

To the Men and Women of New York and the NYC City Council:

It is an honor to show support today for what I believe to be **the** most pressing issue of our day.

It isn't necessary to shock you with some of the more disturbing stories of street harassment that I've heard from my friends, coworkers, and three younger sisters; if you are in this room today, you've heard them already—and chances are you can raise me one better.

The tools of violence and oppression are learned at home, but they are cultivated on the streets. A young boy watches his father whistle at a woman from his car and tries his own hand at the sport later while hanging out with friends in the park—it makes him feel bigger and more macho, and he's all of 100 lbs, no one bats an eye.

It's a compliment, anyway, right?—it's harmless.

But twenty years later, he **is** bigger and more macho, and the whistle no longer serves him well. He's just lost his job and he's angrier, his tactics have evolved. He doesn't move out of the way for a woman passing on the street, and he blocks her path as she tries to walk around. He howls at the girls laughing together on their way to school and leers at the suited executive who sits down next to him on the train. By this time, it's not just women anymore that he wants to scare—his anger is an equal-opportunity employer.

What begins with a whistle ends with intimidation and aggression. It is never a compliment; it is a thinly veiled exertion of power and masculinity that doesn't aim to flatter and please its recipient, but to silence and scare. It isn't courtship, it's provocation, and it's not harmless—**it's bullying**.

The solution to this problem isn't a self-help book or another self-defense guide, because the people for whom these sorts of materials are written are not in need of help and advice. We're in need of some real change.

This isn't a women's issue, and it's not a feminist concern. This is an American issue, and a New York City concern—if we start acknowledging this behavior for what it really is, **bullying**, we can work towards creating an effective and meaningful solution for a problem that extends to and affects every person in this city.

Thank you for addressing this problem today, I look forward to being a part of the solution.