

COLLECTIVE ACTION
FOR SAFE
SPACES 

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Hi amazing community of supporters, advocates, and volunteers:

I'm Jessica. I've been involved with Collective Action for Safe Spaces (CASS) for over a year. First, I served on CASS's Board of Directors and then transitioned to the Interim Executive Director role in September 2015—"Interim" meaning that, while we recognize our current staffing structure is a work in progress, we also know that we have a lot of work to do right now.

I stepped into this position at an exciting time. I had six weeks to learn how local policy-making works, build a coalition with local organizations and community members to ensure that diverse voices were heard at DC's first roundtable on street harassment, and raise the support we needed to keep our work moving forward in 2016.

Fortunately for me, you've all stepped up to steer CASS through this progress. Our team of incredible volunteer staffers worked each week to determine our policy priorities, publicize the roundtable and our year-end campaign, and train community members to ensure folks felt equipped to respond to harassment and to be active bystanders. I have had the steadfast support of an active and committed Board of Directors and local experts working together to end gender-based violence through community-based solutions, like bystander intervention training. And, in my short time in this role, I have found that **leadership is not always about taking the lead, but also about leveraging my position to lift up the voices of those who are silenced or unheard.**

That's the direction we're moving in with CASS's next strategic plan: We want to address public sexual harassment and assault, more commonly known as street harassment, for those who are the most vulnerable—LGBTQ and gender nonconforming people; women, and particularly transwomen, of color; people who sleep in public spaces due to lack of housing; youth who have shared their experiences with being harassed on sidewalks and public transit when they were as young as 11 or 12 years old.

I don't have all the answers for how we're going to end street harassment, but, building on the work of my predecessors and the experts, I have some ideas:

- **Keep up our advocacy with WMATA**—we surveyed transit riders to find out what's working with our anti-harassment campaign on the Metro and what we can do to make everyone feel safer while using public transit.
- **Train bystanders to respond to sexual harassment in the places it happens most**—public transit, bars and nightclubs, cabs, and other public spaces.
- **Teach kids that they deserve to be safe and treated with respect** by partnering with schools and youth organizations to build communities and cultures where harassment is not tolerated.
- **Improve our free, safe rides program** to ensure that it's efficiently serving the greatest need and getting folks home safely.

Together, we're making public spaces safe for everyone.

Thanks for all you do,
Jessica Raven, Interim Executive Director



OUR STAFF

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“[On Metro’s red line], a woman approached me and told me that a man was taking video of my legs with his camera phone. I wore shorts that day; it was hot and I had to push my toddler in his stroller. She told me that he had been filming my legs and using the zoom function to get close-ups. The man overheard her and jumped off the train at Brookland before I could confront him.”

Through our partnerships with Stop Street Harassment and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), we launched the second phase of an awareness campaign on DC’s public transit system.



This campaign names the problem and validates the experiences of thousands of people who experience street harassment on a near-daily basis. The Metropolitan Transit Police received 33 reports of harassment on public transit in 2015—we know that’s just the tip of the iceberg. Increased reporting helps us collect data on the problem to guide comprehensive solutions.

Want to report harassment you’ve experienced or witnessed on public transit? Go to WMATA.com/harassment.

This year, we’re working with Stop Street Harassment and WMATA to gather data about sexual harassment on DC’s public transit system. We’re using this information to guide the next phase of our awareness campaign.



Through CASS's workshops, I have learned techniques to stop harassment, such as acting like I'm lost and asking the harasser for directions, which helps the victim get away.



- Ben Merrion, CASS Board Member

Bystander intervention not only stops sexual harassment and prevents assault in the moment, it spurs cultural change to show harassers that their behavior won't be tolerated and encourages everyone to do their part to make our communities safer.

We've worked with a number of local organizations to train community members to stop harassment and help prevent it from escalating to assault. Thank you to all of our community partners who have participated in our workshops and trainings this year!

We're also starting to have important conversations about the way that race and ethnicity can affect how different people may experience harassment.

Interested in getting your group or organization trained to stop harassment? Request a workshop at bit.ly/CASSworkshops.



YOUR STORIES FUEL OUR WORK.

Our blog, My Spaces, Too, is the only forum dedicated to collecting data on sexual harassment and assault in all public spaces across DC.



I was walking on L St, just past 13th, when I heard a hiss. I looked toward that direction and saw a naked man standing in the window of an apartment building. He flashed his genitals at me. I quickly turned and walked away. It seems like he was standing there for quite some time waiting to flash any woman who walked by.



We've collected more than 900 stories from people who have experienced harassment, and we've identified the places where it happens most: public transit, bars and nightclubs, and cabs.

Share your story at bit.ly/CASSblog!

“ I had just stepped outside a bar to call the friends I was meeting. I was standing quite close to the bouncer, just far away enough to hear the phone. A man walked past with a group of friends, **GRABBED ME BY THE WAIST**, pulled me in, and asked, ‘What are you doing tonight?’ I pulled away, and he walked off laughing. ”

50% of sexual assaults involve the use of alcohol as a weapon to incapacitate targets or as an excuse for sexually aggressive behavior. This puts bar staff in a unique position to stop sexual violence.

In partnership with local self-defense group Defend Yourself, we've trained the staff at bars like The Heights and Hank's Oyster Bar to recognize and stop sexual harassment using bystander intervention skills.



We're also helping Safe Bars expand nationally! We trained a group of trainers in Colorado to transform bar culture in their community and stop sexual violence.

- **Have you experienced sexual harassment at a DC bar? Share your story on our blog at bit.ly/CASSblog.**
- **Know a bar with a bad reputation for harassment or assault? Let's get them trained. Send an email to info@collectiveactiondc.org.**

WE'RE GETTING WOMEN, LGBTQ, AND GENDER NONCONFORMING FOLKS HOME SAFELY.



We gave 67 safe rides home this year!

In 2016, we're improving our RightRides service to ensure that it's meeting the greatest need - those who experience the most severe levels of gender-based violence and face the most barriers to safety when traveling through public spaces.

In 2016, we're working with DC Council members to form a task force on public sexual harassment and assault. The task force will bring together community partners committed to addressing this problem, starting with efforts to collect citywide data and increase awareness.



We worked with partners from Stop Street Harassment, Defend Yourself, DC Rape Crisis Center, DC NOW, Casa Ruby, the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Network for Victim Recovery DC, and more to build a robust presence from community members at DC's historic roundtable on street harassment in December.

“ That’s not okay, and it wasn’t okay when it happened to me. I don’t want my daughter to be subjected to this. ”

- Scyhla Pondexter-Moore on recognizing street harassment as experienced by her 15-year-old daughter



More than 30 people spoke up and shared their stories as survivors, as youth, as bicyclists, as transwomen, as Black women, as women of color, as bystanders, and as advocates for safety. **Now, we're working with DC Council members on comprehensive, citywide solutions to addressing street harassment—from better data collection and public art to training for DC's government employees.**

We released our strategic plan with the following four goals for 2016:



- We organized a Sit-in For Safe Spaces to reclaim safe public spaces in response to an anti-feminist group organizing in Dupont Circle.
- We've made our workshops more intersectional by opening up a dialogue about race and privilege.
- We've worked with Councilmember Nadeau to introduce legislation to form a DC Task Force on Street Harassment that will collect data on harassment and make recommendations to the city on how to address the problem.

Celebrate with us at *Lights, Camera, Collective Action!*





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Here's a quick list of helpful resources:

Share your story: bit.ly/CASSblog

Report harassment on public transit: WMATA.com/harassment

Request a workshop on responding to harassment: bit.ly/CASSworkshops

Stay in the loop about CASS's work: bit.ly/CASSemail

GIVE: bit.ly/SupportCASS

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