

Send me

your stories, comix, art, rants, journal entries, photos
ideas, rants, poems/pros etc. re:

How have you used self-defense in your daily life?
What does self-defense mean to you?

How have you dealt with and overcome sexual harassment,
assault, homophobia, transphobia, racism?

What have you done to care for yourself after an assault/
harassment?

Also send:

Resources you know of such as good books, zines, movies,
local self-defense groups, web sites, and other stuff.
so I can put together a resource list for the next issue.

Write to:

Ariel

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USA

or email: mrippilotta@yahoo.com

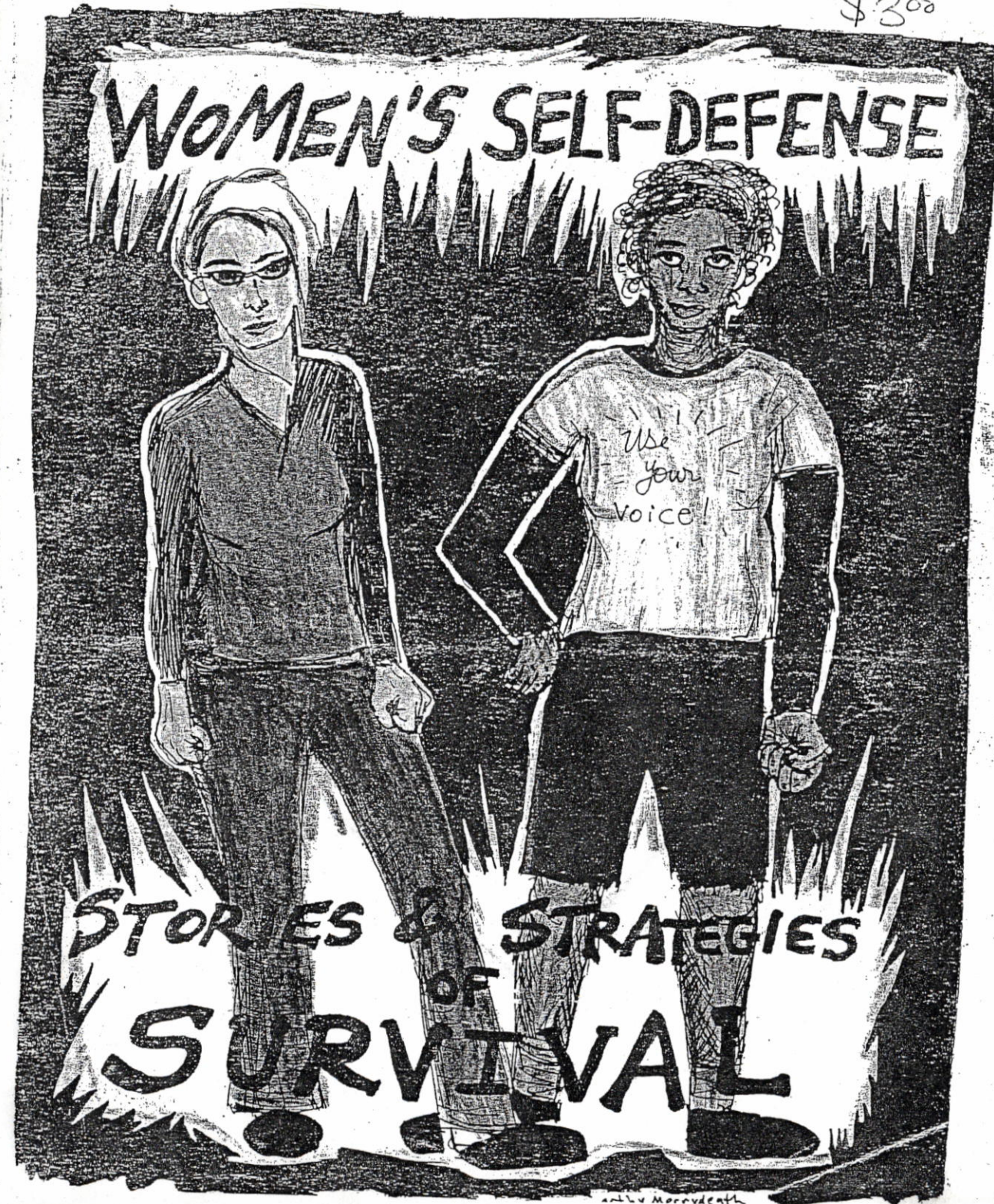
By the way... this
Zine is a benefit for:

Chimera Self-Defense for Women



To find out about classes in your
neighborhood call (773) 271-7345

Since 1976



This Zine is dedicated
to the memory of my

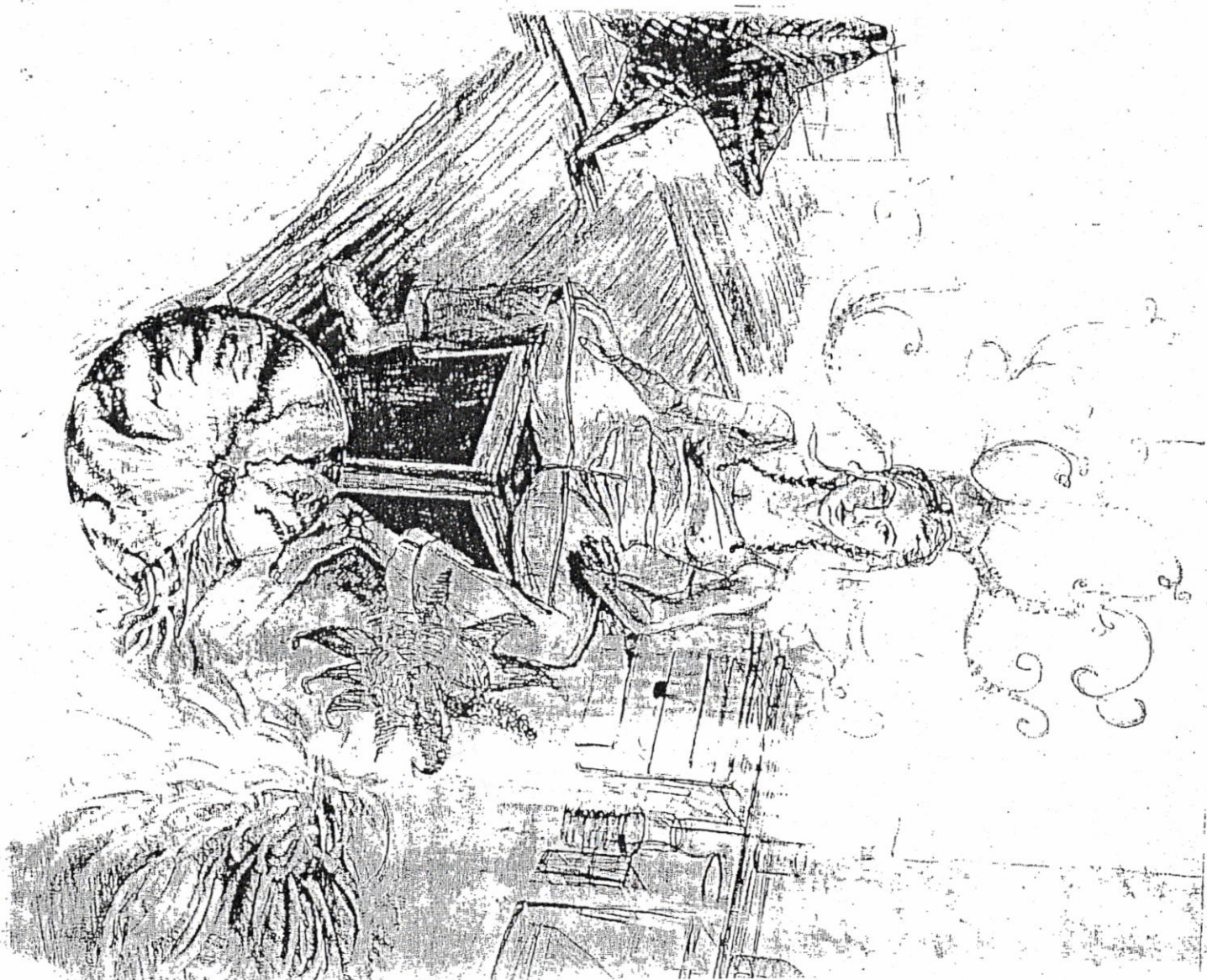
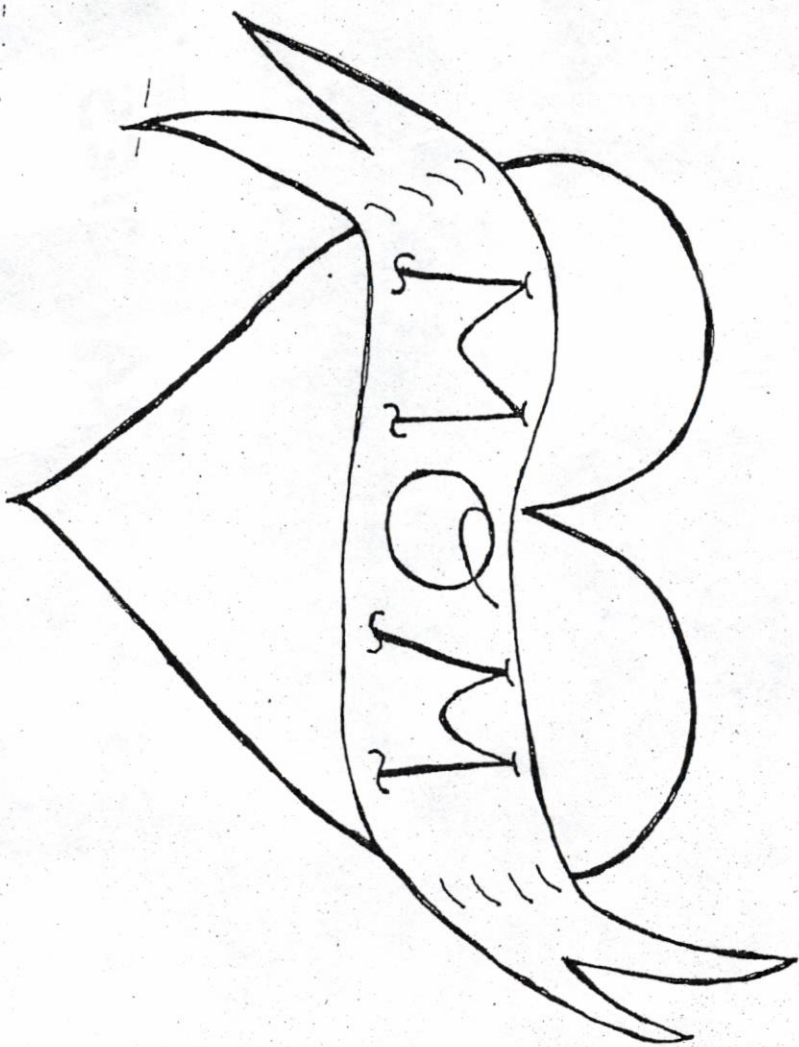


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WELCOME

to the first issue of Self-Defense:
Stories and Strategies of Survival.
This zine has been in the works for
4 years now.

I sent out the following flier to friends and community centers
all over the country:

Sexual harassment is something every woman faces at some
point in her life. But in all kinds of situations ranging from cat
calls and unwelcome stares to physical assault and rape, women
have been FIGHTING BACK!

I AM COMPILING WOMEN'S SELF DEFENSE STORIES.
CONTRIBUTIONS CAN BE IN THE FORM OF
JOURNAL ENTRIES, SHORT STORY, POETRY, PHOTO, COMIX ETC.

SEND YOUR STORY
OF SELF DEFENSE



The contents of this zine are some of the
responses to this flier.

Focus

how women have kept themselves safe during
and after sexual harassment and assault.
The authors write about a wide range of situations including
stranger assault, sexual harassment on the streets and at work,
multiple assailants, assailants with weapons, known assailants,
date rape, and domestic abuse. The stories are arranged in a
random order.

I want to hear from you

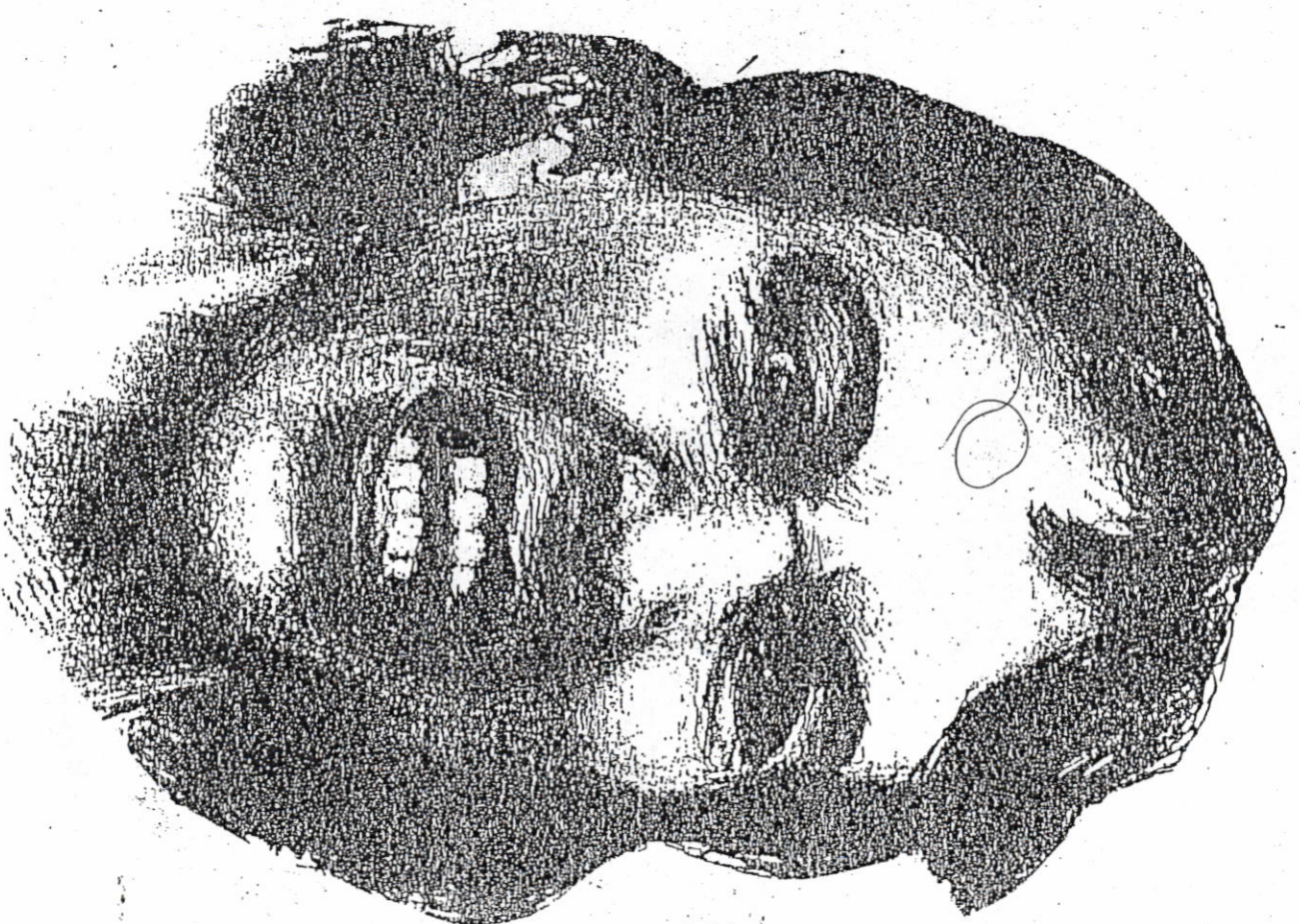
send me your stories, comix, art, essays, rants, journal entries,
etc, about dealing with sexism and assault.
What does self-defense mean to you? How have you kept yourself
safe?

How have you taken care of yourself after an assault? Send me
resources you know of- local women's self-defense groups, books,
information, zines, movies, web sites- so I can compile a
resource list for the next issue.

Feedback/ideas/critiques... on this zine are more than welcome.

WRITE TO:

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policy by which he asks the person he is kissing with before he initiates any type of physical contact, or takes anything any farther.

I found a new place to live.

I wrote a journal entry.

I called my mom.

Every drop of terror in my being was transformed into strength, rage, and instant intuitive logic.

I talked to my friend 2 hours later.

I weigh my options.

We decided to be pro-active and go ask the guy what he wanted.

When he didn't stop I punched him hard in the stomach.

We had an intense shouting match that went on for maybe a minute, followed by a long moment of silence.

I was ready to take him on.

I try for the face.

Remember: There is no set formula to self-defense. There are only options and choices. The uniqueness of each situation and each defender means that she will make a set of choices that are best for her. As survivors, and supporters of survivors, its important to remember never to ask a woman *why* she did something or did not do something else: and its important not to ask ourselves why we did or didn't do something- but appreciate all that we did do to make it through the assault and get on with our lives. Only the woman in the situation knows what was right to do at the time of the assault: to keep herself safe. Likewise, women feel and think many different things during and after an assault. The huge range of our emotions are normal weather it be anger, rage, sadness, fear, panic, disassociation, numbness, or anything else.

Thank you

To all of the women who shared their stories, art and poetry, words are not enough to express how deeply grateful I am to all of you for making this project happen. Thank you Merrydeath for the beautiful cover art. Although we haven't met, your correspondence has made me feel I have had an ally in this project. Your encouraging words meant more than you know. Same for all of the women who showed their support with letters, phone calls and e-mails.

Thank you to all of the Chimera instructors, and to everyone at 1000 Waves Dojo for your patient and professional instruction. Especially to Kyoshi Nancy and Sensi Sarah- you have deeply touched my life. Thank you for awakening a love for the martial arts in me and for creating a beautiful, respectful place to study Seido.

Thank you to Adam- my partner in crime, to las bloody conchas- Ivanna, L-dog, and Julia, to my little bros- Ben and Asa, to the ever growing Women's Radical Self-Help Network, and also to the Wright Community College computer tutor super heroes who saved this zine from my computer illiteracy.

Each Story,

poem and piece of art belongs solely to the woman who contributed it. Absolutely nothing can be reprinted without the author/artist's permission. Its only respectful.

Women learn from Women's

“Live” Terry Greenblatt

THE GOALS OF THIS PROJECT ARE TO:

- ❖ GIVE WOMEN MORE OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM WHEN USING SELF-DEFENSE BY SHARING A DIVERSE RANGE OF STRATEGIES SUCCESSFULLY USED BY WOMEN IN REAL LIFE SITUATIONS.
- ❖ HELP WOMEN OVERCOME ISOLATION AFTER AN ASSAULT AND BEGIN TO HEAL.
- ❖ EXAND OUR NOTIONS OF WHAT "SUCCESSFUL SELF-DEFENSE" IS AND HELP WOMEN APPRECIATE ALL OF THE WAYS WE KEEP OURSELVES SAFE EVERY DAY.
- ❖ BREAK THE STIGMA AROUND SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT SO THAT WE CAN TALK ABOUT IT, TAKE ACTION, AND OVERCOME IT.

Note.

As any of the authors/artists can tell you, in addition to being empowering, it can be very emotionally trying to tell our stories. The same can be said for reading these stories. For me, writing about assault brought up a lot of the anger and fear that I felt at the time it happened; emotions that I had conveniently forgotten. So, take care of yourself as you read these stories. Be aware that for some people they may bring up intense emotions, memories or dreams. It can help to have a good friend around to talk with. Check in with yourself as you read and do what you need to take care of yourself. Be good to yourself. Love yourself.

(4)

(49)

We decided to have a series of community meetings with the offender. I yell from my stomach, so much that it is sore the next day. I know that if I get the knife I am fully prepared to slash his throat. I lungs at him and he recoils in fear. When they offended me or made me uncomfortable I would often leave the room.... I silently made a face or rolled my eyes to let other women know I was disgusted. I walked a few steps with them, then rammed my elbows backwards into their ribs super hard. I jumped up and told him to keep his f---ing hands off of me. I place blame for bullshit! I used the broken record technique. I was acting on impulse. I decided to solicit all the help I could get. I organized. I ran. I stayed home the next day because I was scared, but I went out the day after that and pushed it to the back of my mind. I had been on alert as soon as I heard them crushing through the underbrush. Every drop of terror in my being was transformed into strength, rage, and instant intuitive logic. I called 911. I kept my hand up between us as he circled me, so that my back was never to him. So I could keep an eye on him. I turned around and rode the opposite way down the one way street so that they could not follow me. I decided to take a different approach. I told him NO over and over again. I broke free and walked away from him as he yelled "I'll see you tomorrow".

I have transformed potentially negative street interactions into positive ones. I realized that diffusing the situation would require talking some sense into them as well as a physical reaction, and even though I was a good deal smaller I was more sober and might be able to use this to my advantage. I talked loudly and firmly. I was backing away from him. Once I had some distance I turned around and ran towards the street. I didn't let his old tactics work on me. I tuck my chin. I remember being astounded by my own strength. With the blessing of a motherload of adrenaline I acted quickly. I felt urgency where they only felt aggression. I got up and yelled back at him. I very clearly repeated what she had already said and told him to stay away from her. We sat up so that he would know we were watching him. I slammed my hand under his penis. I stood and turned around to face him. "I heard what you said" I told him looking into his eyes. I threw out the supervisor's porn. I started to feel like he was a little too interested in me. It wasn't his words that off, but how he was looking at me. I was listening to my instinct. I decided I needed to leave at the first opening I got. I said no and kept walking conscious that their eyes followed me. I stopped and put my hand up between us. "STAY THERE!" I yelled. I was yelling "NOOOOOOOOOO!" and I remember deciding that I would not let him rape me even before we hit the ground. I tell him to let me out. I refuse to let them make contact.

Def-defender

The following are some of the things women have done to keep themselves safe that are taken directly from the stories in this zine. While there are roughly 20 stories included, these stories contain countless ways that women keep themselves safe, end an assault, and take care of themselves after an assault. This section highlights some of the ways we care for ourselves and will hopefully give you ideas you can incorporate into your own self-care and self-defense. Keep in mind that different things work for different women, and each situation is going to be unique. Trust that your own reactions in a situation will probably be different from those listed below in some way, and will definitely be exactly what you need to do to keep yourself safe. Only you can decide what is going to be a response that works for you and what is going to keep you safe. This section is NOT designed to make you rethink all the previous situations you've been in and say, "Oh, I should have done this or that." Its just supposed to get the ball rolling and get you thinking of how diverse and unique self-defense can be. Also, during an assault it can be helpful to focus not on what the attacker is doing to you, but what you can do to him or her. Reading these excerpts out of context can help us realize that the woman as the defender has and uses many options.

I have always made it a policy to look people in the eyes, let them know I am aware of their presence.

I turned around, walked slowly over to the perpetrator, looked him in the eye and said calmly and respectfully, "You know, that kind of comment makes me feel really uncomfortable."

I began spewing obscenities.

Instinct took over. I ran after them knife in hand.

In remembering and communicating my own full humanity, I essentially forced the harasser to see me as fully human.

I yelled my repetitive message into their ears, I tried to sound calm but definite.

I have used humor as a subversionary technique, which leaves me feeling lighthearted and empowered.

I rolled over so that he would stop touching me and waited till morning to talk to him about it

Holding him around the neck with one arm, and sliding the other arm under one of his I flung him against the rock behind us. I'm too fast.

We brought people together to confront someone who had been a part of our community for his crimes against women. I start to freak out.

I make a conscious decision I will not get raped and I will not get killed, thoughts of my family, my lover, my best friend fill my head with strength.

I swing my feet at the aggressor's head and make impact.

I lie in bed for many hours crying in pain and confusion and a strength that I am still alive.

I have many nightmares and I get worked up writing this all down.

I pushed him away and told him that I just wanted to sleep.

I kept yelling and struggling. I felt totally

5 in the 000

I was taking a walk on a dirt path by the river in Milwaukee one afternoon. I was enjoying the sun and the trees. I walked by a bridge and saw two men were standing there. The men looked in their mid 40's and one of them looked like he was living under the bridge because he had bags of clothes stored under there. One man (the man who didn't look like he lived under the bridge) asked if I'd seen any deer in the woods today. I said no and kept walking conscious that their eyes followed me. I decided that I did not want these men to know that I was in the woods alone and so I followed the trail out to the street.

I crossed the street and didn't see the men any more so I got back onto the trail on the other side of the road. I walked about half a mile down the trail and then sat down to take a rest. I heard something behind me and turned around to see the guy who had asked me if I'd seen any deer. He asked what I was doing and tried to make small talk. I wanted to leave but didn't want to turn my back on this man because I felt like he would follow me. I told him I was meeting a friend out here in a few minutes (yeah right!). Then the guy picked up a big stick and was holding it. I decided I needed to leave at the first opening I got. That opening came when he crossed the path and entered the woods. He stood in the woods with his back to me and his hands on his crotch as if he was going to pee, but his head was turned and he kept looking at me over his shoulder. In the moment that he looked away I started to run down the path towards the street. I looked behind me and saw him running after me. He was close to me. I stopped and put my hand up between us. "Stay There!" I yelled.

"I don't like it when a person walks away from me like I'm going to hurt them or something" he said. First of all, I was not walking away from him, I was running! And secondly, I had already learned that if a person says anything along the lines of " ... I'm not going to hurt you..." you know that thought is in their head.

He lunged at me, threw his arms around my waist and tackled me to the ground. Time slowed. I was yelling "NOOOO!" and I remember deciding that I would not let him rape me even before we hit the ground. At first he was trying to pull me towards him. I kept yelling and struggling. I remember feeling totally enraged at this man for doing this to me. Then got on top of me. He was trying to put his hand over my mouth to stop my loud yelling. Part of me couldn't believe this was happening until this point. But when he tried to cover my mouth with his hand I knew I needed to act. I felt like if he stopped my yelling I would have less power. I don't remember exactly how I did it, but I must have thrown him off of me using my hips because the next thing I remember is that he was on the ground and I was standing. I kept yelling "GET AWAY FROM ME" with my hand in the stop position between us. He got up and started asking me questions and said again that he did not want to hurt me. (I find it so weird that even after he attacked me he kept saying this! If assault isn't hurting a person...) While he was asking me questions I was backing away from him. Once I had some distance I turned and ran towards the street.

He called out after me "Go ahead and run bitch. I'm not chasing you, I don't want you. I wasn't going to hurt you."

I ran to a gas station I'd seen up the road and called 911. 20 minutes later the cops

arrived. They asked me to describe the man, where it happened etc. I told them the whole story in detail. They wanted to go down to the spot where the attack occurred. At first I was scared but then I said OK. By the time we got there of course the guy was gone. The cops put me back into the cruiser and started asking me questions like what was I doing in the woods anyway, didn't I know it was dangerous, why did I think he wanted to rape me... I started getting mad at them. I was still in a state of shock somewhat and had adrenaline running through my body. I didn't want to be the one on trial here, but that's how they made me feel. I asked them "What would you think if someone tackled you to the ground, got on top of you and tried to put his hand over your mouth?!! You wouldn't think he was trying to rape you?!!" I was yelling. They said I was "exhibiting strange behavior". I yelled "How am I supposed to act after being attacked?!!" Then they asked me my age and didn't believe me when I said I was 18 (I had no I.D. on me). They thought I was a runaway and wanted to take me down to the station to call my parents etc. In their eyes I had become the suspect. The rest is a long boring story of how I had to talk them into letting me out of their cruiser and not take me down to the station. After that experience I felt like the cops had been almost as bad as the assailant himself. They made me feel like I was at fault for having been the one to take a walk by myself, and then told me that being angry was an abnormal way to act after being assaulted.

Looking back, I learned a lot from that experience. Maybe most importantly, I learned that my voice is a powerful weapon which really helps me stay strong and fight hard. I felt like as long as I was yelling I would overcome the assailant. That assault was also the inspiration for this zine. After the attack I had no support from the cops, and minimal support from my friends. I really wanted to know if how I acted was "right" or if I was stupid for having taken a walk by myself like the cops said. Or if I was "strange" as they had said for being very angry about the attack. I've since learned that responding to an assault with anger (as opposed to fear) helps many women get out of the situation safely (Stopping Rape). I decided that day, 4 years ago, that I needed to know how other women were dealing with sexual assault, what they were doing to keep themselves safe, and how they were healing from the experience. I had a strong desire to talk with other women who had been through similar situations. What you are now holding in your hands is the product of that desire to hear other women's stories and to share my own.

The letters, calls, and submissions I've received from women in response to this zine have been invaluable to me. They have let me know that I am not alone. That many women have and are fighting against assault, in many ways! I hope that reading this zine you will find stories that validate your experiences, and give you tools and ideas you can use to defend yourself, if you ever need to. Hopefully violence against women will end, ~~but I know that may be a long way off~~. In the meantime, let these stories serve as an inspiration to women, and testimony to our power and ability to defend ourselves.

Police Say Castration Ended Rape Attempt.

I found the following article in the Times Union out of Albany, NY on Sunday 5-20-01, 2 days after this courageous woman defended herself. Her success story is one

of the few to make it into the mainstream press. Too often we hear stories of women being brutally raped or murdered in the news under the excuse "if it bleeds, it leads". Well, someone was definitely bleeding on this Friday and yet the story was on page 45 or something, shoved down at the bottom of the page surrounded by ads. I bring this up to point out that women's courage, power, determination, and ability to overcome assault is often downplayed in the mass media, if it gets coverage at all. This is just one more reason to talk with your friends about your own experiences- we've got to remind each other that women are fighting back all the time.

Also- notice the language used in the article, "...sex act...". Its kind of misleading because rape is not about sex. It is about one person trying to get power and control over another person. Sometimes the press tries to give rape stories a "sexy" angle, but lets remember,

RAPE IS TO SEXUALITY WHAT HITTING
SOMEONE OVER THE HEAD WITH A
FRYING PAN IS TO COOKING.

CHICAGO — A man has been charged with trying to rape a woman who castrated him during the alleged attack, police said. Erik Williams, 21, allegedly tried to force a 42-year-old woman to perform a sex act on him early Friday, and while the two struggled the woman bit off his testicles, police said.

The woman went to police headquarters and turned the testicles over to officers, authorities said. Williams later arrived at Michael Reese Hospital and Medical Center with injuries matching the woman's description, police said. Doctors were unable to reattach his testicles, hospital spokeswoman Sandra Wills said.

Williams remained in the hospital Saturday in police custody and was listed in stable condition.

— Associated Press

understand how he was feeling because I'd never taken heroine. Watching his pathetic addiction to that drug is one reason that I'll never touch drugs.

I was finally able to get out of the relationship when he went away for a few months. Before he left I was devastated, thinking that I was going to lose my only friend. I was obviously very confused from all of his mind games. But once he was gone I realized what was really going on. His being away gave me the opportunity to awake to the fact that he was making my life a hell.

Before he came back to town I was able to find a new place to live. He called me the day before I moved. I told him that I was moving (but didn't say where), that I didn't like him and that I never wanted to see him again. He was shocked and angry. He gave me a big guilt trip but I didn't let his old tactics work on me. He wanted to see me "just one last time". My part of the conversation went like this:

"No, I really don't want to see you again... No, I don't want to... I just don't that's why... because I don't..." (This is known as the broken record technique in self-defense classes.)

Eventually I had to hang up the phone on him; he never could take no for an answer.

It has been 6 years since that time and I have never seen Bob again. The healing process from this abusive relationship has been slow. For quite a while I could not be close to any males. The only guys I trusted were my brothers. Talking with other women who have survived similar situations and gotten through them has really helped me to see that I was not the crazy one, and I was not the only one this happened to. It has taken even longer to heal from the verbal abuse. Just this year was I able to finally reject his nagging voice from the back of my mind that would say "Bitch" every time I spoke up for myself, or set boundaries. Now that I have rid him from both my life and my mind I have begun to deeply love myself and respect the person I have become.

Not too long ago, I took a self-defense class in the Dojo where I normally take my karate classes. This specific class was a result of the events that occurred on September 11th. It was a way to reach out to the community and offer help and support for people who felt scared and alone. Self defense is often incorporated in the classes I normally take, so I felt that I had a good idea of what the class was going to be like. I thought I would go and support my Dojo by participating in the class.

One of the questions that were asked was why we came. I told my fellow white belt Allison, who had the same enthusiasm that I did, that it seems like we can't get enough of this place. We keep coming back for something. The Dojo is like a beehive, and we go to it for warmth and honey. Kioshy Nancy is like our queen bee; she gives us instructions and encouragement to use in our every day lives. Being part of the Dojo makes you feel like you are part of something good, and I thought going to this class would be a continuation of that. What I didn't expect was that I would leave the first night making one of the hardest decisions of my life. I decided to talk out loud about memories that have always been difficult for me to face.

The first class was very unusual. It was as if I was watching TV and suddenly the person in the television set started talking directly to me, calling me by my name and telling me things about myself that I never told anyone. It was a very emotional experience, and suddenly I felt safe and almost encouraged to talk about my self to others. I knew this moment may one day come, but I didn't know it would happen here.

When I look around a room of people, I often wonder if everyone I see has self worth. If they do, I wonder if they know it, and most of all, I wonder where they got it. I see self worth as one of those things that we take for granted. We don't often appreciate it until we lose it and then get it back. It is not something that is taught to us as we grow necessarily; rather it is something that is assumed in us. We don't learn it in school and we can't buy it at the store, but once we have it, and know we have it, we wonder what would we be without it.

When I look back at my life, I always remember seeing my mother and father fighting. That's my first memory of growing up. My father would yell hysterically, and my mother, unable to handle him, would just let the anger she felt slide down her throat. My father was an angry person almost all of the time. When he came home from work, I always felt as if a black cloud was hanging over our shoulders. I never had a good relationship with him and I always felt that I had to hide when he was around. My mother had married him many years ago, and she always believed that marriage was for good or bad until death do you part, and bad it was for many, many years. She made the decision to be unhappy for the rest of her life, and unfortunately my sister and I had to live with her decision. That always bothered me later on in life, because she made that decision without thinking about us. Besides being a mad person 90% of the time, my father also was jealous and sneaky, a very bad combination for my mother especially. He always accused her of having affairs left and right. He could never understand...

outgoing and had many friends despite his presence, that dragged on her like a heavy anchor full of seaweed and dead rotting fish. He seemed determined to make everyone miserable, especially me.

My father liked me very much, so much that I always felt uncomfortable around him. He favored me and I hated it, I hated him. He was always looking at me; I couldn't get away from him. If we drove somewhere, he always had the rear view mirror pointing at me. It didn't matter where I would sit, at the end I would find myself slouched down as far as I could so, wishing I could just sit on the floor mat. I could not sleep at night; I knew he would come into my room and try to kiss me. He did this sick thing where he would put his fingers on my lips to see if I would notice, as if numbing me to the sensation of a kiss. I was always awake, but inside I was frozen. I could not move or yell my only defense was to grow up quickly. One time, in an out of control wrestling match, he pinned me down and kissed me on the mouth. I did not know what to do, or think, or even say. I ran to the bathroom and felt like I was going to throw up. It was as if everything was only in my mind, and nobody saw or helped me. I learned to shut down inside. I wanted to be invisible. I use to play this game at night, I would lay there and play dead, staying as still as I could, and breathing without moving any part of my body. Perhaps I learned it from watching Wild Wild World of Animals on TV for many years. I was like the spider that had no natural defenses except to lay there and play dead.

My mother never liked her mother in law, which besides years of tradition, she especially didn't like her for one reason. When we were very little, she came to visit us, during her visit she had accused my father of molesting us, her own son. This is what she said about him, and my mother could not accept it. Years later my mother would occasionally make comments about my father like, oh, he may be this and that, but he is not one of those, one of those meaning a child molester. How could my mother of all people be married to one of those. She would not believe it and she would never talk about it. I never had the heart to tell her what kind of man she had married, and so when he finally left her life, it was a chance for me to get rid of him and cut him out of my life. My father left my mother for another woman after twenty years of marriage; I'm glad that he did, because she would have died by his side, miserable and married. He did her a favor, he did all of us a favor. I think the problem with my father was that he was not bad enough. If he was an alcoholic or woman beater it would have been easier for my mom to leave him, but he was sneaky and always lingered on the borderline of obviously insane.

I remember my mom during those times and I always remember that she came second. She never stood up to him and she always let him win. I wish I could say that I learned self worth through my mom, but I know I didn't. I can't say that I would have been better off if she had protected me from him, because if I did what kind of person would I be, what kind of daughter would I be. I do remember, however, my sister with incredible strength. She could sometimes talk to him, and one time in an argument gone out of control, as he grabbed her throat, she shoved him with all her strength, fighting back and standing her ground. Bahm! Right back at you. To this day, I don't think that

by Ariel

(45)

When I was in my early teens I was dating a guy who I'll call Bob (not his real name). During part of this time I was homeless. Often my choices were to either spend the night at Bob's house or to sleep in a city park, or state park. During the warm, clear nights sometimes I'd chose the parks because I knew that staying with Bob had a price. Either way the trade off was no good- face the risk of trouble from someone I didn't know messing with me in the park, or have to put up with trying to repeatedly defend myself against Bob's unwanted sexual advances. Neither were good options.

Soon after I'd started seeing Bob I lost most of my friends. He broke down my self-esteem to the point where I often questioned my sanity. After we'd met I became depressed and withdrawn. The isolation I felt plus the instability of homelessness made me feel dependent on Bob. I felt like he was the only supportive person I had but that was a lie because every time we were together he would force himself on me in some way.

The first time it happened, I woke up to him kissing me. I pushed him away and told him that I just wanted to sleep. But about 5 minutes later he was trying to penetrate me with his penis. I told him again to stop, I even pushed him away. When he still didn't stop, I punched him hard in the stomach. I didn't really have anywhere else to go so I just turned my back to him and tried to sleep. When we talked about it the next day he said that I should be more understanding because he- as an 18 year old- was in the "sexual peak" of his life and couldn't help himself. I felt like saying that he- as a legal adult- should know better.

This crap continued every time we were together and it basically wore me down. It was a constant struggle and it was emotionally exhausting. Towards the end of our "relationship" I'd just lie there completely still and completely tense. I felt humiliated, angry and disgusted. He would get off and then get mad at me for "not being into it". He knew that I wasn't into it because I would tell him that I didn't want to do it. Now I can look back on it and say that it was rape, but at the time I didn't call it that. He would justify his actions by saying that if he didn't ejaculate then his balls would hurt for days after. If I was really upset and crying after then he would be apologetic and say "I didn't mean for it to happen this way".

Even after I got my own place to live my self-esteem was so low that I'd still let him come over. He was also shooting and snorting heroine at this time and refused to use protection on many occasions. He'd come over to my house while he was in withdrawals from heroine and say really mean stuff to me. I got used to being called a bitch- especially when I set boundaries with him. Unfortunately though I started

Another request was that he follow the Antioch policy by which he asks the person he is kissing with before he initiates any type of physical contact, or takes anything any farther.

At one point during the meeting, one of the girls who was there for him looked at me and said "Well I don't think Puma has a problem anymore because we are having sex and he never does anything to me." What the fuck is that?? I couldn't believe she said that! So outrageous! Like she cured him? Like just because he hasn't done it to her (yet!) he is somehow fixed? Like it is our fault that he assaulted us? That sticks out strongly and I'll never forget her saying that. So much for girl solidarity!

So anyway, the next meeting was scheduled for a month later. When we reconvened we asked Puma what he had done. He hadn't really done anything we asked him to. He said that his therapist thought the group was not a good thing for him because we were making too many demands and not really being there to support him.

This was the contradictory problem with our meetings. We said we were doing this to help him and that some of us wanted to work through it with him. At the same time though, we were making demands and somewhat punishing him. It is really tricky to reconcile those two objectives, both of which are important, I think.

Summer break came and everyone left town. In the fall no one saw much reason to continue the meetings since Puma was so uncooperative anyway. The meetings were effective for what they were- bringing people together to confront someone who had once been part of their community, for his crimes against women.

It is really important in these situations that the people who have been attacked are the ones to be in control of when and where the meetings take place, what things are talked about, and what actions are taken. If the survivors are not in control and are pushed to do things they are not comfortable with, they are assaulted twice. In a stronger community I think that this type of action might work better.

It is important to plan beforehand how to run the meeting and the goals that people want to reach from it, again letting the assaulted person be in control. This could be a good format for a community to deal with issues like this, but it needs to be done right.

my sister really knows how much I look up to her. She did the one thing that I could never do, fight back. That by itself was a victory.

I wish my father would have left many years sooner than he did, but it was too late, I had found a pathetic substitute for a father figure. I was nineteen years old and I had married a man much older than myself. He took care of me, my life, my friends; he made sure I had none. He had managed to control every part of my life. He was a bad person, like my father, but different in other ways. He was about control, and power. We were together for six and a half years, but only married for a year and a half. It took a whole year and a half for me to realize that if I don't leave this person, I may end up in the hospital. When we would fight he would lose control and enjoyed beating the crap out of me. He would never hit me in the face, because that would bring attention to what was going on. He made me feel that everything was my fault, and I had no choice but to be with him. I had to live with him and face him constantly to realize how wrong this was. There was no escaping reality and one-day I realized that I couldn't live like this. I started to talk to other people and I made a connection to the outside world. I got the strength to finally leave him. He could not handle it. It was not so much that it was over, rather he could not bear to be the one that was left. He would have much preferred to be the one to leave me. He tried everything to hold on to me, he even raped me hoping to get me pregnant. That was very confusing to me and it took me many years to actually call it rape. This was someone who I thought I loved, but grew to hate with all my strength. I did not fight him, I just cried and told him to stop. It took a lot, and after a few stalking incidents, car chases, and threats to my friends, I got an order of protection and the strength to protect myself.

My mother never knew everything that had happened to me, and even now she knows very little. When she found out that he had hurt me, she had on her face the worst look that I had ever seen. She tried to hold back her tears, but I knew that her heart was breaking. I would have gladly taken a few more beatings than to see how hurt she was inside. I was her daughter, and she was my mother, and she could not protect me. I guess I tried to protect her the way she had always wanted to protect me.

I look back on my life, and though I am only twenty-six, I feel that I have experienced many things. I don't regret what happened to me, I really am rather lucky, many people have it much worse. I know that if I didn't experience the things that I did, I would not have learned to value myself. I know now that I have self worth, and I know where I got it.

I don't believe that you have to forgive people in your life, in fact, I think you can hate them as much as you like, you do however, have the right to go on with your life and be happy. So that day I left the self defense class with more than my usual share of warmth and honey, I left with the strength to say what I felt, knowing that there people out there who would listen and understand.

Bringing people together to confront someone who had once been part of the community, for his crimes against women.

by ~ Julia Daniel

One night I awoke to a male friend, Puma, touching me all over and crying. I had previously been kissing with this person, but we weren't kissing at that time, and this was definitely NOT consensual.

I felt paralyzed and just rolled over so he'd stop, waiting till morning to talk to him about it.

In the morning I just told him that he was weird last night and couldn't discuss it further. I told a couple of friends about it. One friend told me that he thought the situation was real fucked up. I agreed.

I didn't want a lot of people to know however, to protect both Puma and myself. At this time I worried about the offender's emotional stability and thought I had to be careful not to get him into trouble.

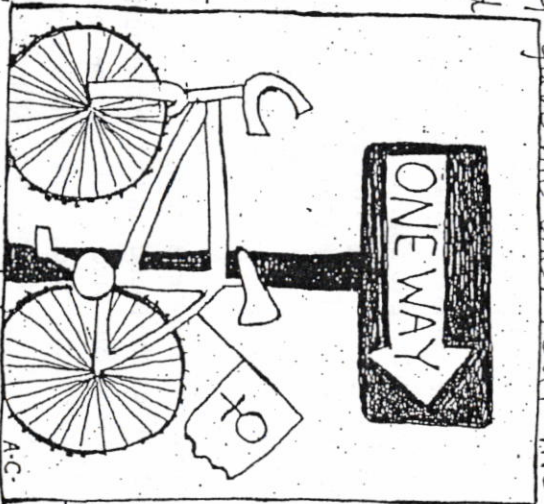
About a year later, word of what had happened spread in our little community, and a couple more people came forward and said that Puma had done similar things to them. When I heard that he had done this to other women I knew we had to do something. Some other folks talked about it with me and we decided to have a series of "community meetings" with the offender. This was weird because we weren't so much of a strong community of friends as we were a group of people who knew each other and occasionally came out to do activism together. Nevertheless this was what we came up with.

So we had our first meeting, and went around, saying why we were there, what role we played in Puma's life and what we wanted out of the meetings. There were people there who were currently kissing with him, as well as 2 of us who he had assaulted and maybe 12 others. It was weird.

We made Puma tell everyone what happened. I felt he didn't really explain what he did to me very well and I told him my side. He said he didn't remember that. Hmm....

Then people went around and talked about both what they wanted him to do and if/how they would help him with it. One of the girls who he had assaulted had an excellent idea. She asked him to keep a journal to record how he was handling things.

this confrontation to escalate so I turned around and rode my bike the opposite way down the one-way street so they could not follow me. But they cut me off at the next intersection and the guy was still pissed. I felt kind of trapped and did not want them to follow me anymore, so I decided to take a different approach. "Why are you doing this to me? You don't even know me! You should treat me with respect!" I said this loudly to all 3 men - they were in the car still. They just drove away.



I was riding my bicycle down a one way street. A truck with 3 construction workers slowed down next to me and made kissy faces and rude comments to me. I gave them the finger. They gave me the finger back and called me some mean names. So I called them some mean names too. This really pissed off one of the guys and he stopped the car and got out. "What did you say to me?!" he yelled. I could tell that this guy was super angry and it looked like he wanted to hit me. I did not want

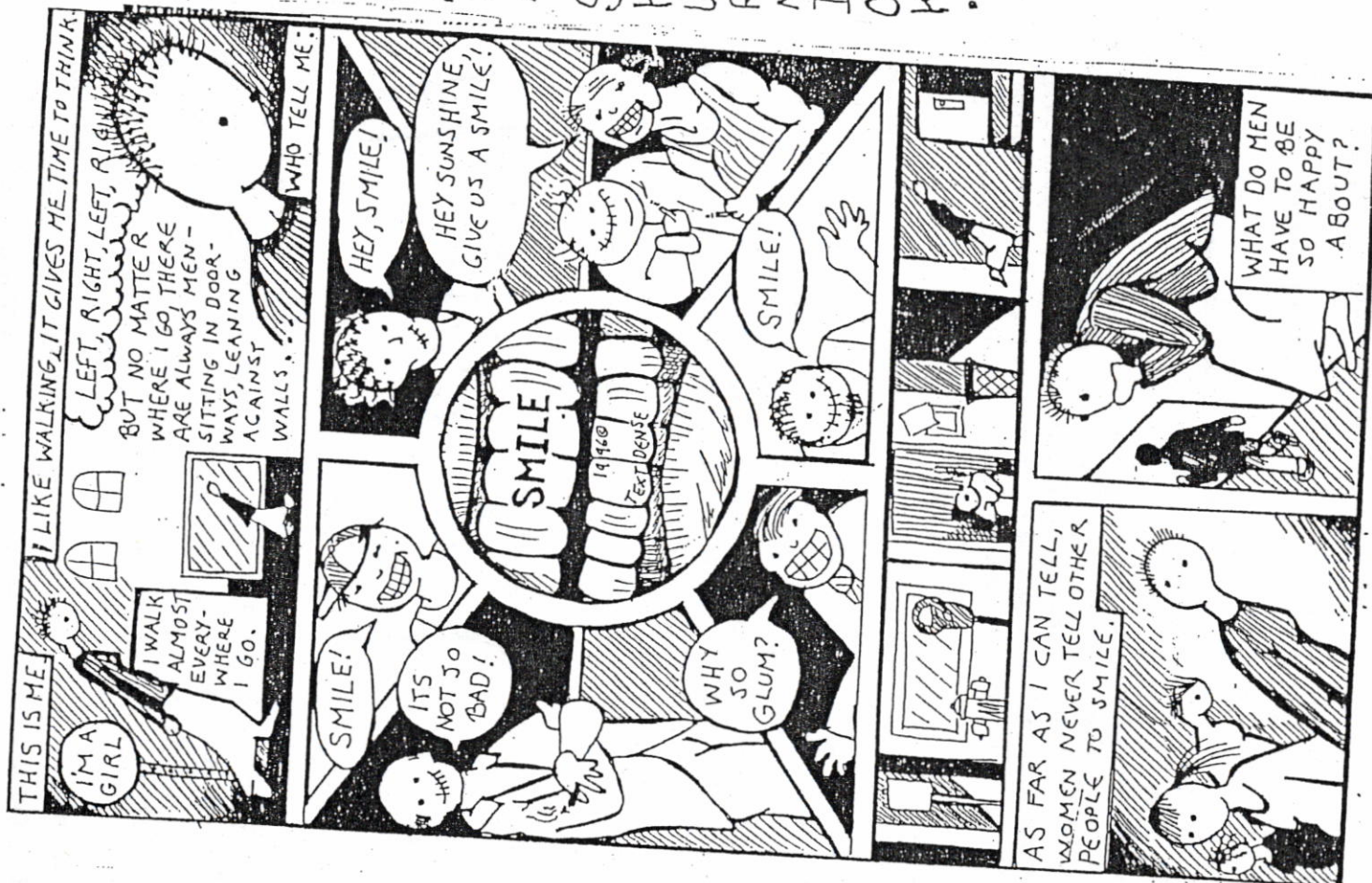
It was the summer of 1983 and I was 20 years old. I was a rather new EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) who had graduated at the top of RyEMT certification class only half a year earlier. I had gotten a job as an EMT on one of Boston's many private ambulance services. No unlike most police forces, the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) field which includes EMT's paramedics and fire fighters was (and still is) overwhelmingly male. I could tell almost immediately from the comments and jokes told by my instructors and fellow students in the EMT training course that the field allowed a climate where sexism and racism could flourish. Of course not all the white men in the field were, or are, contributors to this climate. But there was a rather large and vocal group who certainly did seem to have issues around women, race and power. They would make their presence quite well known with continual talk, put-downs and jokes regarding "inferior" racial groups, "welfare-dependent" minorities, and of course sex, sexy women, breasts, bras and pornography.

I was fast discovering that contrary to popular belief, the EMT field was not made up solely of those who wanted to be care-givers, supporters and saviors of human life. Instead there were a healthy number of folks in the field who were drawn to the drama of messy accidents and blood as well as the attention that came with the brightly colored rotating lights, wailing sirens, noisy radios and the loud PA systems of the fast driving ambulances. We called the EMT's who were into these types of things "Hockey-pucks" or "Frustrated Firefighters." They tended to walk wide, long steps like urban cowboys, liked to be associated with fire fighters and police, and kept unneeded handcuffs obviously dangling on their EMT belts. They appeared to be into the intimidation of "others." More often than not these were the men who acted the most disrespectful towards women and racial/ethnic minorities.

In between calls we would either wait on the streets in the "truck" (ambulance) for our next call or go back to the station and sit in the common room. Waiting in the common room with the other ambulance teams on a slow day was hell. Often I'd be the only woman in the room and the men would begin to talk about some female patient they had picked up on a call. In one instance they joked about the idea of twisting the nipples of unconscious women they picked up, just to test if they really were unconscious, and of raping them if they really were out cold. In another instance, the manager and one of the nicer (or at least nicer looking) EMT's and I were sitting around the common room table. Then, as if I was not even there, they suddenly began discussing in great detail the porn movie they had shown the night before in the co-ed bunk room during the over night shift.

These "jokes" and discussions succeeded in doing the thing I think they were intended to do. They offended me, made me uncomfortable and intimidated me. I would often leave the room and go wait in the truck. Even when another woman was present in the common room with me, it made no difference. There was no solidarity among the women in the company. They just sat there and ignored the men's talk. If I silently made a face or rolled my eyes to let the other women EM T's know I was disgusted by the topic of conversation, they usually ignored me as well. I was constantly fed up with, and angry at, my male and female co-workers, though I rarely actually said anything to them.

By THE AKAH-ZG. WEEA. SKURTHOK.



The racism I saw and heard about from my best buddy in the company, a Black man, was even worse. When he was interviewing for the job two EMT's ran around behind him with sheets over themselves to look like the Klu Klux Klan. After he got the job a group of co-workers physically attacked him one night during an over-night shift. They pinned him down and shaved off his chest hair. In another instance they handcuffed him to a stretcher and then handcuffed the stretcher to a parking meter and left him there on the busy street. My friend laughed it off as a mild form of hazing. He was obviously too terrified to tell the Manager, who we both knew probably condoned the acts anyway.

In the 5 months I had been with the ambulance company I had already gone through 2 men partners (they refused to partner up 2 women) and had been unhappy with both due to too many comments about women and Blacks. I was now with my third partner. He did not talk to me much, and this was an improvement. Though I was slowly beginning to gain his trust by making stupid jokes (something I'm rather good at).

One day in between calls my new partner and I went back to the station. We walked into the empty common room only to be immediately sent back out to do a final call for the day. Only enough time had passed for me to walk into the room, see a porn magazine on the table, pick it up, be told we had a call, throw the thing into the trash can and leave. I didn't really think about my actions. I just did it.

We had only gotten about two blocks down the street when the Dispatcher put out a general call over the radio to all the ambulances on the road, "O.K. Who threw out Timmy's book?" he angrily asked.

Oops, I had thrown out the Supervisor's porn.

Much to my partner's dismay, I called back and said that I had. The Dispatcher called our ambulance back to the station. I was ready to be reprimanded. But by the time I had gotten back the Dispatcher and Manager had realized that the "book" Timmy was complaining someone had dumped was actually only a porn "book." They laughed and sent me back on the road. I thought the incident was over, finished my last trip for the day and went home.

Of course the incident wasn't over. Everyone had heard the general call on the radio about Timmy's "book" and by the time I got in the next morning the whole company knew the whole story. Rebecca had thrown out the Supervisor's porn. Rebecca has a thing against pornography. As soon as I walked in some guys jokingly called me "the porn queen." Ha, ha. Bonded with little patience and little humor. Luckily, I was sent out on a call.

When I came back to the common room and saw the porn center, prominently hung on the walls, it became quickly obvious to me that I was now to be the target of a new group intimidation campaign- the porn reading men in the company vs me. Unfortunately, that meant almost all the men in the company, including the day and night Supervisors, the Manager and the Dispatcher. It was the Dispatcher who actually did scare me the most. He was physically big as well as outspoken and unafraid to say what was on his mind in a rather threatening tone.

The next few days were sheer hell. I was constantly joked about and taunted, and my already near silent partner stopped talking to me all together (not a good thing when you need to work as a team to care for the sick or wounded, especially in an emergency). There were also a number of specific incidents that happened. Though I can't quite remember in which order they occurred I remember the events themselves. A full-paged note written by the Dispatcher was posted on the common room wall next to more porn pictures. This time the porn pictures were meant to be more appropriate for our work. One was of two elderly men dressed in diapers simultaneously sucking on the nipples of a large breasted "porn-nurse." The note from the

By staying lighthearted, committed to remembering our own and the harasser's full humanity, and armed with a range of options, we can keep things moving forward.

Jill Nagle is the editor of *Whores and Other Feminists* (Routledge, 1997) and associate editor of *Male Lust: Pleasure, Power and Transformation* (Kerwin Kay, ed., Haworth, 2000). Find her for almost any purpose at www.jillnagle.com.

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(1999)

Hope's Stories

Frequently in Chicago, the apartment buildings have an outside door, a small vestibule, and then a locked inside door. Because I lived on the second floor of my building, I had to carry my bike up there, so I generally hoisted it on my shoulder before going in the building. One evening, as I was going in, I heard someone running up behind me. I immediately turned, dropped my bike, and got into a 'defensive' stance. You could almost hear the 'screech' of this man putting on his 'brakes' because, obviously, he was not expecting that type of reaction. He said he was there to see someone in the building, and just wanted to 'catch' the door as I was going in. I backed out the outside door, told him to ring the bell of the person he was looking for, and have them buzz him up. It wound up that he was there visiting someone, but I kept myself safe by not being in a small, confined space with him.

* * *

When I first moved to Chicago, I worked downtown and would ride the el. One day a man and I struck up a conversation and he asked if he could walk me home. I said no, but he got off at my stop (at another door) anyway. I believe he thought he could follow me to determine where I lived. Anyway, I had seen him, and had ducked into the corner store and asked the clerk if I could hide behind the counter until I was sure that this man was gone. He allowed me to do so, and even checked a couple of times to make sure that the guy had left. I had a couple of things going for me: I was aware of him getting off the train, and I knew enough about the area I lived in to know where I could go for help.

I love Hope's stories because they are a great example of how self-defense encompasses keeping ourselves safe by getting out of a situation as soon as it starts to feel unsafe. -A.C.)

(41)

called back to him, "Which one of you is the guy!?" Surprised, he turned to his young woman friend, then responded brightly, "We take turns!" This was an exemplary experience for me, as it proved how humor can be a wonderful subversionary technique, which leaves me feeling lighthearted and empowered, rather than small and pissed-off.

However, lighthearted banter doesn't always work, nor, as I mentioned, is the heart connection always possible. In the early part of this decade, I lived in a women's group house in Philadelphia. One day, my housemate Lizzy called me into her room very concerned. An obscene phone caller kept ringing back again and again, and wouldn't be discouraged. I picked up the phone and tried the heart approach, but he was relentless with his stream of explicit talk, which he would leave on the answering machine if we didn't pick up. Finally, enraged, I would spew obscenities--twisted, violent ones--back at him. "I'd like to string you up on a clothesline by your toenails, cut your balls into little tiny bits and fry them up with onions and garlic, and then make you eat them. Yum, yum, yum!!!" He grew increasingly upset, especially after he hung up and I call--returned him, leaving messages on his machine. He called back, completely flummoxed and indignant. "I can't believe what you said!" He sputtered. "This is obscene! I've never heard anything like this!" I could only laugh. He even threatened to call the police. I felt on top of the world.

I'm not advocating imitating this tactic, but the point is this: He did not call back, and Lizzy and I, after having a good laugh at his expense, went on with our afternoons in peace and quiet.

As any women's self-defense instructor will tell you, men do not expect most women in U.S. culture, at least ones perceived as white, to respond aggressively to being attacked or pursued. Neither do we expect ourselves to act aggressively. The surprise element of the aggression, coupled with my own spontaneous narrative, quelled this particular harasser's advances. Although the pacifist inside me is uncomfortable with this approach, I like having it in my arsenal. Besides, violent language used in self-defense is not the same as unprovoked perpetration. It can be used strategically.

Defending oneself against harassment, coming away feeling empowered, and working healing magic on the harasser all at once as I discussed above is certainly ideal, but not always possible or wise, particularly if the harasser is under chemical influence. Too, it shouldn't fall solely within the province of women to effect magic. Men who find themselves in groups could use these tactics with one another.

Dispatchner was

some fabricated story about my sexual activities and about how I should be chained to a bed with a chain only long enough to reach the kitchen. I think I left the porn up, but I'm sure tore the note down.

In another instance the Manager of the company rubbed my back for about 3 seconds in a seemingly friendly manner only

to then declare to the Dispatcher who was in the room with us, "Nice tits for a girl with no bra" I jumped up and told him to keep his f---ing hands off me.

In perhaps the most upsetting instance of the lot, the Dispatcher called me into the common room and with the two of us standing in front of a number of seated male employees he presented me with a large, chocolate, erect penis and a scroll which he proceeded to unroll and read aloud. It said something or other about me and sex, and my "really liking it." Without saying anything I took the penis he gave me and dumped it in the trash on my way out the door.

In each case I was acting on impulse. None of my actions were well thought out. I was nervous and could not think very clearly.

Needless to say I went home a wreck almost every night. Often I would cry myself to sleep, dreading going to work the next day. I had no confidence or self-esteem when I was at work. And I actually feared going into the common room or being called into the Dispatcher's office.

Not surprisingly, none of few women in the company supported me. They all sided with the men in support of pornography, or remained silent. I did have 3 male friends on the company. They all saw the harassment as wrong, but though I should simply shut up and just let the whole thing die down.

Contrary to their advice I knew I had to take action, though I didn't know exactly what to do. I met with a long time supporter of women's causes and my all-time best male ally, my father. After a long meeting we decided on a two track approach. One track would be a letter that he would write to the Manager clearly laying out the harassment he heard me describe (including the "back rub" and "tits" remark that came from the Manager himself). He would also state that as my father he finds the acts horrendous and will not hesitate to support me in a suit against the company.

I must admit that I felt somewhat reluctant to use my father's help in this way. It made me feel like a little girl who could not fend for herself and needed her father, or any man, to protect her. I also felt that the Manager should be able to listen to me, a young female, and my concerns and take the necessary actions to remedy the situation, not wait to hear it from a man before it is a matter worthy of his attention. I decided to ignore these "I-can-do-it-alone" feelings and to solicit all the help I could get from My father.

The second simultaneously taken track in our two-track approach would be my going to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD), a state agency, to see if I had any grounds for filing a formal complaint or for suing the company. I did go to the MCAD. They said I could very well have some grounds for a legitimate complaint of sexual harassment. They said that they would have to investigate the company themselves and would do so upon my request, though it could take some time.

I left unsure as to what to do. I was seared that if I registered a formal complaint with the State of Massachusetts an investigation would ensue, my name would become known in the field and I would never again get hired at any other ambulance company in the State. My career as an EMT passed before my eyes. I decided to wait to see the Manager's reaction to my father's letter first, and use the formal complaint with MCAD as a threat if he did not respond.

After he got my father's letter the Manager suddenly became a new man. Not wanting

to be sued, he pulled me aside and spoke to me for the first time as if I was an adult with some power. I also think that he saw me for the first time as someone's daughter, in other words, a real person and not just a "brood." We sat alone in an ambulance to discuss the matter. He asked me what I wanted to see happen. I told him that I planned to quit but that before I did I wanted a new rule to be passed in the company, no pornography in the common spaces. He agreed and soon after a letter stating that fact was posted on the wall in the common room and, if I remember correctly, stated at a staff meeting.

I left the company with mixed feelings. I felt successful, even vindicated, by the passing of the new rule. But I also felt defeated, the jerks in the company succeeded in pushing me out.

In my eyes the real success came months later. I knew that the sexism I had experienced (and the racism I had seen) at that

one particular ambulance company was a state-wide problem. I decided that someone should address the issue on a state-wide level. I knew that all EMS personnel must take a number of continuing education courses each year to stay certified. I decided that was the route to take.

I called the EMS (Emergency Medical Services) state office and asked to speak with the person in charge of Continuing Education Training. I suggested to him that a course be offered in "Dismantling Discrimination" in the EMS field. The gentleman in charge was African-American. He obviously knew what I was talking about, as any non-white or non-male in the business would. We met. He took my idea completely seriously and he agreed to give me almost complete control over organizing and leading a one evening accredited course on "Dismantling Discrimination" for Emergency Service personnel. Through out the whole few months it took to organize the training he never once wavered in his support or belief in me.

I organized outside experts in affirmative action and the law to come speak. I also got minorities and women from high up positions within the field to come and tell their stories. And I planned a talk I would give to introduce and close the one night training. I was so scared I would be verbally attacked (or worse), or that the event would flop and I would be ostracized from the field, that I couldn't eat for four days before the training.

The training obviously got a good deal of publicity because the turn out was outstanding. Over 60 people showed up. The audience was made up of ambulance technicians, fire-fighters, emergency room personnel, administrative directors of emergency rooms from some of Boston's most noted hospitals and, much to my surprise, the fire-fighters who had originally trained me to be an EMT.

I would guess that over two thirds of the group came out of defensive curiosity. I say this because there were more men with condescending looks on their faces standing (hiding?) towards the back of the room behind the waist high partition than there were attendees sitting in the front actively participating in the evening training. There were about 15 or so participants in the front of the room engaging in the dialogues and asking questions. The rest of the people who stood in the back acted as if they were not there. To me they looked like they were watching a show, one they did not like.

But the evening, the first time the State of Massachusetts had held any type of training dealing with sexism/racism for EMS personnel, ended up being a raving success. Each of the 6 or so speakers did a great job in front of a tough audience. Important legal information was given on how to address discrimination (including filing a formal complaint with the state). And

Facing Random Sexual Harassment

Jill Nagle

Dusk is rapidly approaching. I'm walking at my usual brisk pace through Golden Gate Park, enjoying the casual company of my fellow humans, when a guy on a park bench goes "Heyyyyy...." His voice is low and leering, not friendly nor inviting. It follows me as I keep going past, this time not in the mood to "deal" with the thick, morose layers of guilt, shame and years of strained gender relations reflected in his utterance. But my walk is no longer enjoyable, and at the end of the block, I turn around and head home, angry with myself for "letting" the incident affect me.

As a white middle-class woman who came into feminism in the mid-'80s, I'm conditioned to view any unsolicited public sexual attention as a bad thing. However, I don't always experience it that way. It depends upon the spirit of the delivery: the tone of voice, body posture, carriage, whether the speaker is accompanied by other men, etc. My own response can also help determine the ultimate tenor of the interaction. I've had positive exchanges of sexual attention with strangers in public, and I've also helped transform potentially negative interactions into positive ones.

More than once, I have been catcalled on the street, and turned around, walked slowly over to the perpetrator, looked him in the eye and said calmly and respectfully, "You know, that kind of comment makes me feel really uncomfortable; I don't appreciate it, and neither do any of the women I know." So far, I've received a sincere apology on each of the several occasions I've done this. With two or more men, I find it works best to pick one and focus on him, since otherwise, they tend to bond with each other and ignore the woman.

Sometimes I am too taken aback by an unexpected verbal assault, and am unable to get my bearings enough to respond the way I might like to. Other times, making a heart connection isn't physically possible, such as when someone is in another car on the highway, several stories above on scaffolding or behind glass in a restaurant. In those cases, my favorite way to subvert an instance of unwanted sexual objectification is to do something unexpected and "disgusting," like start picking my nose very obviously and deliberately. My friend Beth likes to burp loudly or make barfing noises. Usually, the men get repulsed and go away. Or else they laugh. Sometimes we laugh, too.

Several years ago, I was making out in public with a rather butch female lover, a young man (who was with a young woman) called out, "Hey which one of you's the guy?" We looked at each other, at first startled and angry, conferred briefly,

I watch TV a little longer, suspended.

My borders have been threatened.

I am a country with no president,

Or national army.

When a leader is murdered,

What's left is an entire nation

In mourning.

The whole body feels it.

Amanda wrote this poem after she was attacked by two guys who followed her out of the subway. When she turned to confront them, one of the men punched her in the face and split her lip. She immediately turned around and ran. She ran into a local bar to get away from the men and then went to the hospital for her split lip. She handled the situation great. She was aware of her surroundings, she turned to confront her attackers, and then she took advantage of the first opportunity to get away. She also made sure to take care of herself after the attack by getting care for her lip. Running from an attacker is one of the most surefire ways to stay safe!

🏠 Ariel 🏠

I kept hearing the guy next door cat calling women on the streets. First it was "hey baby..." then it was the whistle we all know too well- mating call of the creeps-, then it was "hey baby, I'm gonna lick you up and down." I couldn't take it any more. I went out and said, "Hey, I'm your neighbor. I live right here in this building next to you and I've been hearing you cat call women all day. It's offensive, can you please stop?"

He said, "I'm not talking to you, so what's the problem?"

I said, "When guys do that to me I hate it and I bet these other women hate it too. I don't want to hear it anymore. It really bothers me." We went back and forth like this for a while, but he finally said that because I was his neighbor he would quit it. He said I wouldn't hear it from him again and amazingly I never did! I didn't really like the guy after that but I did respect him for hearing me out and keeping to his word! We both handled the situation in a polite neighborly way which was great. I wish it was always that easy!

STOP IT.

WHAT'S IT TO YA?

participants got to share stories of their personal experiences with discrimination. Also, quite important to me was that the skeptical people who had stood in the back of the room all night, the people most similar to the perpetrators of the sexism I had experienced, did not leave offended or angry and were thus able to hear all the important information given.

A final success was that I lived through it all. Actually, I felt more of a sense of relief than anything else. But looking back now I see that it was a real personal success for me. I had experienced harassment that left me with little confidence and almost no self-esteem, and yet I did not let that stop me. By doing something constructive, such as the training, I turned the situation around so that I helped both myself, by rebuilding my confidence and sense of power, and others who might some day find themselves in a similar situation.

Rivka Solomon is the editor of the upcoming book *That Takes Ovaries! Bold Female and Their Brazen Acts* (Random House 2002).

I was walking to meet some friends at a bar. At the time I was living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin so the frequented strip of bars my friends congregated at composed of a two block radius. I have always made it a policy to look people in the eyes, let them know I am aware of their presence. I passed a man probably in his twenties. We made eye contact. I said "Hello" and nodded. Within a passing moment he grabbed me. The thing about reactions- is just that- an instantaneous combustion- fight or flight... I remember struggling to keep a hand free, and using my strength to move forward. I don't remember if I screamed. I don't remember if he had a weapon. I did break free and ran the two blocks to the nearest pub. The friends I confided in told me I shouldn't let this incident scare me too much. I called the cops when I got home that night. They weren't too interested in my story. I later heard this individual was attacking many women.

By Rachel ♥

WHAT HAPPENED
Inga Schowengendt

When I was fifteen years old I went to a party at my friend Ellen's beach cottage. Ellen lived in a small wealthy new-England town with about as much diversity of skin color as a roll of toilet paper. When a family of non-anglo descent moved into town, it was as obvious as the first snowfall. While the community is generally peaceful and safe, it does not inherently model healthy race relations, which I found out for myself that night.

The crowd at the party consisted of kids from the local high school, who crowded into the one room shack roasting marshmallows around the fire grate and drinking punch that was more vodka than it was juice. I was at the party with two friends from my school several towns away. Ellen was the only person in the crowd that we knew from before the party. My friend Julia was a bubbly girl in the grade below me, and Peter was a calm charismatic boy in my grade. Peter was unlike many of the boys at the party in multiple ways: he had a soothing presence, was a good listener, and knew how to relate to girls without talking to their chests; but he was unlike everyone at the party in one particular way: he wasn't white. While Peter's mother was German, his father was Sikhimese, and his Asian descent gave him not only the Sikhimese nickname pinso but also the thick dark hair, olive-cocoa skin and sloping eyes that made him distinct amidst the room of pale northeastern high schoolers.

The room was crowded, and even in the chill of late new-England fall, we soon got overheated and Peter and I decided to go outside for a while. Julia was determinedly flirting with a tall lanky boy with a batch of freshly roasted marshmallows, so she decided to stay and meet up with us later. Sitting on a rock at the edge of a cliff overlooking the ocean, about two hundred feet away from the cottage, Peter and I shivered but were glad for the respite from the increasingly inebriated crowd inside. We hadn't been there but a few minutes before Julia wandered over, having had enough marshmallows for the moment. She joined us on our rock, and it was only moments later that we received another arrival, this one less expected.

Crashing through the knee-high undergrowth of the woods behind us came three boys, all of them in identical baggy sport jackets and hats. They were large and loud, a good foot taller than me at the time, even Peter who was quite tall would have looked up to see into their eyes had they been in front of him, but this was not their plan. Before we could even turn around, they had all pounced on Peter and had him in a headlock. I had been on alert as soon as I heard them crushing so much of

Surviving the Blood that Makes a Country Blush With Rage
Amanda Leigh Liebenstein

I walk in narrow Philadelphia subway tunnels.
Stretching out and up into the streets,
Where people move and beg and leap,
I walk up the steep stairs
Away from glaring lights and low ceilings,
Into eight o'clock at the corner
Of Ellsworth and Federal.
Six legs, three throats, eyes, bellies,
We walk into night together.

Soulful eyes, greasy skin,
Big tongue, birth mark on left
Cheek, high-heeled shoes,
Orange soda stains, I remember
All the people I've seen as I walk
Fast toward my apartment above
Nick's, the Italian tailor shop.
Past the muffler shop, abandon factories,
Across broken glass, old mattresses,
And the empty parking lot,
I keep my hands in my pockets.
I know those boys are behind me,
Beautiful tall trees in a storm.

I cross over to the other side.
They cross over with me,
Walking tight and quiet.
I'm almost home just another block
I'm almost home just another block
I'm almost home.
Here's my song.

Near the Blue Lantern, where pool tables
Collide with sleepy lips in smoky air,
They catch up to me
And swing their legs
Into the same hurried pace as mine.
What do you want from me?
A sad, scared question mark suspended.
What do you want?

Electric eyes falling into sky,
One solid punch and
I see glass I see broken

I see wild I see shy I see echo
I see loose wild shy sky night
Stumbling to an iron run,
I feel sewn up like a bird without a throat.

I see in the mirror my blood at the seams,
My jaw juts out, inside scream --
Into the sideways palm of a man
Who wants to help me, if he can.
Calm down, girl.
Calm down.
I see in the mirror, my jagged jaw.

There's a melting ice bag on my lip
As I wait in the room with other
Sick people and their families.
My eyes wander past the curtains of a
Make-shift room where
I see wide wounds and dangling
Cords monitoring our chances for survival.

I circle the bloody lump with my tongue
And watch the funeral of Itzhak Rabin,
Prime Minister of Israel,
On the TV hanging from the ceiling.
Over and over again a voice describes
The single shot that threw him
To the ground in front of the
Wailing wall in Jerusalem.

In my orange cracked plastic seat
I swing my feet slow,
Resisting the urge to touch my swollen
Lips with my fingers.
My tongue reaches for the corners
Of my mouth and catches tears
Collecting into pools of deep red.

I was riding the Montrose bus east when I saw an older (65+) woman get onto the crowded bus by herself. As the bus continued down its route the crowd thinned and the bus emptied. I was reading- not paying much attention to my surroundings- when something distracted me from my book. I looked up and saw a middle age white man speaking loudly to the older woman. I could tell he didn't know her because she was looking away from him as he rambled on and she had a frightened look on her face. I wanted to ask her if she was alright, but second guessed myself thinking that maybe I was misreading the situation. Then I remembered she had gotten on the bus alone.

The man was touching her arm and saying, "Don't worry. I'll grab you. I won't let anything happen to you... My parents already died and I could never let that happen again... I'll grab you." And he was grabbing her arm. Looking at his eyes I could tell he was either drunk or high on something, and his speech was slurred. My stop was coming up but I didn't want to get off until I felt like he would leave her alone. So I asked him, "Do you know that woman?" He just stared at me. "Do you know that man?" I asked the older woman. She quickly shook her head no, obviously uncomfortable. "You really should not be touching women you don't know" I told the guy. He immediately got defensive (a sign that he wasn't the "nice kind of guy" he was trying to come off as). He raised his voice and was almost yelling when he said "I'm just trying to make her feel comfortable."

Yeah, since when does a woman start feeling comfortable when a strange guy starts grabbing her arm? I could tell he was aggravated and it made me nervous because I didn't know what he was going to do. "The best way to make a woman feel comfortable is to leave her alone" I said. At this he stood up- out of his seat and was even madder now. I was really nervous and felt threatened as he stared at me. Then a woman who was sitting on the back of the bus called out, "She's right, you shouldn't be touching women you don't know." It was SO awesome that this woman who had been observing the situation decided to speak up!! I felt like someone else had my back and was watching out for me-- for other women! Knowing she was there gave me courage. The guy turned his attention back to me and aggressively asked "Are you a cop or something?"

"Maybe" I answered. (This is funny for anyone who knows me because I look nothing like a cop. Obviously this guy was paranoid about something!) With that, he walked to the back of the bus and got off. I sighed in relief and said "Thank you" to the woman who had spoken up with me. I smiled at the older woman who had remained silent the whole time, and then I got off at my stop.

the underbrush because there were paths of less resistance available, and anyone who would walk from behind us was probably very drunk, had some motive for approaching from behind, or both. In this case, the last possibility was true. I can think of no possible reason for what these country club teens turned gansta wannabes did next except that Peter, as a non-white, had crossed the lilly-white line of comfort, and made the perfect target for a bunch of racist kids to prove their manhood on.

The moment that the boys latched onto Peter and began to hit him revealed several things to me in an instant. Firstly, Julia had had more than a little vodka with her marshmallows, and was not going to be a good ally in this situation. She looked stunned and shrank back in a panic, unsure of how to react as she tried to register what was happening. I also realized that these boys were drunk, and that defusing the situation would require talking some sense into them as well as a physical reaction, and that, even though I was a good deal smaller, I was more sober and might be able to use this to my advantage.

I lunged at the nearest boy and grabbed him in a headlock and yelled at Julia, who remained stunned "Go tell Ellen". She snapped to attention and scampered off, and as I had guessed, they let her go with little notice; it was Peter they wanted. As I pealed the first boy off Peter, I talked loudly and firmly to the triad: "He hasn't done anything to you. There is no reason to fight him--you haven't met him, he hasn't done anything to you, we don't want to fight, he hasn't done anything to you."

As I all but yelled my repetitive message into their ears, I tried to sound calm, but definite. The first boy that I peeled off lunged again, and I noticed two more things in an instant: Peter, as part of his Buddhist practice, was a pacifist. Instead of fighting back, he was trying to edge towards the cliff and roll down. He was also not wearing his glasses or contacts, and didn't realize that this was a good 60-foot drop instead of the gradual 15-foot slope he told me later that he imagined considering the usual nature of the new-England coasts on the south shore. This meant that if this situation was going to be resolved physically, I was going to have to do it, and that I had better do it before he either got seriously hurt by his attackers or by going over the edge of the cliff.

As the boys continued to beat Peter, I then did something that I still can only partly remember and partly understand. In a rush of urgency and adrenaline, and repeating my repetitive mantra to the boys the entire time, I grabbed another boy in a headlock, as the boys became more violent, clumsily pummeling Peter towards the ground. Holding him around the neck with one arm, and sliding the other arm under one of his that was wrapped around Peters' neck, I flung him against the rock behind us. Being drunk, he was slow to get up, and somehow, in the haze of adrenaline that followed, I did the same to the other two.

consider my actions, I remember being astounded by my own strength at the time. Peters' three attackers seemed either dazed or surprised by the turn in events, and scampered off with as much grace and speed as their baggy clothes and plastered systems would allow at the same time that Ellen and a group of her friends came storming down the path to our aid. I reached down and grabbed Peters' arm, hauling him back from the edge of the cliff, grateful to discover that the blows he had taken had not hurt him badly.

While the situation was tame in the sense that no weapons were present and the attackers seemed unpracticed as well as drunk, it was frightening to me in that physically, my arsenal was much smaller than these three boys. Had I stopped to think, I would have seen instantly that their sheer size and number did not indicate to me that I was going to control the situation, rather, it could have ended up with both Peter and I being completely overpowered. Luckily, I did not stop and calculate this, I took what cues I could from the situation, and with the blessing of a motherload of adrenaline, I acted quickly, I do believe that they might have fought harder had I not talked to them as I fought them. The most powerful lesson that I take from this experience is not any particular maneuver that was especially effective, as I can hardly remember for the adrenaline, but that I am capable of being a powerful defensive opponent, much more powerful than any of us, most of all myself expected, and that this was made possible because I used the intensity of the situation as fuel instead of panicking or even taking time to consider fear. Every drop of terror in my being was transformed into strength, rage, and instant intuitive logic. While this experience shook me at the time, it has also given me great hope. I am a small girl, and Peters' attackers were hulking boys who had clearly made it through a growth spurt or two, but while the balances were uneven in terms of brawn and body weight, never mind number, I felt urgency where they felt only aggression. If I can avoid a potentially dangerous situation by using my fright at the reality before me to pump power into my body and reasoning into my mind, others who find themselves in similar situations can too.

I was traveling with 5 other women one summer. We had hitched up to Toronto Canada for a conference and ended up sleeping in a city park one night. We chose a very open area in the middle of a field to sleep. We felt relatively safe because there were so many of us. But even so, my friend Kelly and I took turns staying awake to keep an eye on things. I had a knife with me "just in case". It was really just a traveling knife that I used when preparing food and the like.

At one point Kelly woke me up because she had seen a guy circle us at a distance a few times. We both watched him. He was walking in a slow, wide circle around us. We sat up so that he would know we were watching him. When he saw us looking at him he retreated out of sight. I went back to sleep and Kelly stayed awake.

She woke me up a second time when she had noticed that he was circling us again. This was bad because we were both very tired and just wanted to sleep. We tried waking up our friends but they didn't want to move to a new spot, they were really tired too. So Kelly and I decided to be proactive and go ask the guy what he wanted. We got out of our sleeping bags and walked towards him. Kelly took the knife hidden in her sleeve.

When he saw us walking towards him he began to back away. Without getting too close we called out, "Hey, why do you keep walking around us? What do you want?"

He said "I don't speak English" in perfect English. He didn't even have an accent. Weird. I thought he was just trying to blow us off.

"Just leave us alone!!!" we yelled at him.

He made a nasty face and walked away. He stayed pretty far away, but came in and out of our sight throughout the night. Needless to say, Kelly and I got no sleep, but our friends did so that was good at least.

by Ariel

The boy sitting behind me in Humanities class could be heard loudly whispering to his friend, "... its like when a girl says no to sex but really means yes." I was shocked and disgusted by his remark. As the class droned on I became more and more angry at the boy behind me and at myself for not having said anything immediately following his violent comment. I decided that since he'd said it, by now 20 minutes ago, I'd wait till the end of class to confront him on it. As he stood up to leave I stood and turned to face him. "I heard what you said" I told him looking in his eyes. "When a woman says No its not sex, its rape."

"I was just kidding" he said looking to his buddies for reassurance.
"Its not funny. Rape is not a joke."

He rolled his eyes and walked away. Later that day I saw him walking down the hall with a woman. As they passed I said to the woman, "watch out for him, he thinks rape is a joke." she just laughed at me and took hold of his hand. I was disappointed by her reaction, but felt good about speaking up.

I was waiting for my friend in the alley behind my house. It was a Saturday night - we were going to hear some music. My friend was just getting his shoes on so I knew he'd be out any minute... I could hear a man

yelling close by. The yelling guy was. He yelled at me "You are his arms were outstretched & line towards me. I panicked and unexpected situation popped into my head. I decided to get him safe by not letting

put my hand up in stance (feet shoulder width apart, one back straight, one forward). I said "DON'T COME ANY CLOSER TO ME!"

yelling but kept between us and

the older bent, a loud voice

stop width back

positioned apart, one straight, one forward. I said "DON'T COME ANY CLOSER TO ME!"

on and got into a ballanced foot in front of I said

He stopped up in the air and

I turned as he circled me so that my back was never to him. Once he passed me he kept on walking. I called to my friend yelled to hurry up and come outside. The weird guy a sweet girl!" but left me alone. We agreed to watch out of the night & forgot about it for the rest of the night & enjoyed the music.

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A.C.

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turned into a sweet and loving girl. It was a weird in. Then an idea keep myself to me. So I

I was at a party in the West Bottoms (semi-abandoned downtown business district where galleries are in KC), and my friend and I had downed two bottles of Boone's between us. The party was in a gallery, tons of people coming in and out, loud, a band, etc. I decided to go out for some air. I'm usually really nervous outside by myself when it's dark, but I was really enjoying being alone, singing, nice night. I went across the street, still in full view of the building, people coming and going, and then all of a sudden, no one was outside with me. A car drove by and some guys waved to me. I waved back, thinking they were going to the party too. They parked right by me, and one guy got out. He asked me where I lived. I laughed and said "Oh no no, I'm here at the party! The band's starting; they've got some salmon and stuff."

He started asking me if I needed a ride, and I was kind of backing away, saying "No, I don't need a ride, I'm here with my friend." While I was backing away, another guy got out of the car. They were both in their mid-twenties, sort of stocky. I saw two more guys in the back seat of the car. The first two guys grabbed my arms and started forcing me towards the car. I started to panic, and somehow thought really quick "If I pull forward, away from them, they'll just grab me tighter." So I walked a few steps with them, then rammed my elbows backwards into their ribs super-hard. Then I ran back across the street and into the building.

The seriousness of the incident didn't hit me until later that night, talking about it, when I realized, holy fuck anything could have happened to me! Later I was told that there's often a lot of prostitution a few blocks from there, and that's how a few people explained it to me, but even if I was a prostitute, that's insane behavior! You don't force the ladies into your car! Hello!!!

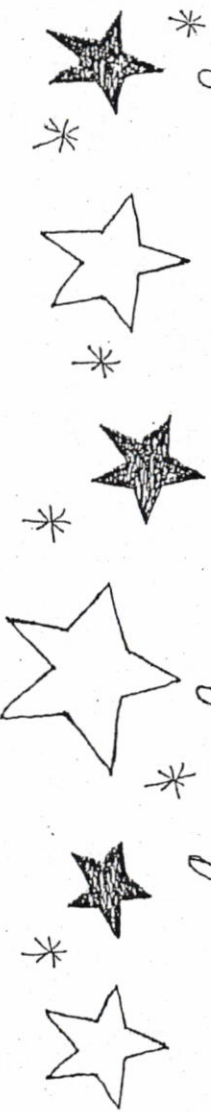
Also, if anyone asks me why I don't talk to the guy I dated who was super-insane abusive in all possible ways I say "UH-HUH... cuz he's a fucking rapist, that's why."

It always throws people off, like "How can she just say that!!!!?" but I think it's important to quit being ashamed that he did things to me, and place blame for bullshit!!!!

ARGH!

Rita Brinkerhoff

The fact that I'm still alive & a girl means self-defense.



When I was 10, I got off the bus 2 stops early because it was a beautiful day and I wanted to walk. This guy looked at me and started walking faster. He followed me home, got through the front door. I ran up the stairs and by absolute luck my step-dad was home. He alarmed the door on the guy. We never called the police. We never talked about it. I stayed home the next day because I was scared he'd be lurking around. But I went out the day after and prayed it to the back of my mind. That's also basically how I deal with at least harassment - push it to the back of my mind.



My friend usually yells at guys, like "Fuck my left one!" or something like that.

Emelda - author of DIVINE DEBRIS nine.

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be surprised how often you see them. I'm not suggesting going out and looking for situations to jump into, but you really don't need to—they find you. So don't just look on if the situation calls for action, you need to ACT!

I've reached my boiling point, but I'm only one person. I'm no superhero, nor am I trying to be. I'm doing what I can, talking to people, speaking out, and when necessary, acting up. If you do nothing else, talk to one friend about this—plant the seed that might move them to action. Because you never know when you might be in need of assistance and the crowd around you is just watching.



Saturday evening I came home and my front door was open. My roommate claimed no knowledge of why and actually thought I had done it. She left for the evening. I felt nervous but tried to ignore it. Later I was watching television and there was a knock at the door. It was a young boy telling me he was "lost" and could he "use the phone?" Weird, no? Thinking I was being prejudice I offered to call for him. When I returned he was gone. Later I was in the kitchen preparing food. Suddenly a loud noise caused the cat to jump from the sofa. The noise was the door being kicked in. My apartment at the time was very narrow and long. The kitchen being on the opposite end from the door. I emerged to find four "boys" all in white tees entering the house. (Oh yeah, between the call incident and the break in I spied this group out my window walking down an alley.) I also emerged with the knife I had been using. Again fight or flight. No time for thinking. Instinct took over. Wearing nothing but a slip I ran after them knife in hand. As soon as they spotted me they started exiting. Luckily I just wound up with cuts on my hand from a glass door that was broken during their flight. Later, my roommate and I figured out that they had been in the house while she was home alone because some of my stuff was stolen.



officers were patrolling the Fullerton platform at the time. We told them what happened and I insisted that they do something.

They told me they would radio ahead and get the guy off the train. And as much as I would have liked to have trusted them, I didn't. I waited while they radioed another officer and accompanied them on the Red Line while they went to apprehend him.

In the end, he was removed from the train, but even with my witness they said they could not do anything more than take him off the train. Only if he threatened physical violence (which was the only thing he didn't directly say) and the woman he was initially harassing came forward could they take him into custody. Bullshit. There are \$200 fines on the L for smoking, eating or radio playing... yet there is not one thing they could do. No disorderly conduct? No public intoxication? No disturbing the peace? And of course she's not going to come forward—she was very upset when I was there and probably very intimidated and embarrassed afterwards as well.

However, the icing on the cake was when I questioned the officers about what I could have done differently so that and they replied "you did everything right." If I did everything right, why did nothing happen to him? Why did that woman have to suffer verbal abuse on her train ride home?

My point of sharing this is that I don't want you to sit idly by. The most terrifying situations can happen not when you are alone, but surrounded by people. Yes, if you're one of the crowd it's easy to look out for your own safety and remove yourself from situation like that, but what if that was you in her shoes?

Imagine being hassled, harassed and possibly more while a crowd of people just look on and don't move to help you. I read something for a Sociology class about a woman being stabbed to death in broad daylight while over 50 people watched—no one acted. It's something about human nature. But along with that story there have also been stories about entire groups moved to action by one person making a the first move to help. Hopefully I'm preaching to the choir on this one and you would snap out of your trance and help someone in a situation like that, but if not I hope this was some food for thought.

One reason why I acted was because I've sat passively by too often when things like this have happened in the past. They happen everywhere, everyday. Yes, I could have been injured that night on the L, but I wasn't. And to tell you the truth, a person could live their life safely, doing things with minimal risk only to be struck by a CTA bus while crossing the street tomorrow. I personally don't see speaking out as any more of a risk than getting of bed each morning. Be a watchdog: look out for injustices. You'd

By Leah

Oh yes, another thought, or feeling, in the church. A sense of just being my self. Of feeling distanced from things, from my possessions. Of only being my body. This is all that is "mine," all I can control, all I can feel and give.

(a journal entry from the day before I was raped)

As I think about writing this story, I am analyzing and pondering all around the details of what actually happened. It always seems like such a long story to me. It was a relatively long ordeal but I think I feel this way mostly because I can never leave anything out. How could I summarize, condense? But I think to labor over a new narrative at this point, crawling with details and descriptions is unnecessary for the audience and not where I'm at with it after all the thought and work I've put towards this fuckin mess. And, to be honest, I am just too fucking tired to write the story again. So that is why I decided to approach it as I have: merging recent ideas and thoughts with excerpts from my journal entry from a few days after the event (going back to read the original journal entry in its entirety for the first time since I wrote it 4 years ago proved to be quite an ass-kicking experience in and of itself). This happened to me while hiking in Costa Rica.

It was so so scary. I can hardly think about it. Maybe I should do this in the daytime when I won't get as scared... I need to get this down.... That first moment is the worst to think about, seeing the guy come up behind me on the trail and while considering him being some local kid, knowing something bad was going to happen, but not knowing what.... The 2 others with shirts tied around their heads come up to take me off the trail into the jungle...

I can finally believe that the story of my rape is a success story. First and foremost because I am still alive! Also because I am still working through it. I haven't given up or blocked it out for good. I remember being terrified that not a day would pass that I didn't think about what happened to me. Maybe a day like that still hasn't passed. But some days it is only a brief thought. Some days I feel angry, wiser, strong, something other than the hopelessness, fear, depression, and dulling heaviness that were so much of my life for the first year or so afterwards.

They start saying "Eres hermosa. Eres demasiado hermosa," (You're beautiful. You're too beautiful) and I'm like "Shit, here it comes." The leader dude asks if I like to make love, if I want to make love w/him. I say NO and he's like "tranquila (calm down), I never force a woman to have sex with me." I guess because I want to, I believe him and feel relieved.

I make up stories trying to figure out, guess, what they would want to hear.

The fact that I didn't fight back physically or try to escape plagued me for a long time, and still does at times. Other heroic and astonishing stories left me doubting the strength everyone had assured me of and feeling like a wimp for not even trying to fight. But I have for the most part, not only come to peace with my decisions, but can understand and back them up.

At some point, the leader tells me to stop crying. I realize, surprised myself, that I'm not crying and say so. I know some part of me is working hard to hold it together.

When I doubt my strength, my decisions, my courage and sum my survival up to submission, luck, and patience, I make myself remember how badly I pleaded with myself to keep myself from giving in, going crazy, dying, getting killed. That was my fight; my brain was working the entire time. What did they want to hear? What were my options? Should I kiss ass? act tough? seem scared? What was waiting for me beyond this that I needed to stay alive for?

After the third guy leaves for town with my ATM card, the leader (the most vocal) and the guy he keeps calling "Maniac" start talking about diff. plans, diff. options. How he (the leader) wanted to kill me, but the third guy said I was cooperative, "tranquila," scared, so he wasn't going to kill me, unless I did something. They talk about... calling my parents for ransom. I'm just thinking, "Please God, no. I just want to be free, I want to be away from these guys." ... Every once in a while, "Maniac" randomly slaps me on the leg w/ the side of the knife which doesn't hurt but scares me. A few times, one of them runs the knife tip along me.... I kept my eyes closed even when my head was covered and I [never saw their faces]. It makes this all seem so unreal and hard to believe.... We were all tired. I was so worn out from being scared. I was thirsty. I was anxious, bored, restless. I asked him to untie a hand so I could lie down and he tied [it] to my other foot but we all lay down on the log for a while.... This whole thing was way longer than a movie....

8 hours is a long time but such terror, control, manipulation and violence are parts of some people's lives for an entire lifetime. Those who manage to hold onto themselves, to struggle through with some vision of what's beyond and outside that, to somehow survive, BLOW ME AWAY. Our survival, mine, theirs, anyone's, causes me to marvel at life, at my life and that I still have it.

They leave me alone at some point, sitting on a log in the jungle, hands tied, foot tied to tree, coat over head and I almost want them to come back so I can't further contemplate the impossibility of escape and because even their company makes time go faster and keeps me scared and tense enough to think about the reality of what's happening.... So finally, leader goes to look out on the trail and make sure no one is coming. He calls to Maniac and they lead me back out to the trail from the jungle, the beach now just on the other side of us. Brief moment of hope as if they're going to let me go from here. They notice me looking at the trail, with glee, familiarity, hope, and ask "Where are you going?"

I feel like I'm indulging my drama a little bit. Not to play the "who's story is crazier" game, but I know there are thousands of women (unfortunately) who's stories break your heart and raise your bile—and there are a million reasons I've made up why mine is not at the top of "The Crazy Story List." BUT, I spent a lot of time trying to think it wasn't that big of a deal and down-playing my strength and the courage of my reaction. SO FUCK IT!!!!

It's still an important thing for people to know about me, but it is no longer so much an integral part of my daily mind flow and my life structure that people need that background before progressing beyond the most basic level of acquaintance. It bothers me sometimes that I know there are people out there who met me right around the time of the rape who's most prominent association with me is that event. I wonder if they have a visual image to go with it.

22

And They Just Watched It Happen....

Rebecca Steinmetz

I have reached my boiling point. I know of too many friends who have been harassed, hassled, sexually assaulted or raped. I have seen too many incidents where women have been intimidated, belittled and terrorized just for the sheer fact that they are women. I know of men who have had the same thing happen to them and I have been assaulted more than once. This enrages me.

Last Friday night I had a nasty run in with a drunken guy who was harassing a woman on my train between Belmont and Fullerton on the Brown Line. She was small and looked about my age—IT COULD HAVE BEEN ME, IT COULD HAVE BEEN YOU, IT COULD HAVE BEEN SOMEONE YOU KNOW. He was a tall, muscular man twice her size. Leaning over his seat, inches from her face, he was yelling obscenities at her in a very threatening manner. She raised her voice and told him over and over to leave her alone.

I could see her shaking from where I was sitting. All eyes in the car were on the two of them. And every single passenger, at least 12 people, sat frozen in their seat. I froze too; it was a frightening thing to see. But if I was frightened and shaken by the sight of this, I could only imagine how she must have felt.

She quickly moved out of her seat and sat down a few rows from me. The man followed her, continuing to yell. One last look at the trance the rest of the passengers were in cinched it for me. His actions and the other passenger's inactivity made my blood boil. I got up and yelled back at him. I very clearly repeated what she had already said and told him to stay away from her. Consequentially, he turned his attack on me—inches away from my face now and I could smell the alcohol on his breath. We had an intense shouting match that went on for maybe a minute, followed by a long moment of silence as I sat down next to her and we ignoring him. During our silence he continued slinging insulting comments at the two of us. And for a reason known only to him, he gave a final repulsive remark, sarcastically and sadistically "apologized" for bothering us, and moved to another car.

The woman was still trembling and now I was too. She told me that he had been harassing her even before I got on the train; she didn't know him and not only was he using incredibly sexist and racist remarks he was also trying to solicit her for sex and drugs. All of his words were intended to insult, intimidate, humiliate and threaten.

What gives him or anyone else the right to do that to another human being? The train arrived at Fullerton and left after giving her a few words of support. But much to my dismay, as I was ready head home, a man who had been on the train with us came over to me and said that he saw the intoxicated man go right back into her car.

around frantically, trying to figure out what was going on. I paid for my falafel and thanked the man, beaming with delight. I walked out of the restaurant, laughing with my head thrown back. Deep, unbridled laughter from my belly. Chortles of freedom and power. It was one of the greatest moments of my life, and I was in absolute ecstasy.

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(check out her web site at www.loolwa.com)



Art from "Feminine Protection for today's woman!"
Artist unknown.

Maniac sticks his dick in me. It hurts, he pushes far, I can't believe this [is] really happening.... At some point he (the leader) says, "My friend didn't rape you, you know. No te violó." I'm like, "Oh really? Oh no? Cómo no?" He says he was just showing you what [it] felt like. To show you what big dicks we have.

He (the leader) keeps saying he'd never rape a girl, he has a mother, he has 5 sisters, he wouldn't do a barbarity.... Eventually we go back to the trail from the beach and walk down a ways, me holding the leader's hand and he says, "If anyone passes, I'm your boyfriend, okay?" Okay. He helps me over the mud, offers support with his hand. Being generally considerate. How do people get so fucked up?... So skewed as to what they're doing to another human being?

So this past summer I took a Model Mugging self-defense course. It was a big financial investment and a huge emotional step for me. I'd suspected for a long time that it would be a helpful step for me to take to exorcise the memories my body itself still held as well as to bolster up my confidence in my ability to survive and assert my right to defend myself. 5 years I hesitated, debated, delayed, made excuses, or forgot for awhile about taking the class. However, I do think it couldn't have been more perfectly timed. Any earlier and I wouldn't have been prepared to fully engage myself. I would still have been too close to the emotions to overcome the fear of confronting them vividly and realize the possibility of using them as tools for strength.

Things I learned from my class: 1) Emotion is power. I was scared of the consuming intensity I imagined my feelings, especially fear, could have if given an opening. Now I know the strength I have when I let emotion fill my body, a tangible force. 2) A tough persona or act is not necessary to protect myself. Using the strengths I find most natural to me to be assertive and firm are the most effective because they are true. 3) Lots of other things. That class really, truly changed my life.

I believed him now when he said they weren't going to kill me.... He left me about 100 ft. from the trail in the jungle and told me to wait 20 minutes, then follow the sound of the ocean to the trail. He kissed me on both cheeks before he left.

I feel so distant from the woman who lived through that. Who waited for what seemed like hours at the side of the trail where they left me, to make sure they were really gone and this wasn't going to start all over again. Who then made her way back through the middle-of-the-night jungle, through ocean stingrays and clouds of mosquitoes, and a full moon that gleamed down steadfast and comfortingly silver. It was me. It is so hard to get my head around that. Sometimes I wish it was someone outside of me so I could comfort her the way I know how. It's harder to do with myself.

Vera (the owner of a hostel back in town who I had met a few times before) is so great. She hugged me through the window. She said "muthafuckers" as she walked out the door. Instantly offered me the tea I'd been envisioning someone offering me.... She called all her friends to figure out what to do, saying "She's a very young girl, she's just a little girl, she's very timid, she's so sweet, she's strong."

She said she learned late in life to not go through life with hate in you. And most important, to not hate yourself. Never hate yourself. "When things like this happen, we need to love ourselves more. And it's like we have some built in mechanism that turns up the love, like we know we need it."

disengagement

you didn't win
because i am learning to trust myself.
in each conscious breath
i reaffirm my relation
to the Ultimate.

all wisdom is contained
in my cells.

you didn't win
because i experience joy.
i have unlocked the box
of my hidden selves
they fly out
and release me from
mental slavery.

i am alive!
long live life!

you didn't win
because it's not a game.
i don't have to beat you
you didn't have to
beat me.

i know how
to treat others with respect.

you didn't win
because the ocean tides
are still ruled by the moon
the sun rises and sets
dirt is dirt.

there are some things
you cannot control.

you didn't win
because i am writing this.
you can never silence me!
i release me
from your bondage.

you can never win.
your greed
eats you alive
your fear controls you.

in sharp contrast
blue on orange
i stand to you and say

i am free.

9.22.00 - erika maria

(29)
I arrived at the Jerusalem bus stop, to meet a friend for lunch. We chose a tasty falafel/shwarma restaurant halfway down the block. I placed my order and looked around, only to see one of the two young soldiers near me staring at my chest. I pretended it was not happening and tried distracting myself. I went over to look at the wall-to-wall pictures of Mizrahi rabbis. How often, after all, did I have the pleasure of seeing pictures of non-Ashkenazi rabbis, even in restaurants owned by Mizrahim (Middle Eastern/North African Jews)?

"Are you from England?" the soldier asked when I returned, still staring at my chest. "What are you looking at?" I challenged. "He's looking at your backpack," his friend answered. As I struggled to think of what to say next, the friend added, "He's staring at your breasts." "What are you, chauvinists?" I replied. Damn! Just didn't sound as good in Hebrew. No punch. "G-d forbid!" the friend said in mock offense. They giggled with delight, thoroughly amused by themselves.

"Why?" the friend continued, "is it a sin for a guy to look?" I practically jumped up his nostrils, shouting at him. "Yes, it's disgusting. Women are not slabs of meat for men to gape at." I had an idea. "How would you feel if women talked to you while staring at your dick?" I leaned over sideways in front of the guy, placing my head squarely in front of his penis. "Would you like it if women talked to you this way?" They both laughed, in a way that was partly disconcerted and partly amused. "Oh, you think it's funny?" I asked. There was no stopping me now. "What about if I hit it?"

I slammed my hand under his penis.

He jumped back, startled, confused. A woman started running around in circles, yelling, "What is it? What's happening? What's going on?" The man behind the counter calmly kept making my falafel. "See," I shouted at the soldier I just hit, "that's what it feels like when men stare at my chest. It's feels as violating as being hit." By this point, the guy who originally stared at my chest had run out of the store. I ran after him. I was on a roll. I found him outside, laughing uncontrollably, with his penis partially erect. "Oh, you think it's funny?" I asked. "What about if I hit yours?" I slammed my hand under his penis, grabbing his balls. He stopped laughing. I gave him the same speech.

I ran back in the store, yelling god knows what. "Hey," I said to the soldier inside, "You've got a cute butt!" Slam! I hit it. The soldier outside came back in. "In fact you've got a cute butt too!" Slam! This guy was really upset by now, shifting back and forth, unsure what the hell to do. I was ready to take him on. He just stood there shifting on his feet, looking thoroughly distressed. I was having a blast.

"Hello, sweetie, how are you?"

It started from the moment I stepped off the airport bus. Innocuous-sounding enough, but poison in its context. Whenever I went, whatever I did, there he would be, in my face. Asking me questions, making comments. I could not lie on the beach alone, walk down the street alone, sit at a cafe alone. It was constant, unceasing, without mercy. And without consequence.

"Don't start with me," I cautioned the first two. "Whop!" they said, simultaneously impressed and entertained by my response. They left me alone after that; but usually I was not so lucky.

Cute young men, creepy old men, and everything in-between. They saw female flesh and went for it: "Hello, how are you today?"

"I want to be alone," I replied. He kept coming towards me, still talking. "I said I want to be alone." He did not stop. "Get the fuck away from me! I don't want to talk with you, and I don't want you near me!" He called me crazy. He started prancing about, yelling about what a nut I was. I moved to a different part of the beach. I moved.

"Hello, sweetie..." The jogger talked at me as he ran by. He ran past me again, talking again. He stopped and came over to me. I tried the ignoring technique. It didn't work. "Can't you just leave a woman alone? Can you deal with the concept that I don't want to talk with you? I am really sick of this! Get away from me!"

I had been thinking for a long time about the idea of hitting men who harassed me. The prospect was looking quite delicious at this point. I was close, very close...

"Hello, how are you?" I was lying on the wide low wall bracing the stairs down, listening to music on my walkman. The sun was shining on me, and I was feeling good. The idiot kept talking. I opened my eyes a slit to see who he was. His face was temptingly close to my foot. I considered the possibilities. The moron kept talking. "Hello? Helloooooo?" he said, waving a hand back and forth, as if to wake me up. I jumped up and verbally devoured him. "I'm not answering you because I don't want to talk with you! Get the fuck out of here!" I was right in his face. He freaked out and retreated, whimpering. I wished I had kicked him. I was getting closer.

by Merrydeath

(25)

I went to Europe last year over the summer and was leaving Berlin to get to France. My travel partner wanted to stay and I was missing projects to return to so I went alone. I left by over-ground train to get to the autobahn outside of Berlin and I found myself lost, the directions I'd been given proved wrong or I had misused them. I had little skill for asking for more than directions in German, and people spoke English so I was able to find a highway: just not the one I was supposed to have taken. I had an atlas but it wasn't too detailed, so it wasn't much use for exact streets. I waited at a small petrol station for hours with no luck, the sky was darkening and a storm forming, so I got nervous, and opted for the road side. Again no one would stop. Finally a car pulled over, two men. Language barriers were difficult but the driver spoke English and I decided to get in and then try to see how far he would go. Normally I would never let myself be outnumbered or take a ride without a clear understanding of the direction and length of the ride, but I figured any autobahn gas station was better than the small town I was in so I went against better judgement and took the ride. The next day I wrote a journal entry of what happened next, and this is what I wrote...

We rode a while and then they suddenly pull off the highway with an excuse to pick up a sister. I start talking about it, questioning and such, and the driver gets nervous, smoking a lot and driving fast. I weigh my options- get out at high speed in the middle of nowhere or wait for a small town. We are near a small area of homes and I see on my map that we are turned around going back from where I came from, and he pulls over into a small dirt road and I tell him to let me out. I realize I can't open the door from the inside. They let me out and I start to run. They get back in the car and I breath relief until they pull over and cut me off, come after me. I look at my watch, 6pm ish.

I start yelling at them and they are nervous, I can feel their hesitation. But I am knocked to the ground quickly. I yell from my stomach, so much that it is sore the next day. Constantly flailing around, and then I remember self-defense course move, try to grab the balls, but I can't get them, the most violent man is pinning my arm and sitting on my chest, resting on his knees. I try for the face, but the other man, the driver, grabs for my wrist, trying to put it in a handcuff. It takes him many minutes to actually get it- good thing for excessive punk jewelry. It gets caught in the cuffs so I have a lot of room. They pull my pants down, below my hips, but I squeeze my thighs together and won't let go. My pants are tight; hard to get them off. I refuse to let them make contact. He grabs my breasts and squeezes. Some details started to jumble, the violent man hits me in the face twice, tries to get my other arm free and into the handcuff but can't I'm too fast. He grabs many layers of clothes and tries to

twist my arm but the grip is weak with the clothing. Screaming the whole time, but the worst was when the aggressive one caught my throat. I tuck my chin like I was taught by Arika O. in self defense. He held that for a long long time. I start to freak out, telling them to back off, I'm losing oxygen, get off my throat, your killing me you fuck, etc and I keep thinking if I don't act fast I will go unconscious and die. I make a conscious decision I will not get raped and I will not get killed, thoughts of my family, my lover, my best friend fell my head with strength. And I again swing my feet at the aggressors head and make impact and he releases the neck hold. I'm able to get to my feet, I close my pants. I see the timid guy with a knife, he doesn't know what to do and I know that if I get the knife I am fully prepared to slash his throat. I lunge at him and he recoils in fear, the knife is a steak knife, cheesy serrated. I make him freak out and I jump into the driver seat of their car; fuck, no keys. This makes them really nervous, the driver jumps into the back seat; I was too late to lock it, and then try to grab the knife again. I get out of the car, I have bargaining power. I tell the aggressive man to retreat 30 feet and he does, I am hesitant to give them my wallet, and they knock me to the ground again, a man on my back and a knife at my spine. I tell them to get off if they want it. I get my wallet and tell them they can't follow me, I throw the wallet, grab my things and run. It seems to take forever till I get to the road.

By this time it is almost 7pm; we fought for 45 minutes. I am frantic, flag down cars who won't let me in their car, a man finally stops. I yell "Politzei", and he takes me to a police station which is two minutes away! In a small town called Finsterwalde. I tell my story to the police who photo me, question me, find me a bed and breakfast to stay in, want me to take them back to the site, but I don't know that I can find it again, don't want to see them again. I call my mom in the U.S. to tell her what happened.

I had a nice shower and a bed, tv to try to take my mind away from the pain. Swollen face, chipmunk cheek and a black and blue bruise on my chin; my throat is swollen and red, raw and I have trouble swallowing, I can't open my mouth more than an inch. My wrist is raw and bloody where I grabbed the knife but couldn't get a good grip on it. My entire back and every muscle in legs, arms, everywhere is sore from fighting and struggling. The adrenalin is wearing off and I no longer feel invincible from pain. I lie in bed for many hours crying in pain and confusion and a strength that I am still alive. I manage to fall asleep after many different attempts to get comfortable. There is no way to sleep which is not painful.

The next day the police came and made me take them to the place, I finally spot it, by seeing the windmills and an old rusty gate. We find my hitchhiking sign, the keys to the handcuffs, my phone card, some German coins. Old old beer cans from months if not years ago buried in the overgrown grass and they have the nerve to accuse me of drinking and partying with these men, of setting everything up in the middle of the

night. I am furious, another fit of crying; I feel like the police are almost as bad as the actual struggle, having to relive it. I try to be sympathetic; language can translate poorly and sound harsher than it is meant; being an outsider has its suspicions, being a punky girl doesn't help. I explain the entire situation, painstaking details, describe the car, etc and then they ask me to stay more days to meet with the man who draws descriptions of the men. I grab pen and paper and draw them myself, which impresses them (I love to draw). They concede to let me go.

The place where I stay is spectacular, caring and gracious, they feed me, support me, let my mother call me, and let me call my lover in America. They drive me to Berlin two days later and I catch an airplane home. My mother bought a ticket so I could get out of there. I had all my bags, my passport was separate from my wallet so though I had no money at least I had my identity.

Its been a year now and the violent man was caught; robbing a bank; he had my canceled credit card on him. He had broken probation or escaped from prison? Something like that, where he had been serving 9 years for kidnaping women, taking them to secluded areas, raping and beating them and taking their money. They said the drawing I did of him looked identical to him and it is what allowed them to connect him to my crime. They want me to go there and testify in court. I'm scared, I feel I have a responsibility to keep him from doing this to more women. But I feel they have a strong case against him, it would cost me time, money, continued heartache. I still have many nightmares and I get worked up writing this all down. I don't know what I'll do. I hope he thinks about this for the rest of his life like I and his other victims will. I don't know what happened to the driver. I just wish they would get honestly and truly fixed and heal their fucked up selves. I started teaching a basic self-defense class here when I returned to New Orleans. I will continue to take classes and educate myself and help others; we will continue to fight back.



Comics taken from "Kick" zine - artist unknown.