

Street harassment; A manifestation of long tradition of misogyny.

Women around the world are subjected to street harassment. It may not happen every time a woman goes out onto the street, but it can happen anytime and anywhere. And it does not only happen on the streets. Women, especially young women as well as women who chose a non-heterosexual orientation, are very often made to feel embarrassed, insecure and unsafe everywhere as a result of whistling, name calling, groping and pushing, lewd remarks and honking, even public masturbation and in some cases exposure (flashing) by boys and men.

I find that perhaps the most threatening of all forms of harassment, is while taking a taxi somewhere. In this situation, the woman passenger is at the complete "mercy" of the verbal abuse of a scumbag taxi driver; trapped in his car:

Street harassment is often condoned as "harmless fun" or as women's "overreaction" or "hypersensitivity" to male attention or by calling it "only an inconvenience," after all "it is not so bad!"

We are often told to accept harassment as "a compliment" or "flattery" for "looking good." Many men and boys may think that women "crave" this kind of attention, just the opposite is true. Women perceive harassment as obscene, disgusting, threatening and very deeply insulting. After all, it is just another unwanted (non-contact) sexual experience and once can never be sure just how far the harasser will go.

Will he cross the threshold and touch you/rape you? How will the pervert respond if you answer back or tell him that he is disgusting? Will he lash out?

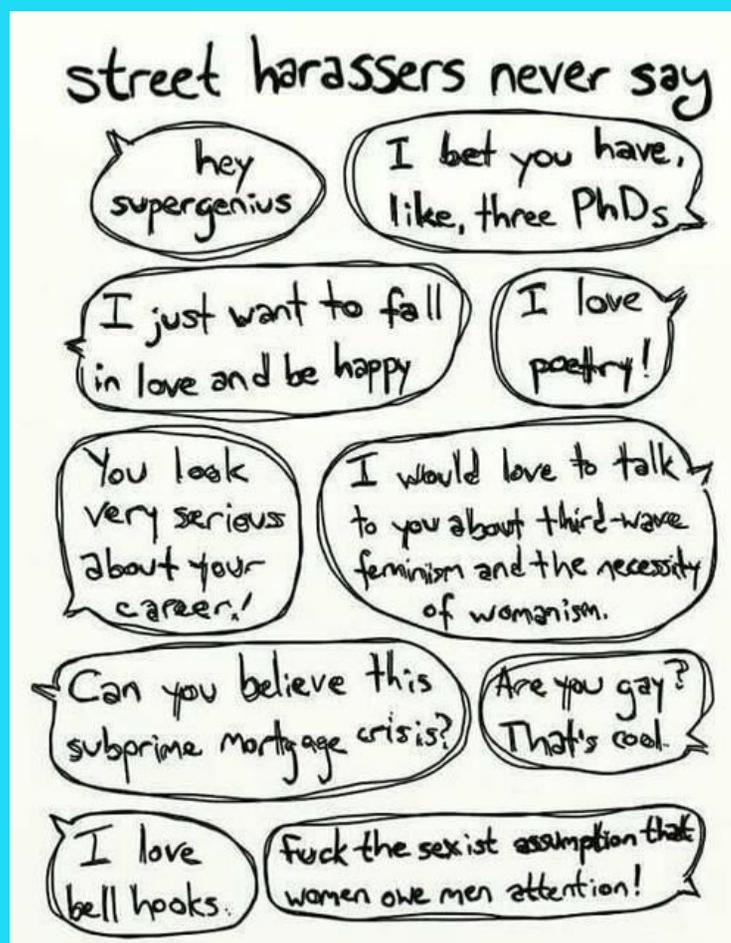
The burden of street harassment is generally placed on the woman. It is because she

was on the street at the wrong time of day/ night, or that she was at the wrong place, or that she should not have been alone. When police officers are warning women against wearing miniskirts, they in fact are blaming women for being harassed or for attracting the wrong kind of attention from men. Girls are therefore told or taught not to "go out" on their own, not to wear revealing clothes, not to frequent certain places. The argument is that a harassed woman did not stick to the "rules" that exist for girls' conduct and movement.

This has implications on the safe and free movement of women in the community and impacts the full participation in society.

Men and boys are seldom held responsible for these casual acts of misogyny. In fact this is part of the "male culture" that does not only exist here, but is a hallmark of patriarchy globally. As long as women are held responsible for being mistreated and harassed whenever we enter the public domain, be it on the street, in a shop, or a taxi, we are strengthening the culture of misogyny. Boys and men need to be taught that harassment is not an acceptable manner for "approaching" a woman. That it is a sign of profound disrespect and that they, themselves, are becoming a lesser person for it. Men, You have the choice not to be a harasser yourself. Stop being a bystander. Stand up against harassment — not only if your mother, sister or daughter is subjected to it, but every time you see one of your brothers threatening or insulting a woman.

Women, if you are sick of being, join the global outrage against street harassment. Don't allow fat cat politicians and persons in authority to blame us for the disgusting behaviour of harassers. Join local action where it exists. For what was the recent miniskirt demonstration if only to address a long-



held and deeply entrenched traditions and culture of disrespect even hatred towards women?

The picture ref.

http://feministing.com/files/2013/01/tumblr_mgqb80fXX2lrtg4mro1_500.png
 png_street harassers never say

By Laura Sasman