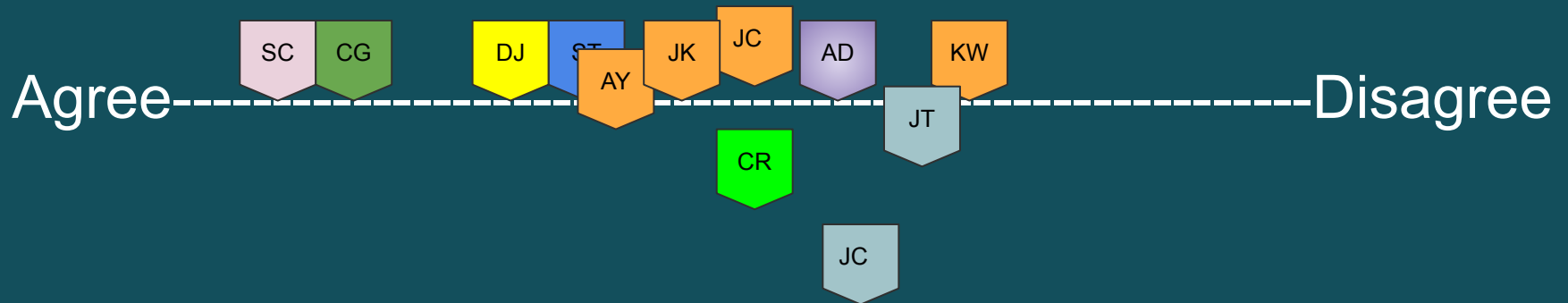


**Fatphobia and pathologization of fatness:  
who gets to construct “wellness” and why is  
it tied to morality?**

Wednesday Nov. 3

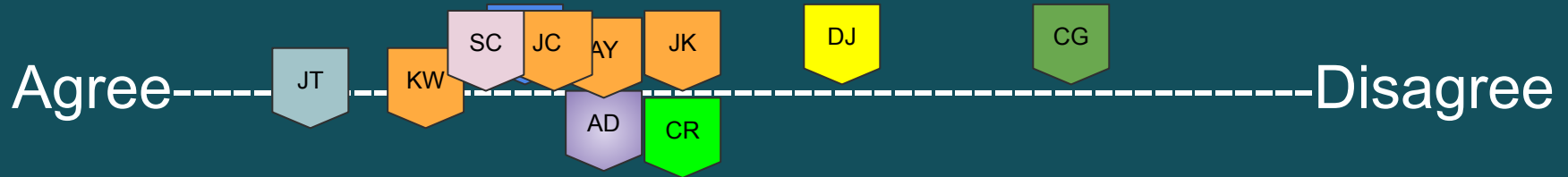
There is currently an **obesity epidemic** in the US.



# What is the “obesity epidemic”?

- News and media influence
  - “Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a report that claimed that obesity was “killing 400,000 Americans a year,” and that it was becoming America’s “number one preventable death”—surpassing tobacco”
  - → **Overstated** America’s death toll from obesity
- Creation of BMI to “easily” measure obesity

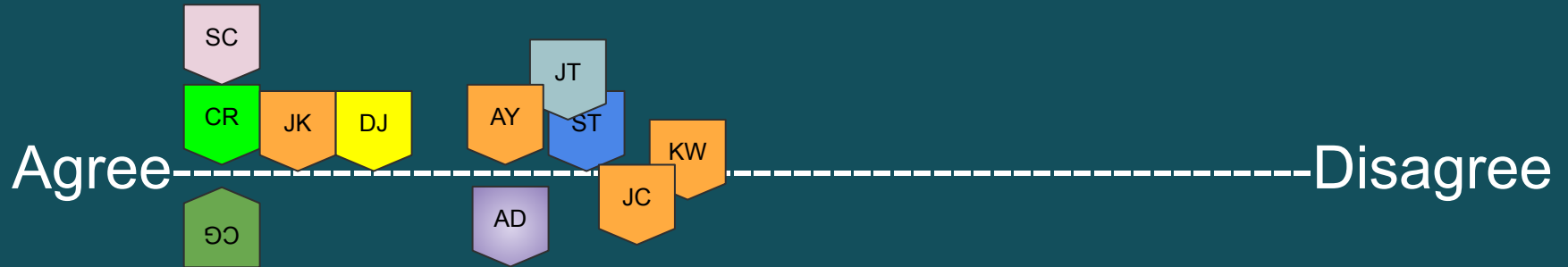
The obsession with obesity was fueled by its  
**lucrative potential.**



\$\$\$

- Diet industry
- Exercise industry

There is an **objective** way to measure obesity.



# Creation of BMI

- BMI based on **cisgender white men**: “Instead of labelling the peak of the bell-curve as merely **normal**, Quetelet labelled it ‘**ideal**’, with those deviating either ‘overweight’ or ‘underweight’ instead of heavier than average or lighter than average.”
- “By 1985, the National Institutes of Health had **revised** their definition of “obesity” to be tied to individual patients’ BMIs... In 1998, the National Institutes of Health once again **changed their definitions** of “overweight” and “obese,” substantially **lowering the threshold to be medically considered fat.**”

The usage of BMI is **racist** and affects Black people **disproportionately**.

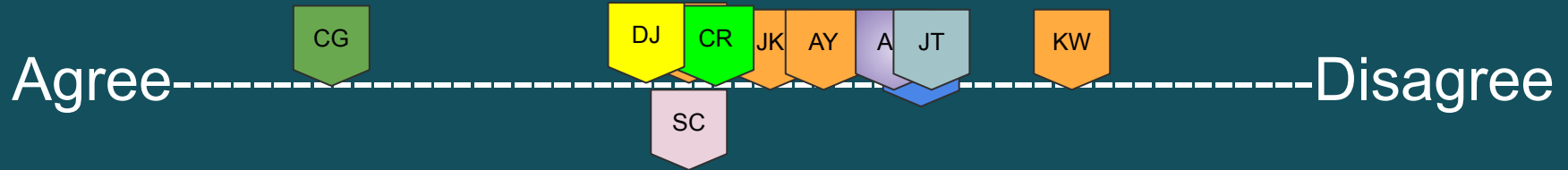


# Race and BMI?

- “Fat people do tend to die at higher rates than their thin counterparts, but it isn’t because of their weight. Fat people tend to die at higher rates than thin people because doctors misdiagnose them, or refuse to treat them, due to their fatness.”
- Diet, exercise, family history
- Distribution of body fat
- Black people make up roughly 13 percent of the American population, but about 51 percent of America’s fat population

- “Health” was created as the antithesis of Blackness; the Black fat was always already removed from the possibility of “good” health—meaning always situated inside / under the label of “bad” health—and was to always and already be the criminal. From the moment white Europeans saw fat Africans, the science that followed was intended to always separate them from the rest. In this way, the BMI—created to maintain whiteness as superior —was always going to harm the Black fat and it is for this reason that Black people make up over half of the fat population and why Black people also have more “health risks” than their white counterparts.

The War on Drugs is an unrelated comparison to  
the War on Obesity.



# War on Drugs

“War on Drugs was a legal way to criminalize and abuse Black people”

- No-knock warrants (drug searches) impact Black homes (>40%)
- Mass incarceration for nonviolent drug offenses impact Black people

1994, John Ehrlichman—domestic affairs advisor and top aide to Nixon:

“The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I’m saying? We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.”

- At the core of the War on Drugs is the Black, and at the core of the War on Obesity—even if not as explicitly so—is the Black fat.

- Crack, too, is a “health” failing. The government convinced the public that Black people were the only ones doing hard drugs; that the “crackheads” were rummaging the streets looking to harm anyone who may stand in between them and their “fix”; that addiction was a moral failing rather than a direct result of one’s immediate environment, overrun by poverty, anti-Blackness, and the inability to acquire proper (mental) health care. And it was this that led to punitive, carceral responses to drug addiction rather than methods rooted in harm reduction. Because the Black always already fails in, or is removed from, morality, and as such never has access to care.
- The Black fat is not dying from being obese, nor is the Black dying from drug addiction. The Black—the Black fat—is dying because of a medical industrial complex committed to seeing fatness, Blackness, and Black fatness as death; they are dying because of a lack of proper resources—like housing and employment—that would provide them with money, health care, and a place to rest their heads; the Black fat, in particular, is dying because of an inherently anti-Black system of policing that sees them as the deadly Beast that needs to be put down. This is the Belly of the Beast: removed from care and placed always in the way of harm.

1: People with unhealthy bodies must take initiative to become healthier.

2: Outside forces are ineffective at generating healthy people.

Agree-----Disagree



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the body positivity movement needs to start moving *hard* into including disabled bodies and this is what I mean by that. yes, it was a good step forward to change the rhetoric from “your body is a good body if it meets these arbitrary aesthetic standards” to “your body is a good body because it completes these tasks for you” (ie: walking, eating, laughing, hugging, etc.) but that rhetoric is still not fully body positive, because it excludes bodies that do not do these things. the same as saying how we need to “focus on healthy bodies not skinny bodies” sounds good at first, but it completely misses the point that *unhealthy bodies deserve to be appreciated too*. disabled bodies are still beautiful and still fundamentally good, not because “your body is kind to you so you should be kind to your body”- because not everyone’s body is kind to them. **but all bodies are still good bodies because they are what houses your soul**. your body is what allows you to exist and live your life in whatever way you live it, and for that reason, it is a good and beautiful body. your body is what your loved ones see when they look at you and the love they feel for it as an extension of you makes it a good and beautiful body. your body doesn’t have to look a certain way or behave a certain way to be good. it is good just for being here.

15,580 notes



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i wish mainstream body positivity focused less on “every body looks good” and more on “your body does not exist for the purpose of being looked at”

5:47 PM · Jul 4, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

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