



Why @SarahVine Is Wrong About Rape & Saying So Is Not “Monsterring”

[\(cross-posted from Incarnationalrelational\)](#)

I am all for nuance in debate and discussion – nuance can and should serve to provide richer and deeper understandings when exploring an idea, a situation, a problem. Nuance is good.

In the last couple of days there has been much reaction to [Judy Finnigan's comments](#) about the footballer Ched Evans case on the ITV show Loose Women. After serving 2 years of a 5 year sentence, Evans is about to be released, and the suggestion that he might return to Sheffield United to resume his footballing career has met with a great deal of anger.

Finnigan suggested that Evan's crime might not be considered as serious because “...*he didn't cause any bodily harm to the person. It was unpleasant, in a hotel room I believe, and she had far too much to drink. That is reprehensible, but he has been convicted and he has served his time. When he comes out, what are we supposed to do, just actually to refuse to let him do his job even though he's already been punished?*”

There was, inevitably, [a good deal of anger](#) at these remarks and Finnigan later apologised. Enter stage left Sarah Vine [in the Daily Mail today](#), who was (to summarise) insisting that Finnigan was right, that she wasn't defending Evans; it was all about feminist ideologues dismissing 'nuance' in the debate; that those who disagree and speak up for the victims 'monster' people like Judy Finnigan and Sarah Vine, and that this 'wasn't very sisterly' of them. Um.

There is so much wrong with this article which is – [as @EVB_Now rightly pointed out this morning](#) – so destructive, that it is hard to know where to begin. But let's start with the Sarah Vine [confusing rape myths](#) with 'nuance', because she clearly does not grasp why the myths which are perpetuated in this article are not about providing richer and deeper understandings, but perpetuate the very things which keep the emphasis on the victims behaviour.

[Radhika Sanghani](#) in the Telegraph [yesterday covered](#) the very rape myths which both Judy Finnigan, and Sarah Vine in defence of her, perpetuated with their comments and article. What I particularly want to address is *why* these myths continue, and these myths – which so effectively keep the focus on the behaviour of the victim – continue to dominate the narrative *because of peoples failure to take in to account the effect on the victim*.

Whether it is Sarah Vine, [or Richard Dawkins](#), or [various people with large media platforms](#) insisting that some rapes are worse because more physical violence might be used, or because it was a stranger, or because 'she was drunk and it just got out of hand...' – these ideas are treated as reasonable (or as giving the debate 'logic' or 'nuance') *because the impact on the victim is not taken in to account*.

One of the most damaging myths about rape is [about how a victim is supposed to behave](#). This



not only makes it harder for victims like the woman raped by Ched Evans, who was vilified, attacked and 'outed' on social media, but once again warps the understanding about the impact on the victim and makes it one of the most difficult crimes to prosecute.

In the context of these, and similar issues, a nuanced discussion would consider why society finds it so difficult to consider the victim (an issue almost unique to crimes involving rape and sexual assault). A nuanced discussion would look more deeply at why we find it easier to critique the behaviour of the victim than what we can, as a society, do to change how we raise our boys and why men rape. A nuanced discussion would look at this, at much more besides, in a more honest and raw way.

To state all this, to say that Judy Finnigan and Sarah Vine are both absolutely wrong, and to challenge what they say because it can and should be challenged, is not to 'monster' anyone. (And nor is 'un-sisterly' – that was a particularly manipulative thing for Sarah Vine to say.)