

TEASE

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**This article contains sensitive subjects concerning sexual harassment.*

“**W**hat’s your number baby?
You gonna let me hit it?
You’re thick, lemme hit it.”
Cat calls refract off of the wall directed towards me.

After being in school for six months, I am numb to these acts of derogatory subversion because I have heard them so often. Most women can relate to this awkward and uncomfortable transaction, and many respond in the same ways—averting our eyes and ignoring them.

Usually, I am one to disregard their cat calls; however, this time the harmful words caught my attention. The comment dripped from his mouth as if he had no control over his thoughts.

“I want to cum on your tits,” he said.

I looked at him in utter disappointment and shock. What did he think gave him the right to talk to me in such a way? What kind of upbringing promotes such behavior as degrading women? What makes him think that he will find love with the use of harassment? If anything, he did grab my attention, but it was not the attention he intended.

Looking at him straight in his eyes I said, “What you’re saying is disrespectful, you should watch how you speak to women.” He scoffed at me as if what I was telling him was completely ridiculous, like he had never heard a woman stand up for herself. But, I do know that I have seen him numerous times and he has not spoken to me since.

I wish I could explain to him now how much his comment has affected me to this day. That night, his voice came back into my head, and I envisioned the way he looked at me. I jumped out of bed and began sorting through all of my clothes, piling up anything that could draw another pervert’s attention. My tight skirts and shirts that showed any cleavage sat there on the ground in front of me, trying to erase each memory of harass-

ment that resided with the clothes.

It is sort of a Catch-22 that I like wearing these types of clothes. At times because I feel good about myself in them, but these clothes do get the attention of those men who view women as sex objects.

If one puts into context 1960s feminist fashion movements, and relates what was going on then to what is the fashion today, the two are not that different. Both then and now, women are wearing sexual clothes to make a social and political statement.

These clothes simultaneously celebrate the female body, showing curves, and making a statement that we are in full acceptance of ourselves. But, then I have to worry about attracting the attention of people who will assume that because I wear those clothes I am conveying some message about my sexuality. The reality is I am wearing what feels comfortable and what I think I look good in.

As a young woman of my generation who wants to be a voice within the new feminist movement, let us all choose clothes and fashion that celebrates the feminine as something powerful and be ready to defend ourselves towards sexist men when necessary.

The boy who hurt me with his words opened my eyes and empowered me; I was no longer going to feed into their brainwashed ideology that they have the right as men to talk to me like that. I was not going to be submissive towards them, but to stand up for what I know is right.

Before this moment, these demeaning remarks left me feeling marginalized and that my thoughts and feelings did not matter, but once I found my voice, in that moment, I knew that I no longer would be a victim. I now have the strength to say, “no, you cannot talk to me like that.” I have the strength to make eye contact, because that little choice of body language will coerce them to think about what they have said.