

## Actual cases – Bystander & community responses

Bystanders had varying responses in these situations – with varying consequences. What might explain their responses? When it comes to community support, who should define the response? What helpful and creative responses are possible?

**Tucson, AR** – A 44-year old white male accosted a group of young Muslim women seated outside a Starbucks, shouting slurs at them and knocking over their table, which caused some of the women to fall to the ground. Bystanders chased him when he ran off and held him until the police arrived. "It was a lot to process," a witness said. "Should I let him go? Should I chase him? What is really happening here? But then I had seen these girls and they're crying and freaking out. So I felt like we couldn't just let him [get] away after what he did." (Jan. 2018)

**Boston, MA** – A 61-year old Muslim grandmother was attacked on the Orange Line by a white male who screamed at her for wearing a hijab, punched the window by her head so hard that it cracked, and claimed she was a terrorist with a bomb. When he approached other passengers, they said to leave them alone but did nothing else. As the woman was leaving the train, the man jabbed her in the back with the metal tip of his umbrella, leaving bruises, and kicked her. At this point, another passenger called out for help. Nearby construction workers circled the man and prevented him from leaving until the MBTA police arrived. (June 2017)

**Burlington, MA** – A Kuwaiti family who came to Boston for medical treatment for their 5-year old child was threatened and assaulted by a white male who demanded a seat where they were having coffee. The man started to film the mother and child; when she held up her hands to block his view, he grabbed her arm and kicked over the stroller in which the child was sitting. He pushed and threatened the husband, loudly swearing at the family. The family reports that other customers did nothing and told responding officers they hadn't seen anything. (Jan. 2018)

**Somerville, MA** – A Muslim mother was attacked by a white female as she walked towards Davis Square, pushing her toddler in a stroller. The woman screamed at them, tore off the mother's hijab – ripping out a clump of her hair – and kicked the stroller. A bystander was able to grab the stroller before it hit a pole; she also walked the terrified mother and child back to their home. (Dec. 2017)

**Newton, MA** – An Iranian shop owner was subjected to filthy language and told to "go back where you came from" by an irate customer upon learning that the store did not sell cigarettes. In response to this incident and others, local residents organized a flash mob at his store to show support and bring in business. (Nov. 2017)

**Seattle, WA** – An African-American woman and her son were harassed at a convenience store by a man who made racist and anti-Muslim remarks. When the woman tried to speak with him outside the store, he pepper-sprayed the woman, her son, and a bystander who had tried to intervene. (Oct. 2017)

**Flagstaff, AZ** – Vandals broke into a Muslim-owned business, spray-painted swastikas and “get out” on the walls, and set fire to the owner's belongings. The owner had previously received death threats that called him a “terrorist.” Local residents set up a GoFundMe account to pay for repairs. (Sept. 2017)

**Newburyport, MA** – Vandals slashed the campaign banner in the yard of a Muslim physician who was running for mayor. He had been targeted with threats, slurs and vandalism in the past. Another candidate for mayor publicly condemned the incident. (July 2017)

**Helena, AL** – Three cars owned by a Muslim family from the Middle East were vandalized by unidentified perpetrators who broke windows, slashed tires, spray-painted obscene and racist slurs, and poured motor oil over the cars. The local community set up a GoFundMe account to pay for repairs. (July 2017)

and of course

**Portland, OR** – On May 26, 2017, three men intervened when a white supremacist accosted two young women – one Muslim, the other African American – on the train. The perpetrator stabbed all three of the men, killing two of them. Say their names:

- Ricky Best, 53, a father of four and veteran;
- Taliesen Namkai-Meche, 23, a recent college graduate; and
- Micah Fletcher, 21, who survived a slashed neck.

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