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SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON THE CTA

DON'T 'HEY MAMA' ME



Ronnett Lockett and her friends are tired of the unwelcome remarks from male passengers on the CTA | PAGES 2-3

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15
 -836
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 2 13 21
 and Prize: \$7.5

Michigan
 Midday Daily 3—012
 Midday Daily 4—5117
 Evening Daily 3—414
 Evening Daily 4—1216
 Fantasy 5—
 05 10 28 36 39
 Classic 47 Jackpot:
 \$11.2 million

Wisconsin
 Pick 3—183
 Pick 4—6740
 Badger 5—
 06 13 19 24 26
 Super Cash—
 01 05 11 12 19 28
 Megajacks Jackpot:
 \$1.6 million
 Powerball Jackpot:
 \$7.2 million

TIRED OF BEING HARASSED ON THE CTA

ROGERS PARK | Activists who battled street abuse now focus on catcalls, other behavior on buses, trains



MARY WISNIEWSKI

Transportation Reporter
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When Lillian Matanmi and her friends get on the L, they often hear catcalls and other unwelcome remarks from male passengers.

Like: "Don't you look sexy today." And: "I like how that little skirt fits on you."

One time, a man reached over and, uninvited, started massaging Matanmi's shoulders.

"I just got up and sat down somewhere else," said Matanmi, 19, who's a student at Malcolm X College. "I felt really uncomfortable and unsafe. I was scared that if I said the wrong thing, I'd be hurt."

Matanmi is a member of the Rogers Park Young Women's Action Team, a group of teen and college-age women who have fought street harassment in their neighborhood, distributing thousands of posters to businesses and homes to encourage people to shoo away congregating men so girls and women can walk in peace. They successfully pushed for better street lighting in the Far North Side neighborhood.

Now, the group has turned its attention to the "hey-babying" and other lewd language they hear on the CTA.

They surveyed 639 CTA riders, mostly young women, and found that harassment on CTA buses and trains is pretty common.

Next month, the group hopes to meet with the CTA's board to talk about ways to improve safety—and help women deal with unwanted attention.

"A lot of people don't realize that when they're getting catcalled or someone touches them in the wrong way, that's harassment," Matanmi said. "They think that's just part of their day."

Just over half of those surveyed said they'd been sexually harassed on the CTA. Thirteen percent said they'd been sexually assaulted.

Of those who had been harassed or assaulted, 91 percent said they didn't file a complaint with the police or the CTA. The transit agency had two recorded incidents of criminal sexual assault systemwide for all of last year.

Forty-four percent of those surveyed said they'd witnessed harassment or assault on the CTA, but only 22 percent said they intervened.

Daphnee Rene, 21, a DePaul University student who's a member of the Rogers Park group, said women sometimes don't report being harassed because they fig-



Daphnee Rene (from left), Lillian Matanmi and Ronnett Lockett are members of the Rogers Park Young Women's Action Team, which is targeting harassment on the CTA. | DOM NAJOLIA-SUN-TIMES

ure that, by the time they get to a CTA worker, the harasser is gone.

Ronnett Lockett, 20, a Northern Illinois University student and another member of the group, said one problem is that women might be frightened and not know how to respond. Ads on trains would help people know what to do, Lockett said.

The group also wants CTA employees and police to be trained in how to deal with harassment. "Sometimes, the bus driver sees it and won't say anything,"

Lockett said. "They probably don't know what to do."

What if a guy just thinks he's being friendly? For Lockett, harassment depends on what's said, and how it's said.

"If you come up to me and say, 'Hey, little mama, let me get your number,' you're harassing me," she said. "If you say, 'Hey, excuse me, how are you today?' I don't feel like you're harassing me."

But if someone says something nice, then keeps saying it after a woman says she isn't interested,

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3 THINGS WE LOVE THE WEST LOOP

A list just three items long can't give a complete picture of the West Loop — but it's a start. Every Monday and Wednesday, we'll share some of our favorite things.

1 On the last Saturday and Sunday of each month through September, checking out the Randolph Street Market Festival, featuring the Chicago Antique Market, a European-style market at Plumbers Hall, 1340 W. Washington. More than 200 vendors sell antiques and collectibles, vintage and indie designer fashions and fine and decorative arts. Food is available. Admission: \$10; \$5 for students and seniors; free for those under 12. The next event is June 27-28.



The festival runs on the last weekend of each month through September.

2 Checking out the area's burgeoning art district, which has more than 35 galleries. Among our favorites: the Peoria Art Gallery, at 1139 W. Fulton (312-226-7808).



A Taste of Randolph will run Friday through Sunday.

3 Enjoying A Taste of Randolph Street, which runs from Friday through Sunday. The festival fun is on West Randolph Street between Peoria and Racine. Suggested donation is \$5. Proceeds will benefit the West Loop Community Organization. Hours: 5-11 p.m. Friday, 2-11 p.m. Saturday, 10 p.m. Sunday.

HEY! YOU GOT THREE BETTER ON

Tell us your three favorite things about the West Loop

at ourtownchicago.com



that's harassment, too, said Matanmi.

CTA spokeswoman Noelle Gaffney said the agency takes these things "very seriously." But riders who feel threatened have to speak up, she said.

"Should a customer feel threatened at any time as the result of another individual's behavior, they should notify the rail operator immediately via the use of the emergency call button," Gaffney said.

At L stations, customer assistants or security guards are on duty during service hours, Gaffney said.

And CTA buses and many L stops are equipped with security cameras networked to the CTA's control center, Gaffney said. Some stations have already been renovated to include brighter lighting, and the agency is in the process of installing more security cameras.

To reach more people and push for improvements, the women's group is planning a poetry slam on sexual harassment on the CTA, to be held from 2 to 4 p.m. June 27 at Berger Park, 6206 N. Sheridan.

Comment at suntimes.com.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

HAVE YOU BEEN HARASSED ON THE CTA?

Share your story at suntimes.com/news/transportation.

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2. FBI probe focuses on North sponsor suntimes.com/entertainment/people
3. Q-and-A with Jay Cutler suntimes.com/sports/football/bears
4. Letterman, Wright done in by own words suntimes.com/news/mitchell
5. Restaurant gets money back, despite cabbie suntimes.com/news/metro



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