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01. One Woman's Mind-Blowing Breakdown of Why the Internet is Full of Sh*t about Women's Bodies

"It's way more than sexism."



Photo Credit: Shutterstock.com/ Milagli

Last week it was [Gawker's dehumanizing article](#) about Sarah Massey, a black woman, and her 7 foot wide ass. (Nope - no racism there!) I am loathe to provide the link to but I want people to know I am not making this shit up.

Every day this week, one of the big three (Gawker, Jezebel, HuffPo) have been dropping articles about women's bodies, their fatness, their thinness, their realness, their photoshoppiness. The cadence of it is akin to Chinese water torture. Regardless of the authors' intentions, all of these articles dehumanize women by criticizing, praising and deconstructing female body fat and symmetry, including and especially the ones that claim to show what "real women" look like. I'm looking at you Dove, you bullshitter, you.

BREAKING NEWS: We know what we look like. We don't need your help.

These articles do absolutely nothing to advance the cause of women's rightful place as equals in the world; human beings who are worthy of respect and possess the exact same dignity of choice for the direction of their lives that is the uncontested birthright of all men. Anything to do with women and their agency comes with exceptions, parentheses and footnotes. Always. These articles are accomplices to this fact and they do nothing but simply fan the flames of an inane conversation about women and the shape and size of their bodies correlative to their social worth. The result: Women can't breathe air without being harassed. This conversation has been going on in this country for far too long. It is neither newsworthy, nor respectful of the intelligence and self-determination of any living, breathing woman on this earth. We are a nation of Neros goo-ing and gah-ing about cellulite while the whole planet is on fire.

You want to talk about causes of obesity and the corporate agenda to keep people addicted to high fat high sugar foods? Go right ahead.

You want to talk about how it costs \$8 for a boneless skinless breast of chicken, but \$3.69 for a Quarter Pounder With Cheese and how that insane margin affects the choices people make? Especially those who are barely keeping their chins above water? Be my guest.

Or perhaps you'd rather talk about the holocaust we are waging on animals via the industrial farming industry? I wish you would.

Or what about the invasion of GMOs and the evil Monsanto Empire making it impossible for anyone to purchase real whole foods at affordable prices? Yes, please.

Or maybe the way models as young as 12 and 13 are exploited and abused and molested by their industry? Absolutely.

Why? Because that shit is of national and international import, affecting all of us down to our molecular infrastructure. Literally. These are subjects worthy of public dissemination. As journalists it is your mandate to talk about these things.

But you won't. Because it would require you to take a stand. And besides, my ass and the ass of Sarah Massey and the ass of [Carmen Diaz](#) are so much simpler. Why tackle the systemic issues that have all of us bent over a barrel when women's asses are such wonderful (ahem) low hanging fruit?

Here's a secret: your readers are not idiots. The truth is no one really and actually gives a shit about the above mentioned asses, and those that do are hiding from something. Why give them an out?

Maybe it's time to stop talking about how fat and skinny women are. Maybe women's bodies are no one's god damned business.

Today on my usual rappel down my Facebook feed I saw the title of this [Huffington Post article](#), about a photographer's project which documents what real women look like post-pregnancy in an effort to show real bodies and normalize breast feeding. It seemed innocuous so I clicked on it.

The photographer, Ashlee Wells Jackson, is obviously talented. I flipped through some of her photos and thought of the bodies of my friends who've recently given birth, some for the second time. All of whom are beautiful, talented, emotionally generous women who are very different from one another in their choices but all amazing new moms. I thought about my own body and what may happen to it should I decide to go ahead and get pregnant.

Then I put my hand on the proverbial hot stove and read the comments below the article. As is the usual case when it comes to discussing women and THEIR bodies, some were reasonable voices in the fracas but most were huge, self-righteous dicks - one in particular - a woman named RosieTRosie actually claimed that "fattie mothers love food more than their kids".

She had some other choice quotes that I won't torture you with here. Suffice it to say she and some of the other anti-fat stasi let their hateful rants crest a peak of emotional instability. They spoke about fat women with orgiastic revulsion. Made me wonder how RosieTRosie spends her time in the bathroom after a meal. Thankfully, my better angels kept me silent (at the time) and moving on.

Surprising to no one, my body was my lifelong foe up until about 10 years ago when I turned 28. I have been overweight my entire life. I've been dieting on and off since I was 5. I was harassed and screamed at for it when I was young.

I was judged for it. I was compared to others and always came up short. I was told repeatedly that no one would ever love me and that my friends were using me. The reason being, people couldn't

actually like someone who was fat. I got the common line: "You have such a pretty face, if only..." And I believed it all.

I soon learned all of these skills: dieting, internal harassing, despair, desperation, people pleasing, judging and comparing. These are skills that all women apprentice in when they are young and become masters of quickly. We practice our dexterity with these tools on ourselves and each other. We are all obliged to become fellow participants in all of this. To this day I have to consciously remind myself that those old ticker tapes are wrong.

People assume things about the quality of your life based on how you look and the size of your ass. They treat you in accordance with their assumptions. (i.e., second class, lazy, junk food junkie, uneducated, socially inept, or god forbid - single). Mind you: I am no slouch. I am a world traveler. I work my ass off on multiple jobs from creative to tech to social activism to writing workshops for wounded warriors and their caregivers. Like it or not - I am in the world.

I am a successful writer in television. I graduated from NYU and Juilliard. I've lived for 20 years in New York as an artist which is like saying I lived on the moon with no oxygen tank. Physically, I am no weakling. Even now, I can run 40 minutes straight, I can make it through a Bikram class multiple times a week. I am strong as an ox. I have been in long term loving relationships. I have many good people in my life, many good friends that I've been with for over 20 years. All this, and I've never come within a mile of what is considered a socially acceptable size for a woman. I mention all of this because people who don't know me are always a little more surprised than they should be when they learn these things about me.

I am not into fat acceptance. The solution to fat shaming is not giving one self permission to be 400 lbs and pretending that is something that makes you happy. I want to lose weight because even though I have never had a cholesterol problem, or high blood pressure, or any other ailment, I know the weight will cause me problems when I'm older. I have more energy when I'm thinner and my body feels better. End of story.

I work on it - but ask anyone who has done it or tried to and they will tell you that it doesn't matter what diet, what pill, what regime you have...losing weight is rolling a boulder up a steep hill most of the time. It is being asked to walk a thousand miles in bare feet. You have to simultaneously live in the present and train yourself not to regret the past. You have to learn radical acceptance of yourself as you are in this moment or not a single ounce of weight will leave for long.

I've lost 100 pounds a few times. And with each renewed effort, the projected success is more and more doubtful. But I am still in the game and I have a lot of non-commercial support. You must try to take care of yourself sandwiched between one wall of prickish, self-righteous fat shamers and well-meaning but misguided fat acceptance folks on the other. You must be willing to get out there and exercise in front of assholes who might laugh at you and your fat butt jiggling as you jog. And one of those assholes may reside in your head.

That's why I always run with my two pitbulls and my iPod is up loud. I hear nothing but music - not even my own thoughts - and I see nothing but the road in front of me and my two gorgeous dogs running dutifully next to me. No one will dare even look at me cross eyed with those two in tow. So after spending 10 to 15 minutes with this article and the comments below, after writing then stopping myself and deleting some really foul replies to the fat shaming stasi douche bags, I just closed the window out.

Here's the solution: I am permanently abstaining from reading any and all articles that have anything to do with women and body issues. No mas!

It's old. It's hackneyed. And oddly it propagates the mental jail women put themselves in.

Think about it this way: think about how many physical hours in a day, a week, a year, women spend worrying about how they look or don't look. That is time wasted. That is time we could spend on writing something, or working on something that we are talented at. A role in a play. A musical instrument. Anything. That is time we could have spent being present in a friendship.

That is time we could have spent thinking of how we could be of service to the people in our lives, or to strangers who need help. We could have spent that time being useful in a suffering and damaged world. An unintended consequence of this kind of obsession is self-centeredness. It is an expression of an out of control ego that needs constant praise.

Another way to look at it: women never catch a break in the media or in society. Not for their entire lives. Everywhere they look, young women and teenaged girls are barraged with pictures and commercials of girls that look a certain way, and appear to be a certain way, the underlying message being "If you are not this, you are not worth much. You are unloveable. You are unacceptable."

Unloveable and unacceptable to whom? Men? Other women? Who are they that they should have that kind of czar-like power?

The joke of it all is that it never ends. Once you hit your 20s then you will be harassed to be in a relationship, to get married, to have kids. And that's when the fun really starts because the media and society will be up your ass about how to be the best-most-perfect pregnant lady, the best way to give birth. Then once you give birth, they'll be back up your ass about how to be the perfect mother, how to breast feed, how to get your pre-pregnancy body back.

Then they'll be up your ass even more about being thin and looking as young as possible from your 30s through middle age. They will tell you to be jealous of young 20 somethings and make you nostalgic for a time in your life that we can all agree was a nonstop shitshow in reality, but at least your hips were narrower and your feet smaller.

And then when you're 65 and past all hope they'll throw pictures of Ertha Kit, Jane Fonda, Nichelle Nicholls and Helen Mirren at you who all look amazing (and good for them) but they all look amazing because they have the money for the treatments and the products and the trainers and everything else that you have to buy in order to maintain.

So you see, its a game. It's a racket. The house always wins. According to marketers and advertisers and capitalists: you must feel that you are not good enough. You must feel that something is missing.

Why?

Because they want you to buy stuff.

You could say its sexist, and it probably is. There is certainly not this constant micromanaging of the appearance and behavior of men through every stage of their lives. They don't get what I call The 24/7 Dogpile Special. But I think more than sexism, there is an economic motive that surpasses all ideological, sociological and scientific demands.

The reason is we women are the ones who buy shit constantly. We shop. This is statistical truth. We are the consumers, the target audience. And so - marketers and advertisers and magazine editors will do everything they possibly can to grab a hold of us and make us want what they have to sell. It is unending: it started when we were born and they will keep barking and hounding us until we breathe our last breath.

You know what I call that? Stalking.

So once you decide that they and the men and women who hate women can all go to hell, and once you decide that life is enormous and you can basically do anything, once you realize that you are on this planet once and its imperative that you make the most of it since there are no do-overs, and once you realize that you are exactly perfect RIGHT NOW WITHOUT EXCEPTION, then it becomes easier to see articles like the ones I mentioned above exactly for what they are: commercials, time suckers, denigrators and handcuffs.

Imagine what we could do if we stopped staring in the mirror?

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theguardian

THEWOMEN'S
BLOG



Friday 28 March 2014

Laura Bates

02. Sexism in the technology industry: the website that says it all

Hot Tech Today has hit on what it thinks is the innovative idea of combining technology news with naked women. It's another setback for those battling misogyny in the tech world



Women working in the male-dominated tech industry can encounter sexist attitudes. Photograph: Niko Guido/Getty Images

You know when you're looking for information about a new gadget or technology trend, but you just can't concentrate without a pair of breasts to leer at while you do your research? Well, panic no more, because a new website, **Hot Tech Today** has solved all your problems. Yes, the self-described "**Tech blog meets Maxim magazine**" has hit on what it seems to think is the innovative idea of combining technology news with naked women ... ta daa! And unfortunately, so far, it hasn't been revealed to be an elaborate spoof.

The site's video **promo** for its upcoming April issue is the easiest way to get a feel for the digital magazine; a bikini-clad model perched on a sofa awkwardly recites a few tech-related snippets before going on to pose for photographs. And just in case you hadn't yet worked out where Hot Tech Today thinks women belong, there's a helpful section showing her dressed as a maid, complete with feather duster. There's even a laptop in the shot with her at one point, but the closest she gets to the keyboard is dusting it daintily in her bra.

In case you're worrying that such a blatantly misogynistic approach might be somewhat alienating for women working in an already male-dominated field, fear not! There's something for the ladies too! Female fans are lucky enough to have the opportunity to send in pictures of themselves to grace the magazine's centrefold ... after they have been voted on by the (implicitly) male readers first, obviously.

So everyone's a winner! (Except, of course, the women working hard to be taken seriously in an industry where they already receive vastly fewer opportunities, lower wages and less respect than their male counterparts. Oh, and the droves of perfectly respectful tech-consuming men who don't happen to be total douchebags. And the whole industry, really, which comes off as excruciatingly outdated and sexist from the whole affair, just when many people within it are working hard to counter this reputation.)

And in case you think there's really no issue with promoting tech as an exclusively male interest, with women strewn about the place like decorative baubles, because it's really all just a bit of fun ... In case you think these misogynistic portrayals of tech as a men's realm, where women only exist to titillate and entertain, don't have any real impact on people's day-to-day lives ... here are some of the stories sent in to the [Everyday Sexism Project](#) by women battling those stereotypes every day in their careers. Try telling them it's all just a bit of harmless fun ...

"Hi, I'm the senior computer tech here, looking at the motherboard.' 'You opened the computer? What a clever girl!'"

"At a dinner for theatre technicians, newcomers were introduced. Each of the men were introduced by the shows they had worked on and tech-related interests and skills they had. I was introduced as 'This is Grace, looking smoking. Don't worry, you'll all get a chance to hit on her later.' No mention of my theatre or tech skills whatever."

"At a networking event, representing my company (me being a certified and pretty awesome technical resource for the company), a guy from one of the biggest prospective customers said he was responsible for deciding if they chose my company or not. He asked what could we offer him in THAT tone that makes you feel uncomfortable ... Ignoring his tone, I started talking about the company, he then interrupted me, got closer and said: 'You don't get it, we are one of the biggest companies here and I am asking what are YOU offering me?'"

"I am an IT professional and have been told I am too pretty to be a programmer, while being patted on the head like a puppy."

"I once worked as an outside IT consultant ... Despite the fact that I had, on average, five years more experience and two years more education than any of the men on the team, took only the challenging service calls and those that involved cleaning up messes made by some of the more junior men on the team, and consistently outperformed everyone else on the team by every measure, I was paid \$2 less per hour than even the entry-level guys. Management rationalised this to me (and themselves) by claiming that it was simply 'risky' to hire women in IT."

"The manager, however, let me know my true worth every day that I came in to file reports. He'd instantly jump in with a back massage the moment he saw me in a chair, constantly told me how he'd love to date me, and even once directly propositioned me while I was actively working on a computer at the repair bench, in the front of the store. I nearly fell out of my chair laughing before I realised he was dead serious."

"I'd routinely show up at customer locations to be greeted with anything from mild scepticism to overt doubt from men and women alike. 'I didn't know women could fix computers!' was a greeting I expected to hear on at least 30% of my service calls. I had the pleasure of responding: 'This is just an easy part-time student job I have while I'm finishing my degree in high energy physics and distributed computing.'"

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