Street Harassment – The Unnamed Harm

Time: 1 and ½ hours.

Materials Needed:
Flip chart and markers
Markers
Pencils and pens
Blank paper – enough for all participants [poetry writing]
Copies of poem “Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf in the Hood” by YWAT
Copy of Film War Zone or Clips from Other Films that Depict Street Harassment

Introductions – Ask everyone to introduce themselves – Name and What Part of the City they Live In

1. Activity #1 -- Film: War Zone (show 15 minutes)
   Pass around paper and pens and ask people to jot down how they feel as they watch this – one word, draw pictures, anything.
   What are the feelings that watching this evokes?

1. Activity #2 -- Small group storytelling – 15 minutes
   Break up into groups of 4-5 and share street harassment stories:
   a. What happened?
   b. What did you do?
   c. How did it make you feel?

2. Facilitator asks the group: Did you hear a story that particularly affected you? Is someone willing to share one or two stories?

3. Activity #3 -- Process the film and the individual storytelling – 20 minutes
   How does harassment make you feel? What are the effects of harassment? [Get participant’s responses – write them on the board.]
   Individually
   Collectively

Facilitator says: “So let’s create a collective definition of street harassment”

a. BRAINSTORMING: What is harassment to you? [Let participants give their specific ideas] – Have one of the facilitators write participant responses on the board.

b. Give YWAT’s definition of harassment
“Harassment is when somebody does something to you and you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.”

c. Share other definitions from the handout

d. Show a music video [Big Pimpin, The Way You Move, Shake Your Tailfeather]

e. Ask Questions to Workshop Participants:
   - What do the girls in these videos look like?
   - When women are treated in this way in media, what messages are being sent? [After the participants answer, what will you say to wrap up the discussion?]

f. Ask Participants: What do you think causes street harassment?
   [Participants will share their ideas and one person will write them down on the board]

g. We needed to understand WHY this was happening – we developed our own “street harassment ladder”

GO OVER THE LADDER AND EXPLAIN:

* How street harassment can lead to serious assaults and sometimes even rape.
* There are many explanations for why this happens: Ignorance, Sexism, Media, Power and Control, Drugs and Alcohol.
* This behavior leads girls and young women to often feel – Fear, Anger, Confusion, Powerlessness, Frustration.

4. Activity #4 – Gendered Public Space-- 10 minutes (optional)

Things you do before leaving the house as a woman or man

   - Public spaces have different meanings for men/women

It’s 11 p.m. one April night and you have a terrible migraine. You are out of Advil and you live in a two-flat. You don’t want to bother your neighbor who has a newborn. You need to go to the local 24 hour CVS pharmacy which is about 15 minutes away from your apartment if you walk.

Brainstorm all of the things that you do –
   - Before leaving your apartment?
a. what clothes do you wear?

b. What are you taking with you? Be specific?
   • When you step outside your apartment?
   a. How are you going to get to CVS?
   • On your way back from the store?

a. What strategies do the girls employ to assess safety and danger?

b. What precautions do they take to keep themselves safe?

Do you feel safe in your neighborhood? [What will you say if the girls say no?]
   • Why is your neighborhood not safe?
   • When do you feel more protected at night or in the day?
   • How do you decide whether a place is safe or unsafe?

5. Activity #5: Poetry Circle (20 minutes)
   1. Hand out “Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf in the Hood.”
   2. Participants can read silently to themselves.
   3. Read the Poem Out Loud Once.
   4. Ask for 1-3 volunteers to read the poem aloud.
   5. Discuss the poem. What are the images that participants like in the poem? What is the author(s) saying in this poem?
   6. In the participant’s opinions, why did the author write this poem? Who is the poem for/addressed to?

Writing Creatively

Step by Step

1. Students should write atop a blank page, “Don’t Call Me Babe”
2. Give participants 15-20 minutes of writing time to create a poem. Emphasize the power of the concrete, tangible imagery in Smith’s poem. Students should include these powerful, packed images within their own writing to give the reader a clear picture.

Sharing the Work:

• One of the most important concepts to work out with a class, especially while students are reading their creative work, is that respecting others and listening are essential for good poetry and performance.

1. Either sitting in a circle or standing each student should share what they have written.
2. A good way for students to listen and get positive feedback from one another is to have a “reverb read.” After each piece is read have the students go around
the room sharing one phrase in the poem they enjoyed. This fosters and deepens the trust and strength of the community in the classroom.

3. Try to encourage everyone to read. A way to try to insure this is to go around the room in a circle so students feel more comfortable not having to volunteer to read. This way you can hear from everyone.
Who's Afraid of the “Big, Bad, Wolf” in the HOOD.

Sometimes walking down the STREET
Feels like an OBSTACLE COURSE.
We are constantly trying to avoid DANGER.
It’s like LiL’ Red Riding Hood
Who was sent into the WOODS
To take food to her sick old grandma and
Was attacked instead by the BIG BAD WOLF.
For us,
the STREETS sometimes seem filled with
BIG BAD WOLVES.

In our neighborhood which is THE HOOD,
The WOODS are streets with names like
Morse, Howard, Touhy, and Clark.

In our neighborhood which is THE HOOD,
The wolf WHISTLES
And CALLS like a Cat.
He says:
“Oh what nice LEGS you have.”
“Oh what a beautiful BODY you have.”
He call us beautiful, FAT ASS, sexy, SKANK,
thick, STUCK UP, all that, BITCH, on fire, HO!
We hear the INSULTS – they are like claps of THUNDER.

In our neighborhood which is THE HOOD,
The wolf INVITES us to “come kick it with him.”
He asks for the DIGITS.
When we say NO, he SPITS OUT
“You ain’t SHIT anyway!”
He offers us a smoke and maybe a drink.
He doesn’t care if we’re 12 or 18.
This wolf is an equal opportunity HARASSER.

In our neighborhood which is THE HOOD,
The wolf makes us believe that
We are being HARASSED
Because of the way we LOOK or DRESS or just
Because “BOYS WILL BE BOYS”
Whatever the case, he makes us BELIEVE it is
OUR FAULT.
We take the BLAME -- what did YOU do?

In our neighborhood which is THE HOOD,
Lil’ Red FIGHTS BACK.
She refuses to be SWALLOWED whole up by the
BIG BAD WOLF.
She STANDS on the corner on Morse Ave and
Demands R-E-S-P-E-C-T.
She
Demands An END TO STREET HARASSMENT.
She prints up thousands of posters with these words
And HANGS them everywhere in the H-O-O-D.

In our neighborhood which is the HOOD,
Lil' Red is
Tan and Mocha,
Caramel and Coffee
Brown and Black.
Her name is Shannon and Shauniece,
Karia and Christine,
Renee and Ronnett
Jasmine and Jonae,
Joyce and Jackquette,
Emilya and Daphne,
Ashley and Geri.

In our neighborhood which is the HOOD,
Lil Red is
NOT afraid
of the BIG BAD WOLF.

Written by The Rogers Park Young Women’s Action Team
and Mariame Kaba.