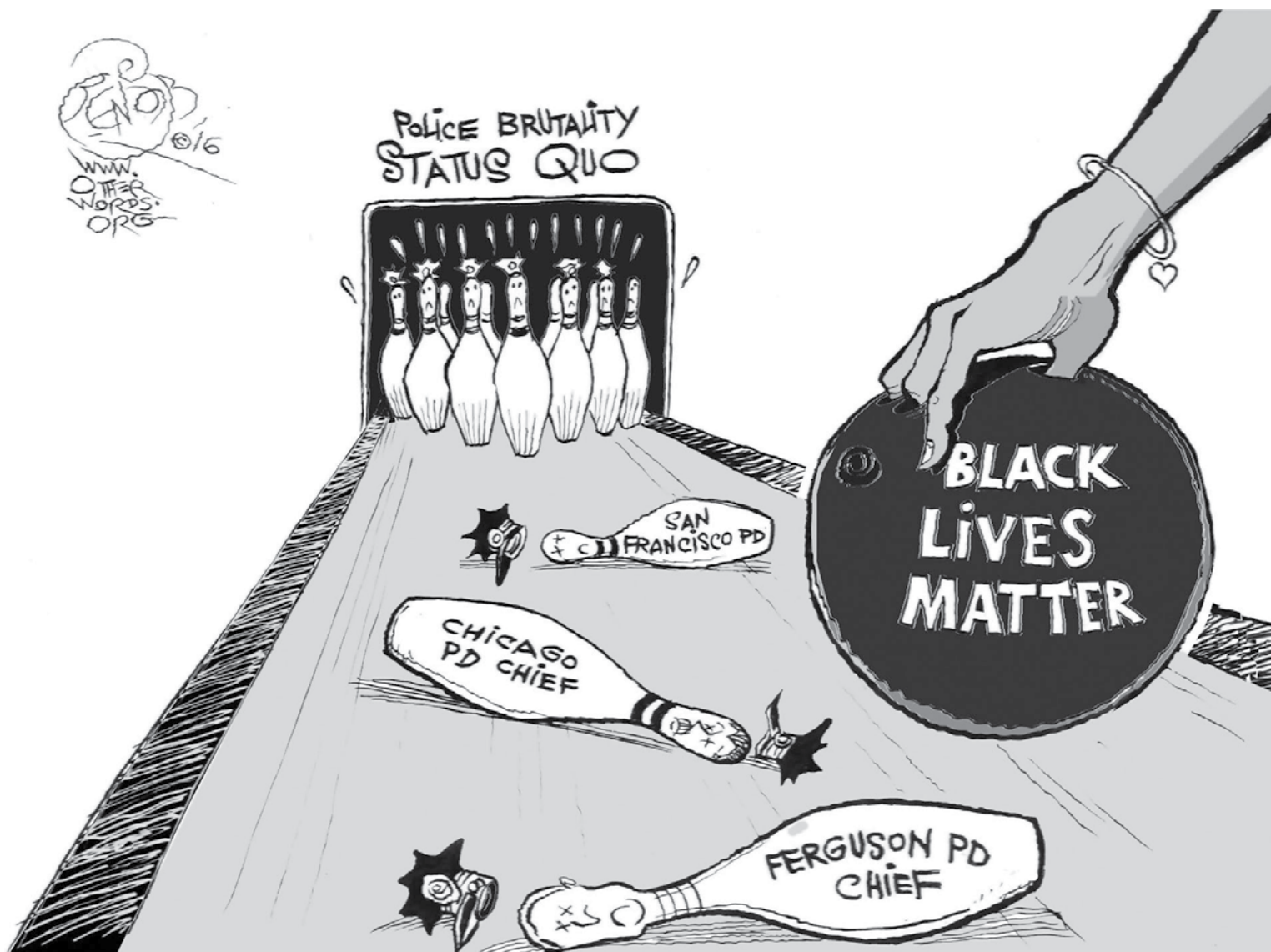


OPINION



Changing How Men View and Talk about Women

'I'm not your Shorty'

BY LAURA FINLEY

Like most women—84 percent across 22 countries, in fact-- I have been catcalled by random men many times. In a widely shared 2014 experiment, a woman in New York City received 100 catcalls in just 10 hours.



But last night was definitely the scariest I have ever experienced. This man amped up his harassment, not only hollering a barrage of "compliments" but following me as well as I walked through an apartment complex.

Surely he felt quite clever at the uniquely revolting ways that he described my body and the things he planned to do to me. His amusement at my fear was clear from both his commentary and his demeanor. I am both proud and sad to say I said nothing and responded with a hasty retreat. Upon arriving home, described what happened to my 12-year-old daughter.

I feel good that I sensed that the potential danger with this one was greater than with the typical degenerate that shouts out at wom-

en. Some women who have been sexually assaulted by strangers report that they sensed something was off but chose to ignore their feelings. And, I think it was really important to discuss what he did and how I felt with my daughter, who, unfortunately, already has experience with guys hooting at her.

A 2014 survey found that 71 percent of women experience street harassment for the first time between the ages of 11 and

him. I do. He didn't have to hold his tongue out of fear of escalating the situation. I did.

Like so many women, I wish I had felt comfortable telling him how unwelcome and repulsive his comments were. I wish I didn't have to prepare my child for how to handle these things, or mentally ready myself for harassment before I walk somewhere. I wish that women didn't have to change their lives in any way for fear that someone will do worse than shout

deter men from harassing women on the streets, although it is a sign that the government recognizes the scope of the problem and the seriousness of the issue.

More important than criminalizing catcalling, however, is changing the way men are taught to view and talk about women.

We need to teach young men that hollering at women just isn't okay. That a genuine compliment is always nice, but a litany of adjectives to describe women's anatomy shouted from across the road is not. They might feel quite cute when they compete with each other to offer up new harangues, but women do not find them at all witty for doing so.

We need to teach young men that true power isn't about making women fear you. Such conversations need to happen in homes, schools, churches, and other institutions. And they need to happen often, starting at a young age.

It's time we put some more focus on the daily microaggressions that women must endure, rather than treating them as if they're an inevitable fact of life if you were born with a vagina.

Laura Finley teaches in the Barry University Department of Sociology and Criminology and is syndicated by PeaceVoice.

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What makes me sad, though, is the power this individual ended up having over me. He didn't change what he was doing or where he was going last night. I did. He doesn't have that scary experience as background the next time he goes somewhere that is new to

out obscenities.

One way to address catcalling is to criminalize it. Belgium and Portugal have laws about street harassment and issue fines to offenders, while other countries like Canada and Argentina use existing harassment laws to address it. The U.S. could do the same, but generally does not. Nor do I necessarily believe that these laws will



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