



*Mohammed Riaz is a professional bus driver and former Vice President for a local mosque for 9 years. He is a board member of another nonprofit organization and a profound believer of gender equality.*

Girls and women in general are abused at every level of their lives, in school, college, or at work. A lot of times they are oppressed or abused by their own family members. It is high time we think about how to change the status quo.

I think parents have to play a big role in prevention of gender violence and abuse- when boys insult girls or make derogatory remarks, instead of taking it lightly, parents should tell their sons that it is not acceptable. In dating and relationships, when boys insult or abuse their intimate partners, their parents, teachers and friends who witness the behavior should step in and protest this abusive behavior. It is our collective responsibility to show the abusers their fault, instead of shoving it under the rug. In my opinion, when abused women are helped to get out of their abusive situation, they should not go back to their abusers; that is the worst mistake a woman can make since it can have dire consequences by encouraging the perpetrator to continue their behavior.

I believe men have huge responsibility to stop violence against women. If a man is insulting or abusing a woman, other men should step in and protest that abuse openly, otherwise they are as bad as the abuser. Men should acknowledge that violence against women is not a women's issue, it is a human right issue.

I have a friend who got beaten up by her boyfriend and she was left alone on her driveway to die. A neighbor found her and called 911. I helped her at that time, but later she not only took the police complaint back, she also went right back to her abusive partner and the abuse started again. Many times women think that it is their fault that the abuse is happening and that they should go back to their abuser. Our community should make women strong enough so that they don't go back to their abusive partners. We should also definitely teach our boys not to abuse women! But most importantly, we need to be good role models for our next generations and lead by example.