



Nigella Lawson: DV in the Public Eye

Regular readers of my blogs will be familiar with my opinions on the issue of Domestic Violence. New readers may want to familiarise themselves with these:

On the nature of abuse which I perceive that the [Fifty Shades trilogy promotes](#);

Specifically addresses the [public perception of domestic violence](#);

And [backing this up with statistics](#).

I was moved to add to this sequence by the Press Preview on Sky News last night. One of the top items was the front page of the Mail on Sunday. Recent weeks have seen Nigella Lawson in the news for matters which we would not have anticipated for a public figure, but there cannot be many people who are now unaware of the pictures published in the Mirror taken at Scott's Restaurant. If you buy the Mail on Sunday, or read online, the next part of the tale is played out [here](#). (No £ to MoS, clean GoogleDocs link)

That's right! Charles Saatchi is divorcing Nigella. Not Nigella divorcing him!

Of course, having been brought up to not always believe what is written in the papers, and to recognise that the press often sensationalise stories for sales and to feed the frenzy of celebrity obsession, it is important to be objective. However a number of points merit further discussion.

The photographs were taken over a period of 27 minutes. In public view, he had his hand on her throat, raised his voice, and not one person intervened to stop him or protect her.

He may well have gone to accept a caution, but that means he accepts what he did was wrong. To dismiss it so it wasn't 'hanging over us' and as a 'playful tiff' belittles the nature of the actions and is an indication of a fundamental lack of respect.

Nigella has not said a word in public about the matter. The article says she refused to defend him. We don't know that for certain, but the point is she hasn't defended him. She has left the marital home and removed her wedding ring. Nigella may be a public figure, but she is a private person. Her first husband, John Diamond, lived his battle with cancer in the public eye through his newspaper column, book and television programmes. She featured in those media, but as John's wife, not the celebrity cook.

Saatchi is using the press to make an announcement that the majority of people would keep amongst themselves. Divorce is a subject that people find embarrassing to discuss. I know a few people who have been divorced, and they don't make it public knowledge; in fact they only share it when the process is complete.

The most shocking thing about the article though is the element of victim blaming, turning the responsibility back on Nigella, with the suggestion that she had done the same to him. We are



now told by him that it has been a marriage on the rocks for a year now, and that he abhors violence. The suggestion is 'it was only once'. Well once is once too many!!

This was not the only example of victim blaming I was aware of yesterday. The Guardian revealed [allegations made by the soprano Angela Gheorghiu](#) against her ex-husband Roberto Alagna. Shocking again in the nature of the acts described. More shocking though is the opinion of Tim Ashley, dismissing this as attention seeking, and beginning the article with the word 'scepticism' and ends with mention of her 'temperamental past behaviour'. A matter for the courts to decide no doubt.

However coming on top of the appalling attitudes shown yesterday to Marion Bartoli, the comments of John Inverdale on BBC Radio5Live that 'she was never going to be a looker' and comments on twitter that were so shocking that I will not repeat them here. Look at @EverydaySexism if you want to see the worst. On a day of great sporting triumph, did anyone say that many of the victorious British Lions were 'no male models' with their broken noses and cauliflower ears? No: I believe they didn't. Despite the attitudes of many changing, we do still live in a very patriarchal, sexist society.

Back to Nigella. She is going through a great personal trauma and won't want to speak about this for a while. However as a national icon she has the love and respect of many right minded people. When the time is right she may speak up about her experiences. Domestic violence is rarely discussed, but in recent months a number of cases have shown the issue is one of control as well as abuse; the recent tragic murders in Salford and Birmingham, and of course the sickening Philpott case.

Nigella is the victim here. The pages of coverage in the Mail on Sunday will embarrass her. Sadly this is the price of being involved with someone with media connections and a huge fortune. We all hope justice will prevail.

This post was first published [here](#), thanks to author for permission to cross post.