

# Don't Ask Why Black Women Feel Unsafe, If You Are Going to Attack Them for Being Honest

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In the past week, I have seen so many (reactive) posts saying how men need to 'Protect Black Women'. Yet, I was conflicted and I had to take it with a grain of salt because some of those posts came from people I have actually seen disrespect Black women regularly. I don't know who needs to be told this, but that phrase is supposed to encompass protecting ALL black women. Yet I've observed that for many of our men, it only seems to apply to the black women in their immediate circle. Like their mother, daughter, sister, friend or the black women they find attractive and 'worth' protecting. But what about the rest of the Black women? The ones who have no equity in your life. It's almost as if those same men don't even acknowledge that there are other black women outside of their circle that not only need protection, but they need it from those men as well.



I have stopped engaging in these types of online conversations because it always turns into Black women being attacked for speaking collective and shared truths. We are instantly labeled the "bitter, hateful, black women always trying to tear a brotha down" by most men when we share painful and traumatic instances that got us to the point of not feeling safe or protected by our men. We are also smothered into silence by the Pick Me's who jump right in all too eager to invalidate another woman's experience with their cries of 'not the men I know'. So I no longer even respond under posts about "iF tHe BLaCK wOmAN fEeLs sAFe" because I refuse to be incessantly be triggered and go back and forth with purveyors of misogynoir over my very real lived experiences. Experiences that support why myself and countless other Black women do not feel safe or protected. Period. I see the men who share and laugh at violent acts towards us. I see who agrees with the disrespectful derogatory banter about us. I notice who shares things that disenfranchises and degrades us. I see it all and I may not say anything, but it is a constant and blatant reminder of how many of our men feel about us. An elder once told me you can tell a person's true character by how they treat someone who they don't stand to gain a thing from. And based off this, I see so many of you who simply don't give a fuck about Black women.

The most disrespected person in America is the black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the black woman. The most neglected person in America is the black woman.

— Malcolm X —

When I walk past men I don't know, I am always on high alert because I don't know how I will be greeted or treated EVER. I can only hope to properly read the room and appeal to their higher selves for the sake of my own protection. Because the truth is, I know that if one decides to put his hands on me there is a greater chance of another brother recording it, laughing, and jumping in than there is someone saying 'Stop. Don't Do That. Leave Her Alone' and to proceed to protect me. And you know it's true. We even saw something like this play out last year where a black woman was harassed outside of her car by what looked like over 50+ black men outside of her car, even groped and smacked her on the behind and NOT ONE helped her or stopped the others. There are too many instances to recall that have gone viral of black women being disrespected, beaten, most recently---hit with a skateboard, and more by a brotha. We see and experience these aggressions in our real lives and online in what seems to feel like perpetuity. And people still fix their mouths to question us when we say we don't feel safe or protected. Then gaslight us about it when we speak out and pressure us not to add to our male

counterparts 'load' as if we are not doing the heaviest of lifting.

I still remember the young sista on the Red Line in Chicago who was stabbed on the train by a brotha she didn't even know because he couldn't deal with being told no. He had been harassing her for a while before it escalated to him stabbing her and once again, not one brotha helped her. This struck a deep nerve with me because I can recall on numerous occasions men I did not know in public settings becoming volatile with me for simply declining their advances. And again, no one intervenes, no one helps. I've spoken to so many women with a different version of this same scenario and what's scarier is the assumption many men have where if a man is being violent with you, y'all must be 'together' and not to get involved because 'you ain't gon leave anyway'. Meanwhile, a stranger is harming you in public (and once again), no one steps in to help. Yet y'all want us to pontificate and claim how 'safe' and 'protected' we are? Yeah. Okay \*insert eyeroll\*. The truth is, in my life, the only black men who have intervened in situations where I was unsafe and by myself were queer and trans folk, not cis-het black men.

As much as I would like to think I would be helped by the majority of black men present (if I was alone and was being bothered or felt unsafe), the truth is, I know I'm on my own. EVERY SINGLE TIME. I know I better have my own protection and be prepared to have to save my own life, even in a space full of men. Most Black women know this, but we don't vocalize it because it has been drummed into us to protect our men at all costs, even at the expense of ourselves. And it hurts. And just like how black folk are all TIRED AF of racism, Black women are TIRED AF of being quiet about having to deal with and accept mistreatment and disrespect for the sake of 'protecting' our men. And I KNOW this isn't all black men. However, If you're triggered by this instead of taking a reflective moment to simply listen to better understand, then yes, I'm probably talking about you. You, who laugh and share videos of black women being violated. You, who is the first under a post to strike up the 'not all men'

chorus. You, who become combative and dismissive the moment a woman shares an experience of feeling unsafe, despite thousands of other women agreeing to that shared collective experience. You who ask 'well what did she do' before asking 'is she alright'. You, who insist that us speaking painful truths 'tear the black community down' (without admonishing those at the root of the violation). You, who hang out with men you know are abusive to their partners, but that's 'none of your business'. You, who knows your 35 year old homeboy has a 17 year old 'girlfriend'. You, who hangs out with men you know don't care for their children. You, who TO THIS DAY \* in Deontay Wilder voice\* who still defend R. Kelly and men in our community like him.

You who allow, encourage, dismiss, and ignore these things and so much more, yet expect us to believe you when you hop on the 'protect black women' bandwagon. It's hard to believe those words when we are inundated with watching actions that say otherwise. The saddest part is that even after I sit and type all this, I already know how it's going to play out. Maybe a handful of our men will listen and reflect on an uncomfortable truth for many black women. Some of you will ask 'how can we do better' or 'make black women feel safe'? And to that I say by simply being better men, holding the men around you (and those you may come in contact with) accountable to being better and operating at a higher frequency and standard. Uplift and teach young boys (biological and otherwise) to operate differently. Find healthier ways to deal with pain and anger and understand that we, black women, do not exist for the sake of being rehabilitation centers for damaged men. That is where you can start if you sincerely give a fuck. However, what I know is that most will take this as an attack, you know, because hit dogs holler, then become defensive as they go put on their 'not all black men' capes. Either way, none of that changes the fact that many of us do not feel safe or protected by the community of our men. I hope to one day, but until then, I know I have to have my own back because we still live in a world where more of our men will

assume we 'must have had it coming' versus simply telling another man to stop violating us.



*This article is dedicated to Oluwatoyin Salau, a 19 year old BLM Activist who was recently sexually violated and murdered by one of our men. I am so sorry your light was extinguished in this manner. You deserved protection. You deserved to feel safe.*

*(And y'all can spare me the emails, DMs, and comments filled with anger and vitriol cause 1) I'm not reading that shit 2) I said what I said and 3) I call out women too, it's just your turn today)*