



Fashion's
URVE Ball

PLUS SIZE WOMEN STRUGGLE
TO FIND FASHIONABLE
CLOTHING ON THE RACKS OF
THEIR FAVORITE STORES
BY: KAYLA CALDWELL

Sherri Williams, a graduate student in Newhouse, faces fashion discrimination every time she goes shopping. “When you walk into a store, take Target for example, in the front you can immediately see the ladies’ fashion,” she says. Blouses, dresses, and more in a variety of cuts, colors, and prints line the walls to entice the shoppers.

“They have a lot of cute stuff, but that’s only the ladies’ fashion,” she says. “You have to keep walking all the way to the back of the store, next to maternity to find the plus-size section. There you find the flowery, billowy, oversized shirts. That’s the plus size section for you,” Williams says.

And 38-year-old Williams isn’t the only one. According to *US Weekly* magazine, actress Melissa McCarthy struggled finding a fashionable dress

also notes that marketing is a serious issue in the plus-size sector of the fashion industry today. “Full figured women are disillusioned with fashion magazines,” says Emme. Since fashion magazines don’t include women above a size 10 or 12, brands need to be more creative with their advertising, whether it be through flyers or social media, in order to reach these clients, she says.

Williams says that even when a line does come out that is trendy and fashion-forward, most women do not necessarily hear about it in time. Women need to know that the line exists in order to buy it.

Williams does, however, see the industry improving, with events such as Full Figured Fashion Week, which held its third event in New York City this past summer. The show took place June 16 to June 18 and hosted to over 15 designers,

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to wear to the Emmy’s this year. Professor Harriet Brown, expert on body image and author of “Brave Girl Eating,” says McCarthy’s struggle shows the stigmatization of the plus-sized body, in both the field and designing level. “If someone like Melissa McCarthy can’t find a good Emmy dress, then I mean, really, we have a problem,” says Brown.

Believing designers to basically design for a hanger to display their art, Brown cites a young designer from the TV show *Project Runway* who complained about having to design for real women. He said that their job was to just sit still, shut up, and let him design. These designers are not necessarily designing for real women, Brown says. They do not want to taint their art by displaying it on a large body. In our society, large bodies are marked bodies, says Williams. They are stigmatized with negativity as ugly and unworthy, she says.

The layout of stores also tell women that they are not welcome. “If they have me all the way in the back, what’s the point?” says Williams. For Williams, she believes it adds to the perception problem of the fashion industry, which is that the clothes may be available, but the women do not know where to look.

Emme, former plus-size model and creator of the self-acceptance and self-betterment site, EmmeNation,

all of whom supported sizes 14 to 24. The main mission of the event is to eradicate the problem that so many plus-size women have, which is finding quality, fashionable clothing in their size.

The industry is slowly changing. For now, some women have taken it into their own hands when they couldn’t find clothes that suited them. McCarthy took the frustration from her Emmy dress search and used it as inspiration to design a clothing line for women with similar body types. Another story of frustration motivated the creation of Monif C., a line of contemporary plus-size clothing that was awarded “Best Plus Size Designer” by Full Figured Fashion Week 2011.

Williams believes the industry has been getting better in its availability of clothes for plus-size women—that is, if you know where to look. Many stores don’t suit her personal style with their large floral prints, oversized t-shirts and jeans. In order for her to stay trendy she has to split her shopping between online stores and visits to her favorite shop, Ashley Stewart, when she goes out of town.

Williams’ challenge finding clothing is evidence that real change has yet to come to the fashion industry, Emme believes. “To bring that change to the mainstream, there needs to be the widespread true belief that all women have the right to look fashionable,” says Emme.