

Fat isn't a bad word



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FEATURE EDITOR

"Stop eating," said self-proclaimed comedian Nicole Arbour while pretending to hold a big sandwich and making an exaggerated double-chin face.

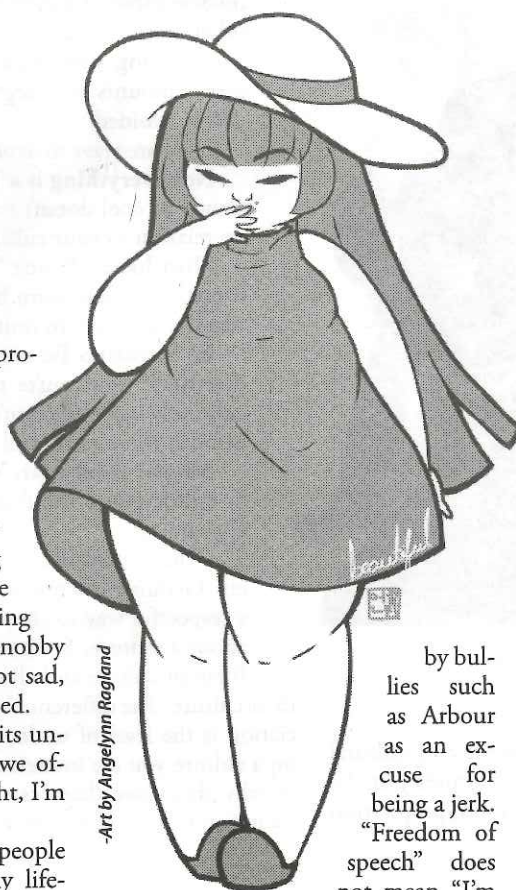
In early September, Arbour posted a "comedy" video putting down fat people. The only people I could imagine possibly laughing at that video are immature or snobby people. Almost everyone else got sad, annoyed, ashamed, or embarrassed.

"Shame people with bad habits until they stop," Arbour said. "If we offend you so much you lose weight, I'm okay with that."

We don't need to shame fat people for their hypothetical unhealthy lifestyles to "get them to lose weight" for two reasons. Firstly, fat doesn't necessarily mean unhealthy, and skinny doesn't necessarily mean healthy. Fat people can do things to improve their health and still not lose the weight. Skinny people can never exercise and eat fast food every day and remain skinny and "healthy-looking." It's a part of genetics. Fat people are treated like an eyesore by judgmental people, no matter what they do.

Secondly, shaming someone into changing will make them want to change themselves in an unhealthy way. People being shamed into losing weight will try to lose it fast. They could try to starve themselves or force-vomit their food and hate their body for a very long time. People who are motivated to get healthy for their own, internal reasons will take the time it requires and accept that they will be proud of themselves for becoming healthy, whether it makes a physical difference or not.

"Freedom of speech" is often used



-Art by Angelynn Ragland

by bullies such as Arbour as an excuse for being a jerk. "Freedom of speech" does not mean "I'm

allowed to be mean or make you feel bad about yourself or say something offensive if I want to, because I can say whatever I want." Freedom of speech means "I can advocate for something or against something if I want to, as long as I do so in a way that does not hurt other human beings, directly or indirectly."

To anyone who feels self-conscious about their weight: You can be confident and feel good-looking too. Being skinny doesn't necessarily lead to healthiness or satisfaction, and if you are really determined to lose weight, you should make sure you know your reasons for wanting to be skinny and how to do it healthfully first. And to everyone else: Please don't make fun of people. Fat people know they're fat and don't need you treating them like they don't have feelings. Encourage them to be happy with themselves.

My experience with having a Valentine's birthday



DORRIAN MURPHY
THOUGHTS EDITOR

I was born around 7:30 p.m. on Valentine's Day.

There are a ton of perks to being born on a holiday. People always remember your birthday, there are holiday sales and specials going on when you have gift money, and you get a lot of attention for it.

What kind of sucks—especially for gift-giving holiday birthdays—is your presents get combined to make up for both holidays, getting you either half the presents or two-in-one holiday-themed gifts. This is probably worse for Christmas babies, but I can definitely relate. It's a little weird getting a bunch of Valentine's cards and bears and balloons from CVS for your birthday. Not that I really care. Valentine's Day means I get a ton of chocolate, and I'm fine with that, but some people get stuck with Christmas sweaters for their birthday.

This especially applies to new friends you make throughout the year. They think it's original of them to buy you gifts relevant to

your holiday birthday—which is so sweet, and I can't look a gift horse in the mouth—but behind the grateful smile is the awkward pain of getting this gift a million times before but not having the heart to tell them.

You can also get overshadowed by the holiday. Again, the early winter holiday kids feel this a lot, but when your family is overwhelmed with gift shopping and giving, they only have a second to wish you a happy

birthday. Ouch.

In my case, my parents probably want to go on a date, but it's my birthday, so they're stuck chilling with me. It becomes a family holiday instead of just my birthday, and my dad says something cheesy like, "We can celebrate our marriage! You're the literal result, born on the day of love from us being in love!" It's kind of selfish for me to want my own holiday, but can you blame me?



The chances of being born on a holiday are pretty slim, but we should try to take advantage of these birthdays. You may get pushed aside for a Christmas tree or a shamrock or an Easter egg or whatever, but the holiday can make your birthday a little more fun. Everyone's celebrating around you, and every time you see a "happy (insert holiday here)!" post, you feel like they're saying happy birthday to you without knowing it.

We can't protect ourselves from fear of guns with more guns



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When people want guns, it's usually to protect themselves from other people with guns. Whether it's a trigger-happy cop or robber under your bed, terrified people feel that they should have the freedom to bear arms to protect themselves wherever they go. I don't believe that's such a good idea.

I can understand why one would want a gun to keep in a bedside drawer, aiding with paranoia over burglars or something, but why do people want to be able to carry guns wherever they want? You have, sat in a sling on your hip, the power to kill wherever you go. Weapons give a power complex with the idea that you can just lift your shirt and show the handgun hanging by your side to get what you want. And in the hands of someone with a bad temper? I don't even want to think about it.

A study by economist Richard Florida in 2011 tried to find the correlations between gun deaths and other kinds of social indicators. "Higher populations, more stress, more immigrants, and more mental illness were not correlated with more deaths from gun violence. But one thing he found was,

perhaps, perfectly predictable: States with tighter gun control laws appear to have fewer gun-related deaths."

The solution to a fear of guns is not giving us full access to "protect ourselves more." The solution is trying to push further restriction on guns. Now, I don't want guns to be gone altogether. Like I said, small guns within the home and with ethical police officers would help with widespread paranoia. We just need a tighter grip on who can get a gun, and we shouldn't give police the option to use it as a first choice.

The fact that we want to keep murder weapons accessible to the general public because it's "a part of American culture" is bull. It's a part of American culture to have the right to take a lethal weapon with you to Wal-Mart? People often say that it's their right, written in the Second Amendment of the Constitution. But what about the charges caused by potential injury and murder? The general self-defense law is "[a] person is privileged to use such force as reasonably appears necessary to defend him or herself against an apparent threat of unlawful and immediate violence from another." Circumstances have to be pretty extreme to warrant a legal killing. This doesn't just apply to guns, either.

My good pal Preston here said it himself; "A knife does not offer the same firepower, and a bomb releases all of its destruc-



-Art by Gia Buttiglione

tive power at one time... Firearms are the ideal tools to stop armed criminals in action." You truly can kill people with a lot of things, but a gun is definitely the most effective. Yeah, you can kill all criminals and terrorists that break into your house all the time and be a big ol' hero, but you can also stop plenty of civilians in their tracks at the sights—and maybe even the sensations—of a benevolent person with their gun.

Counselor Chaos

For now, new alpha system is detrimental

At the beginning of the school year, PHS implemented a new counseling system, which assigns students to counselors based on last name rather than grade level. PHS is the last Pflugerville ISD high school to switch, at the district's request, to the "Alpha" system. The switch from a grade-level system to an alphabetical one was made possible by the addition of a fifth guidance counselor.

While this change will not affect the senior class, as Lonnie Perez remains the senior counselor, it will negatively impact many sophomores and juniors this year.

The new counselor system will make it difficult for counselors and students to form a close relationship with each other, and there is a likely chance that students will find their counselor unfamiliar after they go through so many. The junior class switched counselors between their freshman and sophomore year. Depending on their last name, many juniors have yet another new counselor this year. This has made it difficult to establish a lasting student-and-counselor connection.

While the new counseling system is organized by last name, assistant principals are

still organized by grade level. That means each counselor will have to juggle four assistant principals, and each assistant principal will have to juggle four counselors. The old bond between the grade-level principal, grade-level counselor and the student has been shattered.

Supporters of the alpha system say that it will be easier for counselors to establish relationships with multi-child families, and that having a fifth counselor will decrease workload. However, grouping students just because they are siblings can lead to bias. In addition, The American School Counselor's Association says that if counselors keep their caseload of students under 250, they will form better bonds with their students and be able to assist them better. It will be less stress on both the student and the counselor. However, for our five guidance counselors to have 250 students each, the school would need about 1,000 fewer students than we currently have. Therefore, the change in caseloads is not significant enough to assist counselors or students.

This is not a problem that affects everyone. It also may not be seen as an issue in the future, once counselors have had time



-Art by Miranda Bomer

to establish relationships with their new students. Eventually everyone, including the seniors, will have a counselor determined by last name. However, for those it does affect, this year could be jarring. If the school is in need of a fifth counselor, more focus should be given to the largest class, or to the college and career aspect of counseling. Or, at the very least, exceptions should be granted to those students who have special circum-

stances or intense bonds with their former grade-level counselors. The point of a counselor is to bridge the gap into post-secondary education by providing students with academic and emotional support. However, a true bond cannot be achieved without the consistency of one counselor.

STAFFSTANCE

#Meninism Twitter trend is controversial, contradictory



DORRIAN MURPHY
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Women have had to constantly endure new types of sexism and meet ever-changing standards for respect through the ages. This pattern continues as a new Twitter trend has formed as a way for men's rights activists to "get back" at feminists. The group calls themselves #meninists—feminists for men. The whole movement exists, at its core, to try to promote the gender equality that feminism has been advocating for years. Meninists do have some valid points, but they are addressing them in the wrong way by attacking feminists and making insulting jokes about women.

In reality, it is possible for men to be feminists. Feminism was created in an attempt to gain peace between genders. So, if you support equal opportunity for all genders, technically you support all of the fundamental values of feminism. But it has the 'fem-' prefix, so it must mean that women have been banding together and concocting a scheme take over the world and enslave all the bros, right?



Wrong. The word "feminism" connotes to some that feminists are only fighting for women's rights and ignoring the fact that men have issues too. Of course, men do face societal issues and unrealistic expectations. Non-masculine men are ridiculed for being "unattractive" and "weak." Masculine men are put down for being "unintelligent." Gay men are turned into an insult and a TV trope. All other types of gay men don't exist, apparently, because they get no attention

or representation. And transgender men and men of color live in constant fear of being assaulted or killed. Every good, non-matriarchal feminist knows of these legitimate men's rights issues.

The thing about #meninism is that it does not actively advocate for any of these men. It's just a ridiculous Twitter movement dedicated to making feminists into the villains and selling T-shirts. If you've started a "movement," then why not actually try to

use it to help?

Because, to be honest, the ones who are actually trying to make change for gender equality are the feminists, and at the end of the day, the same stereotypes expect men to be strong that expect women to be weak. At the end of the day, all of our self-esteem is so low for being "too fake" or "too girly" that we put others down when we should all stand up together. At the end of the day, no one benefits from insults, and we reinforce the patriarchy that prohibits any diversity within our gender roles.

So next time you don't understand a movement, don't kick and cry and scream because you feel excluded. Putting down an oppressed party because they are trying to create their own movement just makes you look like the oppressor. Ask questions if you don't understand instead of plugging your ears because you're hurt. Find out how you can support them instead of retaliating with venom in your voice. There is a place in every movement for anyone who wants to help.