
Intimidating and Harassing Jane in the Workplace

Pervasive violence against women is not a joke; harassment and violence against women is widespread

By **Kat Avila** | Published on LatinoLA: October 8, 2014



"Do you have pepper spray?" I asked the bus driver. When she said no, I whipped out the small canister in my jacket pocket and handed it to her before I got off. Some jerk driving a new truck (yes, we have your license plate number) was stalking the bus's final route. As the bus made its stops, the truck would also stop just ahead of her.

A previous driver of this same route had been so harassed her boyfriend would accompany her on the last run. Up to that time, the harasser had been boarding the bus. The later presence of the boyfriend was enough to discourage the predator.

Male or female, the bus drivers have to deal with nutcases on a daily basis. However, female bus drivers as well as female passengers have to deal with an extra level of abuse - sexual harassment and sexual threats.

The pervasiveness of this abuse is such that complaints are often dismissed, ignored, and otherwise not taken seriously. "That guy's harmless" is a familiar retort. Reports of domestic violence against women are frequently treated the same way (the casualties are the children). The empathy isn't there, not to the extent it should be.

That some cultures, religions, and philosophies regard women as subservient to men does not help as they supply justification for the maltreatment and verbal abuse of "uppity" women. In this regard, these institutions are like the hideous peddlers of some forms of pornography. Societal change is difficult because of adherents radically and blindly following the dictates of supraparental institutions.

In California, you could find yourself working for a foreign-owned business. They may not be responsive or even open to the concerns of an American woman putting her foot down about being yelled at and grabbed by foreign male coworkers. After all, those men are acting in socially acceptable ways for the country they are from.

It could be cavemen in a traditionally male-dominated occupation. [See the Cynthia Juarez story on LatinoLA](#)

As in the bus driver anecdote, it is not always hostile coworkers but outside strangers to be on-guard about. At my workplace, a greeter position at our business entrance was eliminated partly because guys walking past the young women were making lewd suggestions and comments. The courage of one woman alerting management - at the risk of appearing overly sensitive or a troublemaker - resulted in a number of other incident reports being filed.

Still, reporting remains financially risky for women who cannot afford to lose their jobs. That is a harsh reality. This is a reason why much workplace hostility remains largely hidden and unreported. Another reason is women are afraid nothing will change and/or the harassment will get worse.

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Because harassment and violence against women is widespread, a proactive step is to recognize and be aware of the problem. For women (and harassed men), it is important to give yourself as good a chance as you can to escape escalating dangerous situations. Staying alert to surroundings and carrying a charged-up phone, whistle, and pepper spray for self-defense is streetwise.

Additionally, individual men and women can be role models for responsible and respectful behavior. Step by step, person by person, positive social progress can be made for a much safer and equitable world for everyone.

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