

The Beauty Myth: We've Come a Long Way

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I have been baffled by the beauty myth all of my life. I've thought of it from all sides, from the point of view of a young Mexican American girl growing up in the States under the shadow of a glamorous mother, to the rebellious assimilated Chicana that refused to wear high heels and make-up, to the mother who raised a dancer who had to navigate the minefield of the dancer's body myth, to the grandmother I am today. And I am still wondering when women will finally gain the respect we deserve without being judged by what our bodies look like.

The Beauty Myth has been alive and well in our mainstream media for over a century and although we have come a long way, many of us are still suffering from its negative effects.

I came across a Lucky Strike cigarette advertising from 1930. This one reads, "To keep a slender figure, no one can deny, reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet."

The Beauty Myth was used for promoting cigarettes to women almost 100 years ago and continued well into the 1970s. We had this silly Virginia Slims cigarette campaign that

“feminized” cigarettes by selling us the drivel that we “had come a long way.” Now we had our own cigarette designed to help us become thin and beautiful, and powerful. (Now we could get lung cancer like everybody else, all while being feminine and slim. [¡Sobre todo delgada!](#))

The goal of the Beauty Myth hasn't changed much. It is still the same as it was when they were selling us cigarettes. The Beauty Myth breaks you down so it can build you back up. First, it identifies the problem: you and your body. It makes you feel fat, inadequate and unattractive and then it provides a solution: the cigarettes, the fad diets, the shampoos, the rubber waistband to melt your belly fat, the magic supplements, or fill-in-the-blank.

The Beauty Myth puts us at risk of self-loathing, and self-loathing is the gateway - el callejón de los eating disorders.

Some research suggests that Latinas have some protection against the negative effects of the Beauty Myth and its resulting body image distortion and eating disorders. In [How to Become a Body Positive Super Mujer](#), we shared some findings from a study, [Brown Beauty: Body Image, Latinas, and the Media](#). The authors of Brown Beauty suggest that being more closely identified with our culture and having the love and support of our friends and familias, may protect us from the negative effects of the Beauty Myth, but other studies suggest that Latinas are becoming more like our Northern European American sisters when it comes to body image and eating disorders.

Although the issue has been raised, and we are aware of the problem, time is overdue for Latinas to counter the effects of the Beauty Myth. And as we look inward, we want to make sure that we aren't creating the Latina version of the Beauty Myth. [Latina Magazine](#) comes to mind. I have enjoyed my subscription to Latina Magazine over the years, and they have great content, but all you have to do is go online and look at a retrospect of their magazine covers and you would be hard-pressed to find Latinas that look like real, everyday Latinas.

#realwomenhavecurves

As healthy Latinas, we don't need to internalize the mainstream definition of beauty. We can come up with our own way of expressing our beauty, our femininity and our inner strength without replicating the Mainstream Beauty Myth.

At De Las Mías we are committed to preventing body loathing and disordered eating. And we are especially interested in creating a supportive and body positive culture for our jovencitas, our young hijas, sobrinas, nietas and ahijadas. We want them to look at us as their role models, mentors and madrinas. Now we can be their protective forces!

There is good work going on in the body positive camp, comadres, and body positivity movement is on the rise. It is an essential part of being our healthiest selves, and we encourage you to take part in it.

If you want to take a deeper dive into the Beauty Myth, read Naomi Wolf's classic, [The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women](#). Wolf explores how the Beauty Myth sells us billions of dollars worth of products to reverse the curse of not fitting into the box. It was first published in 1991 and updated in 2002, and it still remains relevant today.

Selena Gomez recently quoted Wolf's book in response to being the target of body-shaming as told in this [Shape article](#):

The beauty myth — an obsession with physical perfection that traps modern woman in an endless cycle of hopelessness, self-consciousness, and self-hatred as she tries to fulfill society's impossible definition of flawless beauty.

Gomez stood up for herself by asserting, "I chose to take care of myself because I want to, not to prove anything to anyone."

iEso, Girl!

But my favorite Latina fighting the good fight against the Beauty Myth is Rosie Molinary - author of [Hijas Americanas: Beauty, Body Image and Growing Up Latina](#) and [Beautiful You: A Daily Guide to Radical Self-Acceptance](#).

Molinary offers us clear-cut evidence that the Beauty Myth is messing with our Latina sensibilities, and at the same time, she provides us with inspiring content and tools that will help us find our inner resources and support to stand up against it. Her books and [blog](#) are action-oriented and accessible to all, but her work is especially relevant to Latinas, like you, who are embarking on a journey to a healthier life.

Here's an inspiring passage from Beautiful You. You'll find it in the last paragraph of Day 6 in her book of 365 daily installments. It's titled, "Ditch the Fat Chat."

Today. When a woman criticizes herself in front of you, don't join in. Instead, celebrate what you love about her or tell her just how wrong she is. When you are inclined to begin your own body-bashing, stop yourself. We do ourselves and others a disservice when we allow these critiques to carry on.

Beautiful You, in its second edition, offers 365 nuggets of inspiration to help yourself and your comadres, sisters and friends on your journey to a healthier life. You can find out more about Rosie Molinary and her awesome work at <http://rosiemolinary.com>.

Finally, I follow several body positive super mujeres on Instagram. I love their body positive messages: [@Palomija](#), [@rivviera_clothing](#) and [@curvecrushin](#).

Do you want to support yourself and your comadres on this journey to a healthier life? Stop the body bashing — "ditch the fat chat." Please share your body positive journey. Who inspires you? On social media? In real life? Share the love so we can spread the word.