



## You Have the Right to Remain Fat

*Virgie Tovar*

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Growing up as a fat girl, Virgie Tovar believed that her body was something to be fixed. But after two decades of dieting and constant guilt, she was over it—and gave herself the freedom to trust her own body again. Ever since, she's been helping others to do the same. Tovar is hungry for a world where bodies are valued equally, food is free from moral judgment, and you can jiggle through life with respect. In concise and candid language, she delves into unlearning fatphobia, dismantling sexist notions of fashion, and how to reject diet culture's greatest lie: that fat people need to wait before beginning their best lives.

## You Have the Right to Remain Fat Details

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## From Reader Review You Have the Right to Remain Fat for online ebook

### Charlott says

Virgie Tovar is an author, researcher, activist, former Buzzfeed-style writer - and so much more. She regularly gives lectures and organizes workshops on body image and fat discrimination. In 2012, she edited the anthology *Hot & Heavy: Fierce Fat Girls on Life, Love and Fashion*, which I really enjoyed when I read it five years ago. Now her newest book is out: *You Have the Right to Remain Fat: A Manifesto*.

In this slim volume, Tovar combines autobiographical writing with wider political analysis, alternating between vignettes from her life, and spotlights on different topics such as the link between diet culture and fat hatred (also outlining what diet culture actually means), the intersections of sexism, racism, classism, and the way we categorize body sizes, and the history and foci of earlier fat activism (in the US). Tovar emphasizes how body policing tries to keep us small - literally and metaphorically. In her last three chapters, which are aptly and poignantly titled "In the Future, I'm Fat", "I Want Freedom", and "You Have the Right to Remain Fat" the "manifesto" part of the book's title shines through the most obvious. She writes: "My life wouldn't be easier if I were thin. My life would be easier if this culture wasn't obsessed with oppressing me because I'm fat. The solution to a problem like bigotry is not to do everything in our power to accommodate the bigotry. It is to get rid of the bigotry. In the dreams I have of my future, I am fat. This simple fact was hard won".

The writing is on point throughout the book and the pages are filled with very quotable paragraphs. I love how Tovar does not shy away from critiquing how fat activism, when absolved from its queer and radical roots (and re-named body positivity), loses much of its clear vision and impact, more concerned with politeness, access to privileges, and in a complex way still catering to straight men. So yes, there is much goodness in this beautiful book and will make a good present for many people in my (and your lives). My only small-ish gripe: It is quite short, which is not in itself a critique, but in this book it shows. I don't say this book needs to be hundreds of pages long, but a few pages more (also adding a few more citations) to some of the chapters would have been wonderful. But all in all, it was an uplifting, angry, and powerful read.

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### Karla Strand says

For full review, see: [F\\*ck Your Fatphobia](#).

Overall, I really enjoyed this slim volume and read it in one afternoon. One of the strengths of this book is its accessibility. Tovar is very good at explaining some basic concepts for those who may be new to them, such as bootstrapping and gaslighting, and then builds information on these concepts as the book goes on.

And indeed, the book gets stronger and more impassioned as it goes on. Tovar intersperses information about fat discrimination and body image with her own personal experiences which really helps to illustrate the concepts.

Throughout the book, Tovar discusses topics such as body shame, fatphobia, and diet culture, which are the main culprits behind the lies we tell ourselves that as women, and especially as fat women, our bodies are somehow wrong.

But Tovar goes a step further and explains how these issues are actually,

merely symptoms of a larger cultural problem, not least our country's history of unresolved racism, white supremacy, classism, and misogyny.

In no uncertain terms, Tovar argues that unrealistic existing beauty standards are built on this foundation and have been undermining women's self-trust and control over their own lives.

Well, Tovar isn't gonna take it anymore and neither should you. What really resonated with me was Tovar's frustration with putting her life on hold because of her fatness, always feeling like she will really live only once she loses weight. She will wear a bikini when she loses weight or she will travel when she loses weight or will have more sex when she loses weight. This internalized inferiority is something most women experience so much, we don't even realize it.

Rather than recognizing the multiplicity of feminine expression and feminine power (regardless of sex assignment at birth, ability, size, the presence or absence of modesty or money), women in pursuit of thinness become complicit in their own dehumanization and therefore become agents of misogyny.

At a certain point, Virgie Tovar decided to stop dieting and abiding by society's arbitrarily constructed standards and just start living. Not later. NOW.

Something else I appreciated about this book was Tovar's attention to the difference between the fat activist and body positivity movements. For instance, Tovar argues that fat activism has proud queer and political roots and is fighting to tear down the oppressive system of dangerous body ideals, while body positivity adherents wish to assimilate into this system, despite its racist, patriarchal, fatphobic undertones. While only an introduction, this section is just enough to inspire readers to examine these movements further.

Fatphobia affects us all and Virgie Tovar's *You Have the Right to Remain Fat* is an accessible place for anyone to start learning how to fight against it. A determined call to action, this is a quick read that packs a punch. Pick it up if you are a womxn or love a womxn. Full stop.

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### **Abbyforth says**

This book is a short but powerful take on fat acceptance and intersectional feminism. Tovar tackles diet culture and fatphobia head on in a thought-provoking and digestible book. *You Have the Right to Remain Fat* serves as an effective introduction to fat activism: it doesn't aim to be an exhaustive one-stop resource, but rather a stirring manifesto. I can think of several friends who are deep in diet culture who would benefit from reading this book.

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### **Shayna Medinger says**

While this book is short and may not be as mind-blowing to more seasoned fat activists, I can see this being a staple for anyone interested in body politics -- from those totally new to the idea to those well versed in it. I read this in one sitting and already know I'll be reading it numerous times in the future. Virgie Tovar had always had a way with words and with raw truth in story-telling, and this book is no different. For such a

small book, it dives into so many big topics -- such as how fatness and race intersect and the ties between classism and fatphobia -- and left me feeling raw, emotional, and with a renewed sense of self. A must read book!

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### **Carly says**

If I could give this 100 stars, I would, without irony. I'm just going to say it: Virgie Tovar is the feminist theorist of our generation. This book is monumentally important, wholly original in its voice and approach, and radical as the day is long. Fat liberation is everything, and Virgie is \*the\* revolutionary thinker and writer needed to boldly decry capitalist body positive half-measures in favor of true freedom for the masses. Not placing body liberation at the center of our politics leaves contemporary feminism half-formed and feeble. I want to throw this book from rooftops. I want to slip it in mailboxes. I want to nail it to doors like the seditious, ground-shaking literature it is. If only there were 900 more pages. Brava, and God bless Virgie Tovar.

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### **Kathryn says**

I was really pleasantly surprised by this book. I love Virgie Tovar, but a lot of the fat positivity/fat liberation books I've been reading recently have still been prioritizing feeling good and loving yourself, and in this short book Tovar really focuses on the culture that makes hating one's body possible. At every turn, she affirms that your responses to this culture - to bigotry and oppression and fatphobia and mistreatment and the dismissal of your gut instincts - are correct. But she does not present options that prioritize your feelings. The solution to bigotry is not to love yourself more; it's to remove the bigotry. When the bigotry is removed and bodies are free and liberated, self-love will come naturally. But in the meantime, feeling good about your personal self is not the correct scale response to systemic oppression. I really appreciated her clarity of vision and message.

This book is like 100 pages and well worth reading.

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### **Bri Little says**

I was so so excited for this book to come out and Virgie certainly did not disappoint. Her manifesto is part memoir, part culture critique and features excellent research and commentary on fatphobia and how diet culture and fear of fatness is directly linked to misogyny. I admire the surety with which Tovar names the hatred and shame fat people are made to feel not by our own shortcomings, but because of the culture we live in that aims to strip us of agency and the magic of our own bodies. Her experience with dieting, dating, and people in her life who reinforce fatphobia hit home for me. I especially enjoyed how she addressed fatphobia at all its intersections. Her critique of the body positivity movement and its centering of cis, straight white women who crave desirability rather than freedom reminds us that there's so much work left to do in the mainstream and that we should move toward a queer politic that acknowledges the different, more nuanced ways people are shamed for their bodies.

This is such a precious, timely read and I will probably reread sometime soon.

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### **Elena says**

It's said that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, or its size, rather, in this case (no pun intended). Nevertheless: a very small, very thin book with large letters about a topic of massive controversy and relevance, well that's a challenge. I wish Tovar had succeeded in this regard, but she didn't, and to be honest, knowing her agenda before reading it, this didn't come as a big surprise. To start with the positive, there is without any doubt some true and relevant content in this little book. For example when Tovar writes "Stop. Stop being terrified of fatness. Stop marginalizing fat people [...] Every person, regardless of weight or health status deserves a life completely free from bigotry and discrimination". Yes, and yes again. This is the message, every reasonable and empathetic person could and should sign up for. This is the message that sadly is not conventional wisdom yet. But this is not Tovar's main imperative. Tovar's agenda is intersectionality. And every concept about fat discrimination has to fit into it. Diet culture according to Tovar is mainly an invention of white supremacist men, it's a child of a toxic, racist masculinity, born to control women in every possible regard. There are two main problems I have with this. Intersectionality in itself is a controversial topic. I will not elaborate on this one, since its too large and not my main point of criticism here. Though it should be mentioned that as a strategy it is at best risky to bring up a controversial topic and intertwine it so strongly with an even more controversial one. Nevertheless, the real problems lie in the fact that Tovar makes many claims about the natural world and fails in giving any kind of evidence and that she completely lacks any differentiation between the cultural and political dimensions of "diet culture" or weight issues and the medical ones. The latter she denies without further elaboration, as sadly do most proponents of the "fat acceptance" movement. For example is very questionable, that "diet culture" was ever strategically "invented" since, again, from the perspective of evolutionary psychology or anthropology we have rather reason to believe it developed from our desire to mate with "healthy" partners (and that might indeed have different meanings to different cultures). Not to say those are the facts but a book on that topic at least should discuss the whole picture. As for health the only point Tovar makes is a hint at the 'minority stress model'. Indeed stress seems to worsen on a statistical scale the health of people, who face discrimination. But instead of producing the same symptoms in all oppressed people as a single cause, it rather causes unhealthy behavior of the oppressed and worsens existing conditions (the classic example is the exposure to HIV infections). The mountain of evidence for causal health problems produced by excess weight (whatever that is, indeed it is worth discussing!) doesn't exist in the world Tovar paints here. It's a world with a massive ideological superstructure and tiny feet on a mainly non existent ground (reality). It's no surprise that all the praises for the book come from within the bubble of 'fat acceptance' subculture, Tovar is part of. A message that so consequently ignores fundamental realities will never make it into the mainstream, what is a tragedy because the topic of fat stigma is still underrepresented in literature.

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### **Carla Estruch says**

Si este libro hubiese existido hace cinco años, habría cambiado muchísimo a la Carla de aquel entonces. La de ahora ya está cambiada y bastante contenta con su cuerpo (carrera de fondo, ya sabéis), pero nunca viene mal renovar ese sentimiento de lucha y ganas de libertad que desprenden libros como el de Tovar.

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### **meeshell says**

Thank you to edelweiss for the E-ARC copy of this book.

I was not entirely familiar with this author's work, but a friend assured me she's awesome. I was not disappointed.

Tovar focuses on how fat phobia should truly be viewed from the perspective of "just let me be fat", instead of fighting so much. If you don't make demands the other side can not fight with you.

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### **'Patricia Wheeler says**

I've had the pleasure to meet Virgie in person at a lingerie show for the plus size community, right after her first book came out. I have been following Virgie Tovar for a couple of years, #losehatenotweight has been my motto since first coming across it. I frickin love this book, her other books and her posts. I happily show my 10 year old daughter all the body positive books and people I come across. Its time for a change..... 1 person at a time can make a difference. be that change today.

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### **Carolyn says**

I give this book a high rating because I am invested in this topic and support the eradication of fatphobia. However, this book was way too short. If the author had done seven years of research into fatphobia studies, then where is all this information? I was hoping for a dieting-focused version of the Beauty Myth but it seemed more like a small summary of the author's experiences and thoughts. There is much more to be said about the misogyny and sexism in this culture that is hard to recognize and articulate.

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### **Leixuri says**

Me encanto este libro. Me hizo reflexionar sobre la gordofobia que nos inculcan desde pequeños/as desde la sociedad. Y lo cruel que esto resulta para nuestras mentes y cuerpos. Como la mayoría de la sociedad miramos a las/os gordas/os como personas enfermas y no somos capaces de ver más allá de su físico. Ya que nos da miedo saber que le pasa, si es feliz como es... Lo único que nos preocupa como individuos/as es no ser gordos/as por no encajaremos en esta sociedad construida para delgados/as.

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### **Elizabeth Moffat says**

First of all, thank you so much to Nikki Griffiths for getting in touch and inviting me to take part in this blog tour and to Melville House UK for providing me with a copy of this slim but incredibly powerful feminist manifesto in exchange for an honest review. I'm a huge supporter of women, no matter what their size or shape and pretty much jumped at the chance to become much more well versed in a topic that is always hanging around the periphery of my consciousness but I never give myself much of a chance to think about because, quite frankly, it can get a little bit upsetting and frustrating. Virgie Tovar takes our biggest fears about being female and of what is expected of us in a society increasingly obsessed with the way a person

looks which apparently defines their entire worth to themselves and others. She completely smashes these often unrealistic expectations into raw, honest thoughts and advice that genuinely feels that it comes directly from her heart.

I described this book as being a "slim volume" but even that feels incredibly judgemental of me! I'd like to change my wording and call it perfectly formed instead. It explores topics that made me nod my head in agreement with Virgie's insightful words (probably like one of those annoying nodding dogs you used to see, do those still exist?!) and other parts, I'm ashamed to say I hadn't even thought about too deeply, particularly how a change of social class and race can also permeate into the general attitudes about size and how "unhealthy/wrong/embarrassing/distasteful" it is. The whole thing with diet culture and how it affects millions of women every day is truly staggering and I gained a whole new level of respect for the author as she shared her own experiences, being perfectly honest about how she used to succumb to the dieting demon, making herself ill in the process to be just a little bit thinner.

I don't know how it has become so ingrained in the minds of society that thin = happy? Of course it's not the case but somehow (and I'm as guilty of it as the next woman), we think we're going to have a better life, perhaps be more attractive to the opposite/same sex, get more respect and have a better chance of achieving that promotion etc etc. I especially connected with Virgie's thoughts about the diet industry at the moment - it's dressed up as "getting healthier" or "taking care of yourself," rather than losing weight, but we know exactly what they're really referring to, don't we?

As for my personal experience, I grew up as a super skinny young woman, with the occasional suggestion I had an eating disorder, I was so thin. (I didn't). Then in my early twenties, I started to gain more weight and I would probably class myself as a curvy girl right now (UK size 14). How does this connect with the book? Well, I'm heartily embarrassed to say this but I used to pray that I would never gain weight, that I would always remain slim. I don't know where I got the idea that it was a terrible thing to have a bit of meat on your bones, I think it was a mixture of what I saw in the media, how my friends looked and acted and how I saw larger people treated regarding their weight. Obviously I have struggled a bit with my new body image and have to admit to those gut-wrenching feelings of wanting to be just a little bit thinner. However, reading this book really did make me feel so much more empowered, both as a woman and about my weight. Whilst it might take a little bit of time to learn to love my shape the way Virgie does, she has taught me about self-love and respect which I sorely needed and opened my eyes to the hypocrisy and unfairness that women who are slightly larger suffer on a daily basis.

For my full review and many more, please visit my blog at <http://www.bibliobeth.com>

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### **Mairead says**

Quick, important, honest must-read.

"To put it plainly, dieting is a little bit like someone pissing on your leg and then telling you it's raining. Except it's more like someone shitting on your face and then asking you for a dollar and then going into your house and systematically shitting on everything of value that you own and then setting that shit-filled home—that was once filled with the sound of laughter and love but that now's just filled with shit—on fire and then blaming you for it.

Dieting is the outcome of the belief that we don't deserve to live life on our own goddamn terms. And that

belief is so entrenched and all-encompassing that it affects even each spoonful of food we eat.”

See also: “My life wouldn’t be easier if I were thin. My life would be easier if this culture wasn’t obsessed with oppressing me because I’m fat. The solution to a problem like bigotry is not to do everything in our power to accommodate the bigotry. It is to get rid of the bigotry.”

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