

“My Takeaway Was Pure Joy”

Since I returned from the Large Women’s Workshop with Marion Ouphouet [see previous two articles], my mind has been reeling with a multitude of thoughts, unleashed memories, directions that evoke tears, and tears shed for my sisters’ stories. Thankfully, my workshop buddies are also my regular Co-Counselors, and we can continue on streams of consciousness and strands of thought that our new awarenesses evoked.

As a Black woman, I have focused my writing and activism mostly on the intersectionality of Black women’s rights, racism, and fighting all the “isms” waged against women and especially women of color. I have neglected to notice how much time I spend each day creating a visual appearance that is uniquely mine yet deflects the observer’s eye from my large size.

Though I have always left a space for large women’s issues in my women’s support group, I haven’t done that in my writing. My excuse has been that they are not high enough on the hierarchy of “isms” that I fight to focus my full and precious attention on them.

This workshop brought into focus the many ways that large women’s oppression impacts my life. I realized how many health and appearance-related decisions I make each day and hour, and the huge amount of time I spend pressing against the oppression internally. My feelings about being large in relation to my thin male partner came into focus: “dating while fat,” “he knows you’re big; it’s not a secret,” and so on. I realized that my parents’ stories about food are also my stories. I thought about my mother, who was raised middle class during the Depression, and how her attitudes about food, scarcity, and obesity had impacted me.

This workshop was a wonderful experience. It was full of tears and empathy—and beautiful, caring women in a sisterhood within which we can stand tall and feel fully proud, perfect, and loved by ourselves and each other. My takeaway [what I took away] was pure joy!

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