

Transcript for The Who's Dat Phat Girl Podcast - With Brooke Hoover
EPISODE #28- Show BIGness

Hey y'all, I'm Brooke Hoover. A Louisiana native, actor, writer and comedian. I've lost 100 pounds through diet and exercise or shall I say "lifestyle changes". My twenty year and counting health journey has taught me that just like taking a diet pill for weight loss, body positivity doesn't magically happen overnight. I'm working on re-gaining my self esteem and re-kindling my love affair with Cajun and Southern comfort food in a healthier way all the while juggling eating as clean as I can, re-establishing myself in the entertainment industry which, as we know, is historically fat phobic all the while showing my inner phat girl some love - that's phat with a PH - pretty hot and tempting. Let me tell y'all a tale or two...

We're gonna start off this business with a little song, y'all..
 (Singing)

There's no business like Show Business like no business I knowoooooow

Y'all may have heard Annie in the background barking because she loves a good show tune, too. She's a show biz doggy. So we're talking about show business today. The episode called Show BIGness because we're talking about my bigness in the business of show.

Ah, show business y'all.

It's a business where they can fat shame you with no repercussions. Which I kind of appreciate in a way because at least you know where you stand. Oh, there's many other businesses out there who don't hire a person for their size (among other things - race, sexual orientation, general appearance) but in the acting world, I actually don't mind it. I've always kind of known where I've stood. I prefer aggressiveness to passive aggressiveness ANY DAY.

Case in point: day jobs for actors often involve being a server or being a temp. I went down the temp route. One day, in the middle of July in the summer heat in the early 2000's, I had a job interview to be a temp to hire receptionist for a non-profit. I had white Nautica chinos and a blue blouse and a black poplin blazer thing, the best of the best my business casual summer edition. Looking back I don't know what I was thinking. But, I went in to the interview with my 220 pound self. I stood outside the building and switched from my Birkenstocks to my low black heels for temp jobs. I was sweaty as hell but trying my hardest and I was totally qualified for the job, mind y'all. The interview went well enough but I could tell the lady interviewing me just wasn't feeling me.

A few days later I got a call from the temp agency saying I wasn't hired. She went on to tell me WHY I wasn't hired (I didn't even ask - honestly - that's why I was doing mindless temp work so that I could put my effort into my ART not into my day job.) The temp agency lady says, "Well, the lady you interviewed with said you weren't

dressed appropriately and your appearance was disheveled.” She didn’t mention that on my resume I had had a decade of office experience and could handle multi-line phones and 98 words per minute in my sleep. And, instead of me saying, “Lady I’m a poor overweight actor and it’s the middle of July in New York City. I’m doing my best.” I CRIED. I was in the middle of a Starbucks in Columbus Circle and I started bawling like an IDIOT. ABOUT A TEMP JOB.

I tell this tale because in the acting world, you know the role you’re auditioning for in advance. And you hardly EVER hear back when you do NOT book the job. And it’s actually kind of easier. I prefer it that way. It’s easier for me to assume that I just suck than for someone else to tell me exactly why I suck. Ohhhhh I don’t really mean that, y’all. When actors don’t get a role, it isn’t because we suck, it’s because we remind the director of their ex-wife, we look too similar to the lead or it just wasn’t meant to be, right?

This passive aggressive office culture BS is also why I stopped being a TEMP and dove into Show Business - Show BIGness even harder to make IT my “day job”. I’d rather be chewed up and swallowed by Monstro the whale from Pinocchio than lightly bitten by mosquitos for the rest of my life.

I’d rather know what I’m getting into in advance...and with the acting world, usually you do because they can say, “seeking a temp to perm receptionist. Must look like she stepped out of a 1999 Talbot’s magazine, straight hair up in a French twist, ideally a size 6 to be slender enough but not too slender so she doesn’t border the line of Calvin Klein 1990’s Uber skinny heroin chic. She must never sweat, literally or figuratively.” In show business you can do that. In the regular job industry, you can’t. Unless you want a law suit.

But, dealing with my BIGness in this Show Business was not always so easy.

In college, I was at my heaviest at 250 pounds. But, I still did this crazy Suzuki stomping that we had to do and African dance with the best of them. In fact, African dance was how I found my freedom. I talk about this in another podcast episode Episode 6 Hold me Closer Phatty Dancer - but, it was the first time I was happy and free in my larger body...ever. And it was the first time my fatness was called out by a college professor who goes, “Brooke, I saw you in African Dance Class. You’re a BIGGER girl. You need to use it. You need to own it.” (And I didn’t want to do any of that because I don’t like being told what to do and I didn’t want to own my bigness because I had been chastised about it for so long.) And, also, it was the first time that someone just expected me to hear news like this and just keep moving on like business per usual. It didn’t destroy my love of African dance but it did kind of destroy my sense of self because I thought, “Maybe if I keep doing African dance, maybe if I keep doing Something, I will lose weight and I won’t have to own my bigness. Because people are afraid of my bigness. It makes them uncomfortable. And, I can’t be free if I am making people uncomfortable.” Oooooooh child things are gonna get easier.....

But losing weight and self acceptance still didn't come easy. Upon college graduation, I had an agent who was VERY interested in working with me. ALL of the things she sent me on had "EXTREMELY LARGE or OVERWEIGHT" attached to it. Instead of auditioning happily and laughing all the way to the bank, I took it personally. So, when said agent wanted me to audition for Cirque de Soleil, before even telling me what the role was, I already knew it. I told her I didn't want to be a circus freak. And I never worked with said agent again. Looking back, I probably should have done it because I didn't realize how ARTISIQUE Cirque de Soleil was. Maybe just maybe they would have done justice to overweight peoples. MAY-BE.

Later on, a few years after agent #1 right out of college, I'm still in the business, after losing about 20 or 30 pounds and feeling a little better about myself, I met with a casting director at one of those meet and greets. I did my monologue and felt like I did a great job. She smiled and shook my hand. I turned around and waved and noticed, as I was leaving, that on the top of my resume, detailing all my hard work, years of serious theatre preparation and Suzuki and African dance experience, she had written in big all caps B-I-G. BIG. In Red. Circled. So, instead of focusing on the interview going well, I focus on the fact that after losing some weight, I am still, I am STILL viewed as just the big girl. I told a friend about it and the friend put a different perspective on it. Said friend said, "Maybe she just thought your acting was BIG." Either way, it wasn't a compliment or a good thing, in my mind.

After that, I kept auditioning for a variety of roles from white trash moms to overweight woman eating pasta to rotund brothel Madame and all the acting roles in between that always, always, always had to qualify themselves as "we are the roles for the FAT ladies." I just wanted to audition for something simple like "lawyer" or "nurse" or "person" without having a FAT in front of it. It was discouraging because I was slowly losing weight. But, the industry wasn't seeing that. The industry did not CARE.

I auditioned for Neil LaBute's revival of Fat Pig on Broadway and I didn't get it. In my sick mind I told myself, "maybe it's because you're losing too much weight." A friend of mine told me I probably didn't get it because I didn't have enough credits. Ah, perspective. Either way, both were crappy.

Then, one day, about seven years ago, I saw a posting on a site us actors - we actors WE actors use call Actors Access. They were looking for a "plus size lady" which is a term they started using about oh I'd say a decade ago to sound more politically correct than FAT or LARGE or OBESSE. The film shot in Texas or somewhere down South and I said Yee-Haw. I'm technically plus size. This isn't as offensive as submitting for a fat woman or an unkempt white trash woman, let's go for it. Then, I get the script. The script described a "disgustingly gross large woman laying on a couch..." and I just couldn't take it any more. I wrote the casting director telling them that I would have to decline. At this point, I had never EVER turned down an audition, a JOB opportunity. I said something along the lines of, "This is disgraceful

and I'm not going to subjugate my mental health to this and I don't think any other actresses should do so either. Sadly, I have to decline because I've come too far in my journey as a working actor and as a person to be called disgustingly gross simply because I'm not a size 2." I thought I'd be blacklisted and that the casting director would hate me. But, they wrote back. She said she completely understood and that they'd talk to the director. The director changed up the script to describe the lady on the couch as "rotund woman". Which, I thought was acceptable enough to audition for now. I got an email a week later from the casting director saying they loved my audition but that they decided to go with someone local so they could save on travel expenses. I wonder if that's true - if they decided to go with someone who didn't speak up as much as I did. But, honestly, for the first time in the industry, I felt SOMEWHAT understood - but more so, I felt PROUD of myself for standing up for MY BODY and MY SOUL.

And, now, after nearly two decades of pounding the pavement in my Birkenstocks in this business and losing 100 pounds of weight since that very first African Dance class, I am seeing the trend. I am now auditioning for co-star roles like doctor, lawyer, nurse. Just regular utility people roles that don't specify that I am fat. Oh, I still sometimes submit for and audition for "larger lady" roles because let's face it, compared to most of Hollywood, at a size 10, 5'8" and 150 pounds, I am still considered Godzilla. But, now it's not my calling card.

I have worked so hard for this show business to not define my relationship with my body. I have tried so hard for this show business and sometimes lack of business to not define my relationship with my self worth. But, I have never, ever debated leaving this business. Because I tell ya, I'm never going to interview for someone who judges my typing skills based on how well I wear business casual to an interview. (Makes a fart noise with mouth) That called for another fart noise.

Thank y'all so much for listening. I really appreciate it. I hope in the specificity of my own journey, it helps you find a connection with your own. My dear best friend Brian who directed me in my solo show "Phat Girl Costumes" which inspired this Podcast - this podcast? Listen to that accent! He said, "In your specificity, there is a universality" Brian said it much more eloquently than I do but that's what I'm going for. I'm sharing my specific journey to hopefully make everybody else feel a little less alone in theirs and to hopefully inspire peeps. So, as always, thank y'all so much for listening and go to Instagram (@br00keh00ver) go to YouTube (youtube.com/brookehoover) I love it when people leave comments. Tell me about some of your most horrific job interviews or some of your most wonderful jobs; show business or otherwise.

Thanks so much for listening, y'all. It is my hope to inspire, uplift and entertain you with this Who's Dat Phat Girl podcast. So, if you're HUNGRY for more, you can book me to speak or perform my solo show that inspired this podcast Phat Girl Costumes written by yours truly and directed by my best bud Brian Lady at your virtual or in

person event. Please visit Brookehoover.com/fluffybuttproductions or email me at contactbrookehoover@gmail.com for more information. And, let's follow each other on instagram - I'm @Br00keH00ver and those 0's are not the letter O but they're ZEROS. Not because I want to be a size 0 but because I guess I'm just so clever with my late 90s Yahoo! self

And, if you like this podcast, please give me a five star rating and write a review on Apple Podcasts and, please, most importantly, share with your friends, family and other people you may know who are as phat as we are - that's phat with a PH.

©2022 Brooke Hoover Who's Dat Phat Girl?