

'Fat Activist' Speaks at Public Health School, Denounces 'Thin Privilege'

By Emily Zanotti | 9:21 pm, May 10, 2016

The University of Minnesota's School of Public Health was a lot less healthy this week.

In celebration of "[International No Diet Day](#)," the school of public health, [together with the University of Minnesota's School of Social Work and its College of Food and Agriculture](#), invited Virgie Tovar, a self-proclaimed "fat activist," to [instruct America's future nutritionists, dietitians and social workers](#) on the finer points of "fat oppression."

Tovar's talk, entitled "Dispelling Myths: Fat, Fatphobia, and Challenging Social Stereotypes," was designed to help students understand that "fat phobia" is rampant in a "white, heteronormative society" that is looking to actively oppress people with larger body types. Society's bias against fat people is, apparently, a form of bigotry and discrimination, evident in everything from sexual preferences to the size of seats on public transportation.

She even, reportedly, compared society's anti-fat culture to so-called "rape culture," and chastised society for its obsession with what she termed "thin privilege."

According to Tovar, the students, who study *public health* ([at one of the top 10 schools for public health](#)), shouldn't push people they deem overweight to shed pounds, even if it's better overall for health. "Weight loss is not a realistic goal for most people," she said, declaring that exercise and diet are "social constructs." She implored her audience to "lose hate, not weight" and rebel against "diet culture." (Diets are, of course, just a tool of the hetero-normative Patriarchy.)

She did not specify how "losing hate" would have the same impact on, say, your chances of dying of heart disease, but we assume she was not referring to any scientific understanding of human anatomy or disease.

No surprise, Tovar, who lists her occupation as "fat activist," has a Masters in Human Sexuality—with a focus on the "intersection of body size, race and gender"—and taught at the University of California, at Berkeley, where that is considered an actual academic field of study. Her expertise is wide-ranging.

If you feel as though you've missed out on her speech at UMinn, [for a cool \\$100 you can take her four-week interactive course, called "BabeCamp"](#), which will teach you how diet culture is ruining your life. It's not a real camp, though—it's four interactive webinars and a daily action email—but you do get a certificate at the end. No need to get off the couch.