

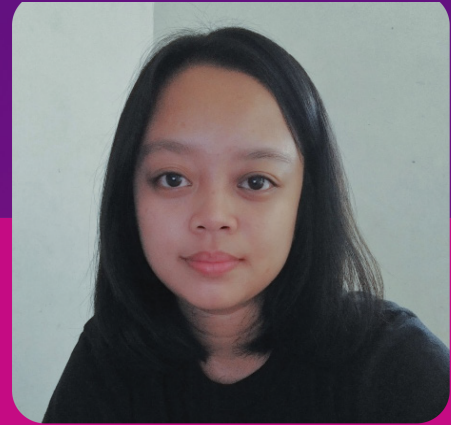
# The way it should be

“Bastos”. A word, an expression of disgust, an action considered to be offending to anybody. “Bastos” is a term embodying a threatening action, or the harassment by an offender to a victim. It could happen anywhere, to anyone at any age or sex. One thing’s certain, it happens currently in this society where we live, and it has been, for a long time.

In the present day Philippines, what is considered an act of sexual violence? How are we protected? Up to what extent can we say that our spaces are safe? Sexual harassment and gender-based violence are considered as a form of discrimination against women. The Philippines, being a state party to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and International Labors Organization (ILO) Convention, condemns all forms of violence against women and is strong in its implementation of laws and sanctions as well as preventive approaches.

On Valentine’s Day in 1995, under the then President Fidel V. Ramos, Republic Act 7877, otherwise known as the “Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995”, was enacted, declaring that “[...] all forms of sexual harassment in the employment, education or training environment are hereby declared unlawful”. It details how a sexual harassment in the said environments were conducted, the duty and the liabilities of the head of the office when the act is committed, and the sanction when a person is convicted with violations of the law.

Twenty-six years later, how far have we gone into #SanaAllSafeSpace? Last April 17, 2019, Republic Act 11313- the Safe Spaces Act, more popularized as “Bawal ang Bastos” bill, was signed into law by President Rodrigo R. Duterte. It focuses on gender-based sexual harassment in public areas, ensuring a person of his/her sense of personal space and public safety, provides protection even to cyberspace and states prohibited acts and their



*The Way it Should Be*  
is one of the winning essays by Ms. Lea dela Cruz during the essay writing contest NFRDI had conducted for the promotion of the 2021’s 18-day campaign to end Violence Against Women. Ms. dela Cruz is a Technical Education and Skills Development Specialist I at the Training Division of the NFRDI

corresponding penalties. The said law encompassed a wider coverage for protection compared to RA 7877, wherein the former declares that sexual harassment is only punishable when committed by someone who has authority, influence or moral ascendancy over the victim. With “Bawal ang Bastos” law, acts committed between peers, by a subordinate to a superior officer, by a student to a teacher, or by a trainee to a trainer are now punishable sexual harassment. Prior to this implementation, some local government units passed and implemented ordinances in their respective cities and municipalities to put a stop on acts of sexual harassment in public spaces like catcalling, use of lewd words, offensive physical touching, among others. With this, we can say that we have taken leaps on countering sexual harassment.

The next step would be the improvement of the system by widening the coverage of the law and having systematic implementation of all these laws by establishing comprehensive and fair justice and welfare system. It is a human right to uphold the dignity of every individual and having full respect for human rights. This is how it should be. (LMDelaCruz)

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