

Cut Puss And Snakey Boney

"Yuh fat like Cut Puss", or "Yuh favya snakey boney scarce a fat" - some colourful ways in which Jamaicans style each other based on weight and size.

Sometimes these are phrases and names are used to malign and cuss out someone, very often leading to a fist fight, or a state of 'major malice'; initially involving the two individuals, but later encompassing their families, and sometimes their communities. In many cases however, they are literally terms of endearment. What is even more interesting, is that the person who is so called, often ends up calling himself or herself that weight or size associated name. Many an overweight man refers to himself as 'Bigga' or 'Fatta', and many an underweight woman calls herself 'Tiny' or 'winjy'. But how did we end up with constructs like 'cut puss'? In days long ago when cats used to be allowed to go out a door go mouse, go catch lizard and rat, they were getting exercise so they did not put on too much weight. The same cat that was constantly out a door 'mousing', or 'lizarding', would also be teefing yuh neighbor fish dat she put out to thaw on the wash zinc, or making his way into the kitchen to help himself to the chicken leg on the kitchen counter top. He was also a virile cat, and was 'looking ooman' all over the place. The answer was to castrate him, killing all his urges. The urge to go walk up an dung and look ooman, and also the urge to mouse. Since he was no longer getting the same level of exercise, he put on weight and became fat. He was just styled as a 'cut puss'. In the case of 'snakey bone', if you are very skinny, then your movements may seem serpentine, and of course there is very little fat. Weight and size associated names tend to fall into four general categories: fatter than average, skinnier than average, taller than average, shorter than average. Fatter Than Average-Fatty, fatty boom boom, Fatta, Cut puss, Mampy, Champion, Bigga, Bigga-dread, biggadapple, wanga-gut, Mamud, - Mudfish, Roley poley Skinnier Than Average-Snakey boney scarce a fat, Treddy (meaning skinny like thread), Fatty (teasing for the lack of fat), Diet (it seems as if you are on a permanent diet), Krukumkum (the sound of your bones knocking), Beenie, Tiny, Mawga lion, Skinny minny Taller Than Average-Langilaala, Longers-Stretch, Light bulb (you are good for screwing in light bulbs), Pawpaw tree, Length, stick Shorter Than Average-Shorty (dat one obvious), Tumpa (if you are short and a little on the plump side), Half pint, Tumbletut, Beenie bud, Bud Then there is a whole other category of nick names and phrases associated with body parts. If your feet are large you are likely to simply be called 'big foot', or 'foot', 'yam foot', 'plouden' (the name of a district in Jamaica, known to produce really large yams), 'tractor' or 'baby coffin' as in 'her foot big so her shoes look like baby coffin'. If your head is too big, they will tell you 'yuh head big like wharf dog'. If your teeth are large and prominent, or you seem to be always grinning 'Yuh a kin yuh teet like Kong dog'. Kong was a well known Jamaican photographer and it was said that he took many pictures of his dogs, smiling. If your nose seems extra large you are likely to be called 'nose'. If you eat a lot you are likely to be told that you are 'nyammie nyamie', or 'wanga gut', and if you look underfed they will tell you that you 'live far from yuh kitchen' or that 'johncrow a bake bammy fi yuh or a roas plantain fi yuh'. The notion there is that you are so skinny that the johncrow is just waiting for you to die, so he is preparing the rest of his meal. And of course there are the adjectives waggaty, slacky-tidy, tuku tuku, helluva (as in 'you are very helluva'), sweaty if you are overweight. These are balanced by adjectives such as 'mawga' and 'crawny', if you seem underweight. Lastly the clothes. If you clothes 'doan tan (stay) good', that too will elicit some names. If your pants are too high on your waist 'yuh haul up shawl up'. If they are too short 'yuh teck yuh pants measurement inna water'. If your clothing is too large and therefore seeming to hang from your shoulders, it will elicit 'Yuh fayva heng pon nail' or they will ask 'joncrow heng yuh clothes pon yuh'.