

# Refire

A SIX WEEK SERIES



## Workbook

Refire, a six-week speaker series in the spring of 2021, gathered six experts in their chosen fields to talk about making meaningful changes to the systemic issues that plague hospitality. Each speaker brought their unique experiences from outside of our industry and applied them to problems we encounter at our workplaces everyday. We asked them all to supply actionable steps we might take as individuals and as a community to make a kinder, more equitable future. This workbook is a collection of resources in one centralized location for you to make notes, add your thoughts, and refer back to whenever you might need a refresher. We also will be sifting out important concepts and defining and delving into the words that are the foundation to transformation. We encourage you to flesh out your own reflections, and challenge you to use these conversations as the jumping off point for creating change within your own sphere.

© 2021 Beam Suntory, Inc., Merchandise Mart, 222 W. Merchandise Mart Plaza, Suite 1600, Chicago, IL 60654

drink  smart®

# Refire

A SIX WEEK SERIES

X Paper  
X Pencil  
X Open Mind

THE BLEND  
by Beam Suntory

© 2021 Beam Suntory, Inc., Merchandise Mart, 222 W. Merchandise Mart Plaza, Suite 1600, Chicago, IL 60654

## WORKBOOK CHECKLIST

Now it's up to all of us! Our Refire speakers asked us a lot of questions and called out some important actions we can take to build a better future in our workplaces and communities. So let's strategize! This workbook was created as a space for reflection. The last page is great to print out and write on, or you can grab your favorite pen and notebook to journal your thoughts. Our hope was that bringing all of the information together might help build a guide to plan out the meaningful changes we all want to make. We can't wait to see what this community can do.

© 2021 Beam Suntory, Inc., Merchandise Mart, 222 W. Merchandise Mart Plaza, Suite 1600, Chicago, IL 60654

drink  smart®

# Weight Discrimination & Anti-Fatness WITH VIRGIE TOVAR

Robin Nance talking about weight discrimination and anti-fatness with Virgie Tovar, author and fat activist, was a window into a topic that often gets overlooked in discussions of inclusivity and accessibility. As hospitality professionals, Virgie posed the question: are all of the spaces we inhabit and the words we use welcoming to bodies of all sizes? Let's take a look at how we can make changes that benefit our community and the bottom line, too! Virgie thinks hospitality folks like us just might be the visionaries we need.

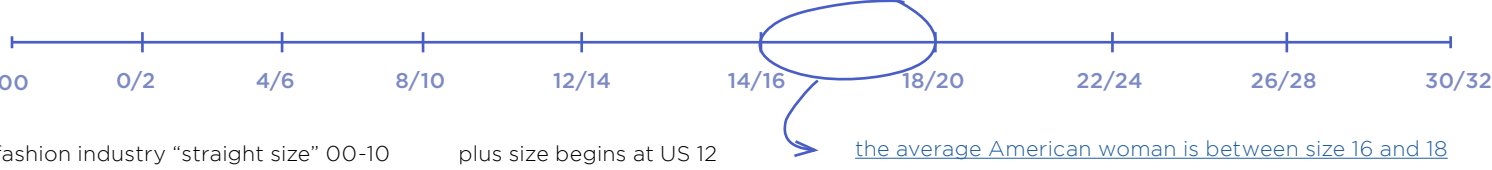


We need to prioritize fat discrimination as a legitimate form of Bigotry.

VIRGIE TOVAR

## BIGOTRY IN THE FORM OF FAT DISCRIMINATION

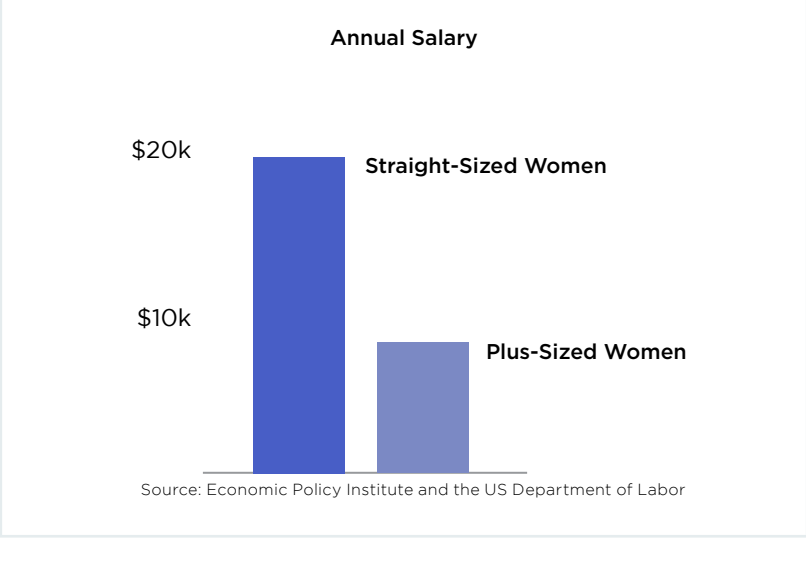
**Fat-phobia** is a form of bias where people have an irrational fear, aversion or discriminate against people they perceive as fat or obese. Other terms that we might see include anti-fatness and fat discrimination. Virgie describes the culture we live in as having “extremely negative attitudes towards higher-weight people and weight gain” and that “the attitudes and behaviors that target higher weight people 100% overlay with the criteria for discrimination and bigotry.”



## WHERE DOES WEIGHT BIAS SHOW UP?

### WAGE GAP

Fat discrimination exists in the workplace, and as Virgie points out “plus-size women make anywhere between **\$9,000 and \$19,000** less per year than their straight [size] counterparts.”



### [MIS]REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA

Plus-size people have little to no representation in the media. When people in bigger bodies are included, it is generally no more than a trope, prop or stereotype:

Represented as a joke; less-than  
Hyper-sexualized or Asexual  
Evil or Villainous

### MEDICAL BIAS

Western standards of health and the use of the BMI as a measurement of health are misleading and harmful. Evidence shows that doctors and healthcare professionals have some of the most entrenched anti-fat bias of any profession. Plus-size patients are **less likely** to get screened for cancer, and more likely to be prescribed diet or weight loss regimens - regardless of their symptoms or condition.

## Body Mass Index (BMI) History

The BMI has been problematic and racist since it was first conceived in 1830. The use of the BMI over the next nearly 200 years as a standard measure of health has contributed to physician weight discrimination, medical racism and fatphobia resulting in **70-million** Americans inaccurately categorized according to this flawed system today.

The BMI was invented by Adolphe Jacques Quetelet, a Belgian mathematician and statistician. He was part of a sociological study to determine the average mathematical weight of the average man. This work was never meant to measure individual health and the only participants in his study were white European men, thus the standard body mass calculations excluded any other genders, ethnicities, or anyone with a disability. By the turn of the next century The Quetelet Index was used as scientific justification for eugenics, the practice of sterilizing the disabled, the poor, immigrants and people of color. As we moved into the 20th century, insurance actuaries used it to create tables to gauge life expectancy, and those tables moved into the medical field as doctors started using them to judge health. The Body Mass Index was coined in the 70's. In 1985 the National Institute of Health linked individual BMI to overall personal health and in 1998 that standard changed, lowering the ideal BMI number. This instantly categorized more people as obese. Through all of this, the basic calculations have stayed the same. The BMI continues to diagnose health based on an outdated, inaccurate and biased system rooted in whiteness.

Oh, my God, the BMI. The BMI is such hot trash.

VIRGIE TOVAR

## BODY POSITIVITY VS FAT ACTIVISM

These discriminatory practices have led to a social and political movement referred to as **fat activism**, which seeks to raise awareness about the cultural attitudes towards larger-bodied people, and dismantle the systemic issues that continue the cycle of weight discrimination. “**Body positivity**” is a social movement to empower people in bigger bodies, and challenge the way society views beauty standards. This differs from fat-activism and **fat acceptance** which takes it a step further by concentrating on collectively banding together to affect change through the political system. Virgie breaks down the difference [here](#).

The word fat is weaponized against higher weight people. You cannot take that word from me. It is my word, it is my body.

VIRGIE TOVAR

## LANGUAGE TO TRASH

### “You Look Like You’ve Lost Weight”

Phrases like this demonstrate to an employee, coworker, guest/regular that their body size is being tracked. Even though people understand this to be a compliment, Virgie notes that it often “creates a sense that my body is being watched, and, according to research, when I regain that weight, those attitudes are going to go away, those compliments are going to go away, and then I'm going to feel like garbage.” Don't refer to people's weight. If we must compare size, use bigger and smaller bodies and leave weight out of it.

## DISCRIMINATORY DISCRIPTORS

### ASSESSMENT & MORALIZING

Shaming language like guilty, indulgent, addictive, binge, sinful, and cheat tells people how they should feel when eating, and implies that everyone is dieting. Innocent, guilt-free, detoxing, cleanse, and skinny, assign a higher morality to certain foods considered healthier, and in some cases refer to potentially restricting or unsustainable eating habits.

### DESCRIPTIVE & FACTUAL

Be specific! Use descriptors such as:

- Delicious
- Irresistible
- Staff Pick
- Minimally-Processed
- No Refined Sugar
- Certified Organic

## ECONOMICS OF INCLUSIVITY

We, as a culture, are led to believe that thin people are the norm. This societal norm contributes to uninformed decision making, especially when it comes to business decisions and guest interactions. Virgie points out, “Because of this belief of the thin person as the majority client, biggest spender, the most important-- which is all a product of fatphobia-- you're leaving behind 70% of the population, which **potentially could be 70% of your market.**”

Applying what we know about the US population, it is reasonable to assume that 70% of guests we serve in hospitality are in bigger bodies and/or plus size. So how do we start actively designing for and including this guest in the future of hospitality? Virgie says, “I want to invite hospitality professionals to go outside of their comfort zone and imagine creating that magic for every person, regardless of their size.” [Check out Virgie's articles in Forbes here.](#)

Fat people are not failed thin people.

VIRGIE TOVAR

# Weight Discrimination & Anti-Fatness

## WORKSHEET

### Language

Are you using language that normalizes the idea that thin is good and fat is bad? Are menus free of moralizing language? (e.g. guilt free heart attack special)

Does your staff know that weight loss challenges or talking negatively about weight gain/higher weight people is size bias?

When choosing staff uniforms are we considering all sizes and shapes of bodies? (e.g Button down shirts are not inclusive)

### Space

Do you know the dimensions of all your seating doorways and bathroom stalls?

What might make a plus size patron feel welcome in your space?  
Is this information available on your website?

Are there non-booth seats, seats without armrests, seats with over a 250 pound limit?



*Marketing*

Is this information available on your website?

Do your marketing materials have photos of plus size models and patrons?

Does your marketing articulate your commitment to working on size inclusion?

