



Warren Eugene Merrick III
Photography

To Whom it may concern,

On January 28, I was attacked by three men, each of whose body mass exceeded mine by twice as much. They happened to be NYC police officers. Just prior to my attack, I had asked one of the officers for his badge number as they would not leave me alone for playing the violin on the subway platform, which is my right. He refused, suddenly grabbed my phone as I was recording, another cop grabbed my violin, and another my body. Within seconds, I was forced to the ground by all three, handcuffed, causing injury to my right wrist ligament and left knee. The leader of the three, the person who injured my wrist and refused to show his ID, further abused his authority via sexual harassment shortly after my arrest. He said, "I can get as close as I want, no one will

hear you..." (THIS IS SOMETHING A RAPIST WOULD SAY). And he wanted to make sure I knew how completely powerless I was "now that Trump is in office." Not knowing anything about me, he fervently sought to force me into a stereotype with which he was comfortable, he said, "If you're an immigrant, you're in big trouble..." (ALL THIS THE FIRST WEEK OF TRUMP'S IMMIGRATION BAN). Sparing most of the details of my recovery, after the ordeal, I had a cast on my wrist, and walked with a crutch for weeks, not to mention all the resulting anxieties to work through that came with such a shock. What has happened to me, up until then, I've only read and heard about. And now that I have a visceral understanding, the perspective I now have is, '**IT REALLY CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE.**' I feel the urge to communicate this message to the general public. This, what I have experienced doesn't just happen on TV, to Black people, Homeless people or Immigrants; though they make up the majority... shouldn't happen to anyone. Thank you for reading. ~Jia (YouTube: The Busker's Chronicles: Diary of a Street Performer)

Busking (Street Performing), its brief history and reality in the NY subway today:

Busking is known to be the second oldest profession to mankind. While there are many benefits to performers, audiences, and society's culture, it's been subject to harassment from the authorities because we're our own advocates; there's no grand buildings to walk through to get to a stage, or big names to hide behind-- what you see/hear is what you get. Currently, there are still many arbitrary laws against busking in NYC, which makes buskers easy targets for easy ticketing, to fill police officers' daily ticket quotas. The other reason is that 'rookie cops' are frequently told to, "Go practice on the musicians." As in, 'find a reason and tell us to leave'; because most of us would go without question, unlike where the 'real crimes' are. Of all the arbitrary rules, the grandfather law that would trump it all is the *Constitution and the First Amendment*, which grant freedom of Speech and Expression. Broken Windows Policing only creates excuses for cops to abuse their authorities.

To the law abiding authorities: Buskers are generally artists with gentle souls, who give our heart and soul through music and performance in the darkest places in this city. Please put a stop to Busker harassment!

(For additional reference: Please read the book written by Anthropologist, Susie J. Tanenbaum, 'Underground Harmony: Music and Politics in the Subways of New York'.)



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