



## We need a nuanced discussion of rape culture

[\(originally published in the Huffington Post\)](#)

We need a nuanced discussion of rape culture: just as every single person who has stepped up to defend Judy Finnigan's theory that [Ched Evans wasn't a violent rapist](#) has demanded this week. We need to discuss why convicted rapist Ched Evans is currently in talks, from prison, about a potential return to play for Sheffield United. We just don't need a nuanced discussion of what the definition of rape actually is: we already know it is a crime that involves bodily harm.

We need a nuanced discussion of media coverage of Finnigan's quote "the rape was not violent. He didn't cause any bodily harm to the person", which has focused entirely on Ched Evans and the consequences of rape to his career. We need to talk about why the woman raped isn't considered an important part of this news story. We need to talk about why a woman who was raped, forced to leave her home and change her name isn't considered worthy of the same consideration as her rapist. We need to talk about why media has focused on the long-term consequences to the rapist but not the victim. Why are we more concerned with Evans' career but not that of the woman who was raped?

We also need to have a real discussion as to why Evans' supporters are being given a public platform to denigrate a victim of rape by suggesting that it's akin to "cheating" - as his girlfriend [Natasha Massey](#) has said this week. Apparently, Amanda Holden has chipped in to this debate by suggesting rape was 'harsher' than infidelity - a statement that we can't even begin to fathom. Why are we allowing a [narrative](#) that confuses rape with sex and infidelity?

Why are Evans' supporters not being challenged more effectively? Why are we letting the supporters of a convicted rapist [dictate media coverage](#)? Why are Evans' girlfriend and sister being invited to have cozy chats about "infidelity" without a representative from Rape Crisis on to challenge the narrative? Why do journalists and media pundits have no specialist training in rape awareness?

We also need to talk about [rape myths](#). This has to start with the fact that [rape myths exist](#) and are incredibly dangerous. Finnigan's invocation of the "victim had too much to drink" narrative isn't new and she isn't the only person suggesting that Ched Evans can't be a rapist because the victim was drunk. Frankly, the police and courts accept this as an excuse continuously and it's as [offensive and harmful](#) when they do it. We need a public discussion on rape myths: what they are, how they harm and how to challenge them. We need to make it clear that a woman who is drunk is still a victim of rape - that intoxication does not make it acceptable to rape.

What we don't need is a discussion that involves threatening or abusive language directed at Judy Finnigan for her inappropriate and offensive statements about rape. Nuanced discussions do not involve sending [abusive messages](#) and threatening to rape the children of those you disagree with. Nuance doesn't involve misogynistic language or behaviour.

A nuanced discussion requires prioritising the most important person: [the victim](#).



Our organisation does not support Ched Evans return to professional football. We do not believe anyone convicted for rape or other forms of violence against women and girls should continue in a job which involves being hero-worshipped by young boys. We want a real public debate on the moral consequences of Evans returning to his previous lifestyle and employment. What are the messages we are teaching young men and women about bodily autonomy and consent if the career of a footballer is considered more important than the crime he committed?

We would also like to see more consistent legal consequences for those who send abusive and threatening messages and we want to see harassment and stalking laws invoked in response. This is as important for those who have publicly smeared and harassed a victim of rape as it is for those abusing a woman who made a grossly inappropriate statement.

Mostly, we don't want to see Judy Finnigan fired. We would like to see Finnigan, and the rest of the *Loose Women* team, undergo specialist training in victim awareness, trauma, and sexual and domestic violence and abuse. We would like to see an entire episode dedicated to rape culture where survivors and representatives from Rape Crisis and other specialist sector services can talk publicly about rape myths. We want Finnigan to understand the consequences of her statement for victims.

We want to see a nuanced public discussion that recognises that rape is always a violent crime, challenges rape myths and ensures that the victim is always the centre of the discussion.