



Why Are Some Black Men Dismissing Black Women's Criticism of Bill Cosby?

Given that 90 percent of all sexual assaults are intraracial, one has to wonder if the men defending Cosby are protecting him—or themselves.

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It's about time for black men to take a long look in the mirror and ask how our male privilege can be harmful to black women.

During the most turbulent of times, it seems that when black women raise their voices to discuss their unique experience with racism and sexual violence, too many of us have a tendency to discredit their claims.

Black women have always taken our claims—of being victims of state-sponsored brutality—at face value, yet we often struggle to return that same benefit of the doubt when they discuss sexual violence directed at them. This is a serious issue we have to confront in our community because we have to challenge whether we really honor black womanhood, as many of us would like to believe.

Emphasis on the word “womanhood.”

A recent example of black male betrayal of black women took place last weekend when comedian Faizon Love responded to black women who dared to challenge his [Twitter tirade](#) in defense of Bill Cosby, by calling them “bitches” and “hos” and repeating the same illogical refrain of other Cosby apologists: that neither the national press nor social media has allowed “due process” to investigate the allegations against him.

It's a peculiar argument, given that black men as a whole often don't trust “due process” to work to our benefit. In central New Jersey, for example, [99 percent of police-brutality cases go uninvestigated](#). [According to the Cato Institute](#), most of the 17,000 local and state law-enforcement agencies don't self-report acts of police misconduct, and many states have laws that won't allow agencies to release results of misconduct investigations.

If black men aren't expected to trust such a system, why should we expect women to trust “due process” when [40 percent](#) of college sexual assault cases in America go uninvestigated? Or consider New Orleans, where detectives followed up on only [179 of 1,290](#) sex cases between

January 2011 and December 2013. Do we really have to ask why only [60 percent of sexual assault cases are reported](#) to begin with?

Are we really that shocked that women are often left with no recourse other than the court of public opinion, when data show that their alleged perpetrator will probably never see the inside of a courtroom to begin with, much less a jail cell?

And even when women are brave enough to file charges of assault, the media tears them apart. Earlier this year, radio host D.L. Hughley referred to Columbus Short's wife as a "[thirsty bitch](#)" during an off-air recording that was posted on his station's website after she reported the actor to the police for allegedly beating her. Hughley also talked down to his female co-host when she tried to tell him that he was being unduly harsh.

Would he have called a mother seeking justice for a son who had died at the hands of a cop a "thirsty bitch"? I doubt it.

I've often received emails from black men who wanted me to cover a story about some form of police brutality or misconduct. If I had to depend on video evidence or "being there" to witness the act, for example, to determine if they were telling the truth, I'd have no story to report because there usually isn't any video evidence of a crime or violation. And, of course, I wasn't there. Using this logic, the media would have no justification for covering Trayvon Martin's killing at the hands of George Zimmerman. We weren't there, right? How do *we* know for *sure* what happened?

And I've covered many stories on street harassment, sexual assault and the online abuse against black women, only to find that many black men flatly deny women's testimonies. In plenty of instances, black men have violently attacked black women online, calling them "Negro bed wenches" and "agents for white feminists" for simply talking to me about the abuse they experience. Black men hurl these insults at the same women who would organize marches in their hometowns if a police officer shot and killed them. Ironically, these men don't come after me over my reporting; they attack black women who follow me on Twitter.

We only have to look to the black men still wearing Ray Rice jerseys—while black women were being teargassed by cops on the front lines in Ferguson, Mo., defending *their* right to live—to understand the extreme hypocrisy of some Cosby defenders.

But I believe there is a larger issue behind all this: Given that 90 percent of all sexual assaults are intraracial, one has to wonder if the men defending Cosby are protecting him, or themselves. Think about all the men who get violently defensive and attack women online when women complain about street harassment. It seems painfully obvious that the subject hits a nerve that forces men to look in the mirror, and they probably aren't comfortable with what they are seeing.

Women aren't excluded from my observations of this double standard, either.

I've seen many black women continue to defend Cosby. Sil Lai Abrams, a domestic violence activist and survivor of sexual assault, told me that I shouldn't be shocked by it. "What we're seeing is, in my opinion, a natural response that we have to protect those who are ours, coupled with the unfortunate fact that a lot of black women have internalized the system of patriarchy and misogynistic attitudes into their consciousness," she said.

Whatever the cause for such protectionism, black men and women wielding their incredibly high burden-of-proof standards against Cosby's accusers need to ask themselves if they would require the same threshold if they were to experience an act of police violence or sexual assault. It's not a rhetorical question, so allow me to answer: They wouldn't. No one would, and they shouldn't have to.

As the allegations against Cosby unfold and black women share their unique experiences of fighting racism and defending their womanhood against sexual violence, black men need to resist the urge to get defensive and stop calling them bitches and hos for sharing their stories or trying to silence them. We have to stop bringing harm to the same women who have historically been the guardians of our own safety and well-being.

It's about time we return the favor and stop second-guessing them when they bravely speak out about sexual assault.

We owe black women at least that and so much more.