

Good Afternoon Council Member Bowser, Members of the Committee and Committee Staff,

My name is Ami Lynch and I have come here to tell my story. I do not enter this room or speak these words easily. I come with purpose and intention and will struggle through this because to me it is worth it. There are many people testifying about their experiences today and each one needs to be heard. I gather strength from their words and I acknowledge their truths.

I am head of a research division focused on gender at my place of employment. I taught for 10 years in Women's Studies at the George Washington University. I've spoken to countless students about harassment from theoretical and empirical standpoints and assisted them through bureaucratic and therapeutic processes and yet when it came to my experience in February of 2011 on Metrobus 10B I was reminded that all the learning and teaching I had done did not adequately prepare me for this experience nor shield me from the pain of it.

I got on the bus in Alexandria on Mt. Vernon Avenue at 5 pm and was greeted by a driver who commented on how tall I was. "You play basketball?" he asked. "Yes but I was never very good," I responded. He proceeded to tell me that we could go on a date and play basketball and "I'd beat you real good" he said laughing. As I walked to my seat he said "Damn you got long legs girl." For the duration of my 45 minute ride he continued to make random comments about us dating and I said nothing back. He spoke out loud to whomever would listen about his days in the military as a paratrooper. About his enjoyment of R&B groups like The Temptations but that he was "disgusted" when he heard that one of them might be gay. "And then I stopped listening to them. That's just disgusting," he said. His non-stop talking seemed expected by the assumed regulars who were sitting in the center-facing seats at the front of the bus. His laughter and propositioning continued as did my attempts to tune him out. And then came my stop. I pushed the indicator button. He stopped in the middle of the road on 2nd Street South, holding up the bus and blocking traffic and motioned to me to come near him. He signaled to me to bend down. He then said, "Hey baby, it doesn't matter that I'm not tall, because when we're lying down it's all the same anyway," and as he laughed he gestured from his crotch to my crotch. I was stunned. In shock, I stepped off the bus, crossed the street, and began to cry. I forgot what to do. I didn't speak back. I felt violated. Disgusted. Powerless.

To gain some sense of power back, I filed a report with WMATA customer relations. After three weeks, multiple emails and phone calls, finally Lendy Castillo, Customer Relations Manager, emailed me asking that I call him. When I did I was told "We let you down. This shouldn't have happened." This was a good start, but then he proceeded to say "I shouldn't say this but I talked to his supervisor and his supervisor said that there is no way he has time to talk to customers on his route." He then said, "Also she said he wouldn't do that. The supervisor also said that the driver reported, "That's not how it happened."" And with that, Mr. Castillo had nothing left to say. I said, "I know my truth. I know what happened. If he doesn't talk on his route how do I know about his military service? Why would I have gotten the bus number? How would I have suffered through his homophobic comments in addition to the verbal sexual harassment he

subjected me to?” And Mr. Castillo had nothing for me other than the impression it was a “he said/she said” situation. It most definitely was not.

For a year now I have not taken the 10B bus. This has cost me nearly \$1000 in cab fares to my weekly appointment for which I previously used the 10B bus. WMATA should be ashamed of themselves for this driver and for supposed “Managers of Customer Relations” who manage nothing but damage control.

So today, I take all power of this incident back. I stand here, tall, telling you what happened on this bus. Irrelevant of what the driver, or his supervisor or Lendy Castillo says. He sexually harassed me. To make sure this does not happen in the future or that when it happens it is appropriately addressed I urge you to train your staff, prepare them for the proper responses and work from a point of prevention rather than one of snuffing out fires.

WMATA did what they did to try to shut me up, but clearly it’s not working. There is a lot of courage in this room today. I thank my fellow strong citizens for speaking up too. Speaking truth to power will topple power. But the aggressive and avoidance-based WMATA system will not topple me.

Thank you for listening.