



## **SARAH MM**

As a woman in the City of Philadelphia, it's extremely difficult to get from point A to point B without being scared for your life at any point in a day. You step out of your house first thing in the morning to go to the coffee shop and hear "daymn girl" or "smile honey". You get off the subway by work and have to stop before climbing stairs because a pair of young strangers have made it obvious that they'd like to follow closely behind you to get a glimpse up your skirt. You walk home from dinner and have to be on guard (since it is now dark and the harassment only increases after sundown) only to be taunted by a man on a bike who passes you twice, slows down behind you and to say "where you goin baby, how bout some fun". When you say "no" he pretends not to understand and rides closer declaring his overpowering size over you without having to say anything. You ask, "please leave me alone" and he still is confused. Now you have a choice, you can scream at the top of your lungs for him to GO AWAY, or you can just hope to god that he will give up and let you walk home without raping you. You yell, because you're scared, even though no one is around, and luckily he goes away (though this is obviously not the case for everyone).

The next day you are walking to a friends house mid day in south philly only to be asked "do you want to make some money" from the 3 men twice your size on the corner of 7th & Morris. When you do decide to stand up for yourself, and shout back "don't talk to women like that" or "do you really think that works?" or any number of things, you are laughed at because you are ultimately powerless against the harassers who have total control over you outside your home.

These assailants in South Philly specifically have followed, screamed, cornered, and threatened me to the point where i am forced to face life and death decisions on a weekly basis. It makes me want to not leave the house. It makes me miss out on events. It makes me terrified for my friends. Most importantly, if I can't go out without being harassed, what is the point in going out at all? There isn't one. Women across Philadelphia have to fight this quiet battle every single day. Some do it better than others, but we all have to. It's not fair. We shouldn't have to be terrorized every second we step out our door. We shouldn't have to be aware of what neighborhoods our friends live in and how early we have to leave to get home safely. Yes, crime happens everywhere at any given time but harassment is also a crime that goes unpunished until it turns into something like rape or assault and even then very little is done to bring the criminals to justice. I have called the police to report my harassers and they do nothing. I have yelled back like a crazy person, ran away in tears, and now have to pick and choose what neighborhoods i travel to in the city of Philadelphia depending on the amount of times i have been harassed and severity of the cases. There is no reason why there cant be some repercussions for harassers or some kind of system for catching assailants who think it's ok to objectify people.