced concern trolling? Give examples.

## **Chapter 9** LACK OF OPTIONS

Have you experienced or have you seen someone experience a lack of options because of fat?

Consider the issue of requiring a fat person to pay for two seats on a bus or an airplane. Is this fair? Why or why not?

## **Chapter 10** THE RESULT—INTERNALIZED FAT HATRED

Do you or someone you know struggle with internalized fat hatred?

When we talk about self-policing, what do we mean? Give examples.

## **Chapter 11** FIGHTING THE “OPPRESSOR WITHIN”

What is a paradigm shift? In terms of fat acceptance, what does a paradigm shift look like for our society? For you individually?

Do you experience cognitive dissonance between wanting to accept your body and wanting to lose weight? What kind of issues, both personally and societally, can this cognitive dissonance create?

Do you have any rage in relation to fat? Do you express it in any way? How might you express it constructively?

Have you experienced The Fantasy of Being Thin? How did/does it affect you? What would happen if you let go of this fantasy?

Thin or fat, have you started a fat acceptance journey? If yes, what do you do to resist negative thoughts about your body?

Do you find yourself in the stages of fat acceptance? If so, which one are you experiencing the most at this time? Do you bounce back and forth between stages?

1. Still believing fat is a bad thing.
2. Hating fat and not hating fat at the same time.
3. The cognitive dissonance of not believing in dieting yet wanting to be slimmer.
4. Experiencing anger at the dominant system.
5. Overcoming fantastical thinking about thinness.
6. The return of negative body thoughts even after reaching fat acceptance.
7. Full 100% fat acceptance.

## **Chapter 12** RESISTING EXTERNAL FORCES

If you are fat, do you practice resistance by being visible? If you did, what would that look like?

How would you be affected if you saw more fat people in bright clothing? Exercising? Enjoying life?

How would you respond to someone who says resistance to fat prejudice is just an excuse to stay fat?

Have you ever heard someone use a logical fallacy when arguing about fat acceptance? How did you address it?

How can a resistance group combat the co-opting of their terminology?

Do you ever see positive pictures of fat people? What do you think when you see them?

Are you a fat ally? As an ally, how can you help the fat acceptance movement?

Fat or thin, how do you view fat people who speak out against fat prejudice? Would you like that to change? How might you go about changing your views?

What is activism? What counts as fat activism?

Do you practice fat activism? What could you personally do to reduce oppression against fat people?

Have you ever experienced activist burn out? Did you recover? How?

## **Chapter 13** THE POWER OF RHETORIC

Language both creates and reflects our reality. How?

How do definitions control and constrict people? Give some examples of ways that health-related definitions have been used to socially control people in the past.

Why are the World Health Organization's and American Medical Association's definition of health problematic? Could you ever meet that definition? Why is it important for individuals to have their own definitions of health?

What do you think when you hear the word "fat"? If your thinking is negative, how might you look at "fat" more neutrally?

Have you or someone you know come out as fat accepting? What was the response?

Have you had a negative experience with a doctor regarding weight? How did you respond? How would you like to have responded?

Why is humor so important when dealing with oppression? Have you ever used humor to deal with societal pressures? How?

How can conflict be positive for a social justice movement?

How do we define "fat"? When is an individual "fat"? What are the problems with defining "fat"?

If you are fat, do you talk about your eating and exercise behavior? Why or why not?

Can dieting and fat acceptance coincide? Can individuals fight for a group while trying to change aspects of that group within themselves?

## **Chapter 14** HOOKS VS. FOUCAULT: POWER VS. RESISTANCE

Do you believe we will ever move beyond power structures in our society? Why or why not? Can we move beyond power structures as individuals?

How can self-recovery be a catalyst for change?

Name some ways resistance might normalize fat bodies.

## **Chapter 15** KNOWLEDGE VS. RESISTANCE

How can online interaction be "politically meaningful"?

What creates a group's identity in an online environment? What elements create this identity?

## **Chapter 16** LOVING THE FAT BODY

Hooks calls for love to be "a force that fights dehumanization" rather than an emotion. What could result from thinking of love as an action—a verb—rather than a feeling—a noun?

When you think of loving your body, how do you respond? What feelings and thoughts come up?

Do you accept your body as it is? If not, what could you do to find acceptance for your body?

How does acting lovingly towards others increase love for the self? How does acting lovingly towards the self increase love for others?

## **Chapter 17** LOVE IN ACTION: HEALTH AT EVERY SIZE

Do you practice HAES? Has it been beneficial? How?

If you don't practice HAES, how would your life change if you did?

What kind of problems arise if we decide that fat healthy people are OK, but fat unhealthy people are not?

## **Chapter 18** FAT ACCEPTANCE FOR EVERYONE

Why is intersectionality so important to fat acceptance?

If you are thin, what could you receive from fat acceptance? How could you help fat people in our society?

What does thin privilege look like? Provide some examples.

How might fat men experience oppression differently from fat women?

How might fat people of color experience oppression differently from fat white people?

How might fat individuals with disabilities experience oppression differently from fat able people?

How might fat LGBTQ individuals experience oppression differently from fat straight people?

How might fat people in other countries experience oppression differently from fat people in the U.S.?

## **Chapter 19** ONLINE ENVIRONMENT AS A SAFE(R) SPACE

Does cyberspace feel like a space—a place to go—to you? Why or why not?

Are you part of a virtual community? Why or why not? Have you found support there?

Are online communities public or private spaces? Why?

Do you belong to some kind of community? If yes, do you ever feel left out? What do you do to address that feeling?

## **Chapter 20** THE UPWARD SPIRAL

Are you part of a resistance movement? If yes, how does being involved with the movement help you fight internalized oppression? How does fighting internalized oppression help you resist dominating forces?

## **Chapter 21** LOVE OVERALL

How can hooks' concept of love make the world a better place?

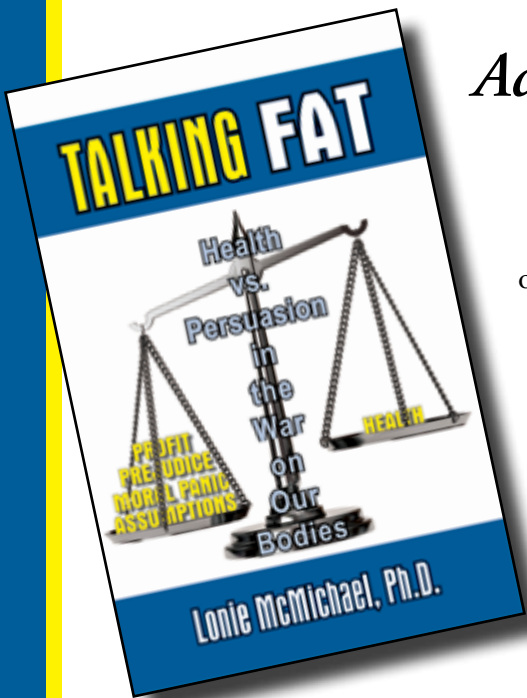
Do you believe we will ever have a truly loving society? Why or why not?

# About the Author

**Lonie McMichael** EARNED A PH.D. IN TECHNICAL communication and rhetoric, writing her dissertation on the medical rhetoric surrounding the “obesity epidemic” and how such rhetoric legitimizes fat prejudice. These topics became two separate books, *Talking Fat* (published by Pearlsong Press in 2012) and *Acceptable Prejudice?* (Pearlsong Press, 2013).

Dr. McMichael is currently teaching professional and technical writing at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and working on her third book about things fat.

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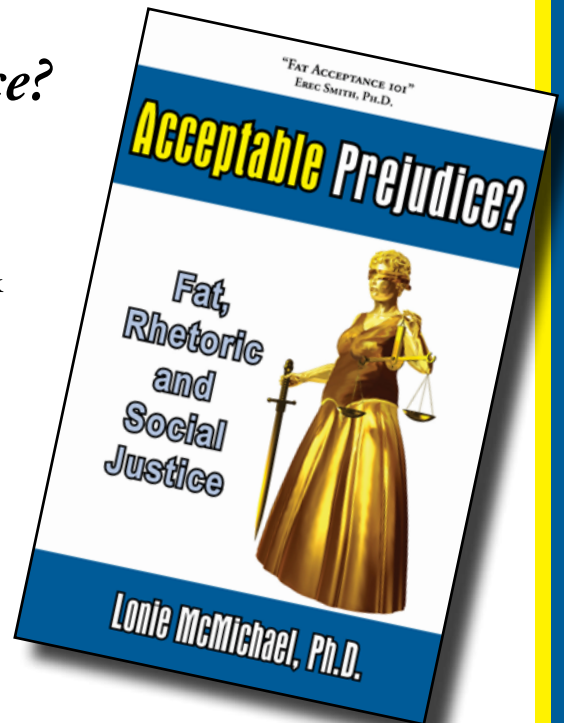


## *Acceptable Prejudice?*

&

## *Talking Fat*

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