

**Excerpt from “Comments on the Million Man March” by Patricia Williams
(October 1, 1995)**

There are serious questions of the relationship between men and women in this country that have to be addressed on all levels. We are a country with a very high level of violence against women, that's the same for whites as well as blacks. To the extent that white women in this country, white feminists in this country, have succeeded in making the issue of things like sexual harassment, child abuse, rape, questions of a national agenda, black women have not been so fortunate.

The actual status of black women in pressing their claims of rape, of child abuse, of sexual harassment, has light years to go in terms of being able to supersede the stereotypes. And these questions, and the relationship of such public figures as Clarence Thomas, or the boxer, Mike Tyson, who was convicted of rape and was then celebrated when he was released from jail, by certain black people, these are questions that do have to be addressed.

Now the complication for me arises in terms of whether or not, in pressing that as a feminist agenda which desperately needs to be addressed, in this context will symbolically reduce the march to a kind of Punch and Judy show between black men and black women, for the entertainment, for the spectacularisation, of a largely white audience. So I'm not sure that this is the optimal place to have that kind of conversation, as pressed by black feminists.

What I would, as a black feminist, press, in terms of the agenda, is that black men take it upon themselves in the context of this march. I think that that would be a wonderful beginning of a conversation. If the question of misogyny, if the question of the relationship between black men and black women, were spontaneously initiated.

SOURCE: Patricia Williams, interview by Helen Thomas, *Background Briefing*, ABC Radio National (Australia), October 1, 1995. Available at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/bbing/stories/s10791.htm>. Last Accessed December 5, 2008.