

# One Million Men and Me

This is an excerpt from *One Million Men and Me*, a children's book written by Kelly Starling Lyons and published in 2007. This book is set at the Million Man March, a 1995 demonstration in Washington, D.C.

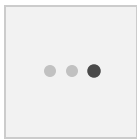
KELLY STARLING LYONS

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Tier 2 terms

rumbled, ebony, rose, quilt, thrust, retirees, responsibility, clasped, unity, swelled, purpose, thumped, roar, echoed

Web Version: <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts/one-million-men-and-me>



*This article contains a multimedia feature that is available at the web address above.*

My cousin, Omari, said no girls were allowed.

But Daddy took me.

Our bus rumbled through ebony night. My head snuggled into Daddy's warm chest until pink daylight rose around us and the driver called, "Washington, D.C."

Like a quilt of moving pieces, we walked together, singing songs that made my heart dance.

We stood tall and proud as mighty oaks, the men, Daddy and me.

They came to make changes, came to make themselves and their communities better.

And I was their princess, there to see the dream of this day come true.

I squeezed Daddy's hand as the view stretched before us – one million Black men, one million Black kings.

Happiness glowed in Daddy's eyes. Tears shone too.

Daddy lifted me on his shoulders as voices rang around us: Sister Angelou, Rev. Jackson, Minister Farrakhan.

Men chanted.

A sea of fists thrust toward the sky.

I looked at the faces, wrinkled and smooth – at skin a rainbow of chocolate, graham cracker brown and cream.

Daddy said they were doctors, garbage men, students, homeless people and retirees.

They came to the March to pray and take responsibility.

Everywhere I looked, fathers and sons, friends and strangers, clasped hands in unity. Their faces filled with pride. Their hearts swelled with hope.

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Daddy said they missed school and work to join in purpose and peace.

Drums thumped. I felt the magic. And I held my head a little higher.

Someone called for the men to give and they answered.

Dollars for a new future flowed overhead, a river of green.

The roar of speakers echoed in my ears as powerful words traveled up to the sky and back. I watched Daddy nod and smile at everyone we passed.

I asked if he knew them. He said no. Didn't have to. They were his brothers, here and always.

I saw signs bright with bold letters. "I am a Man. I am One in a Million."

Author's Note (Excerpt):

I went to the March to make sure the young African-American men in the community I covered had a place to tell their stories. But I had a testimony, too. So many images touched

me. Then, I saw a girl walk past the Reflecting Pool clutching her daddy's hand. Her eyes, big as quarters, glittered like diamonds. She walked like a little princess among kings.

This story was inspired by the beautiful Black men and boys who stood together at the March, by that sweet girl, by everyone who made the dream of the Million Man March come true. Not long ago, I talked to a group of young people who never heard of the Million Man March. I hope this story will help change that. Like the 1963 March on Washington, we need to remember the Million Man March, a brilliant event where Black men made history.

### Source

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### **TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS**

1. Question

According to the narrator, what was the purpose of the Million Man March?

2. Question

The narrator describes the men as standing "tall and proud as mighty oaks." Oak trees are a kind of tree. Why might the narrator have used this comparison?

3. Question

How does the narrator feel about being at the march with her dad? Use words and phrases from the story.

## TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### 1. Question

According to the narrator, what was the purpose of the Million Man March?

Answer

The purpose was to “make changes ... make themselves and their communities better ... to pray and take responsibility.”

### 2. Question

The narrator describes the men as standing “tall and proud as mighty oaks.” Oak trees are a kind of tree. Why might the narrator have used this comparison?

Answer

The comparison helps to show how tall, proud and strong the men felt. They did not bend and hide. Instead, they stood tall like a strong tree.

### 3. Question

How does the narrator feel about being at the march with her dad? Use words and phrases from the story.

Answer

She feels happy and proud and a part of something big and important. She recounts “singing songs that made my heart dance.” She says, “I was their princess,” “I felt the magic” and “I held my head a little higher.”