



Celebrity Case Studies

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High Profile Case Studies

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Rihanna v Brown

Rihanna was abused by her ex-boyfriend Chris Brown. He was convicted of assaulting her in February 2009 where she was left with visible, physical injuries and hospitalisation.

Throughout his relationships, Brown has obtained a history of violent and aggressive behaviour as well as violent threats, harassment, and sexual assault.

Police investigating the 2009 attack "learned of two earlier incidents related to domestic violence that went unreported," - this included Brown allegedly pushing Rihanna into a wall and smashing her car windows with her inside.

Brown surrendered to the police and later pled guilty to felony assault. He was sentenced to five year probation, domestic violence counselling and more than 1,400 hours in labour-oriented service.

Even after the abuse, Rihanna forgave Brown and attempted to reconcile their relationship because she believed that she could change him. Rihanna said: "I was very protective of him. I felt that people didn't understand him. Even after."

In 2018, Brown left three identical comments using the blushing face emoji on Rihanna's lingerie line pictures which left fans distraught, furious and unforgiving. One fan messaged Brown on social media to "get away from her".

High Profile Domestic Abuse Case Studies

"I lived like that for a long time. I used to wish, hope and dream that someone would kidnap me."

Mariah Carey

"If you put up with it, maybe you are agreeing that you deserve this."

Rihanna

Mariah Carey v Mottola

In 1993, Mariah Carey married her record label boss Tommy Mottola. Their affair started off like a fairy tale. Carey immediately fell in love with the successful businessman and they began dating while working together at Sony Music where Mottola was the head of the organisation.

The abuse inflicted by Mottola was mainly psychological and emotional. Mottola had the upper hand in the relationship due to his status in business and powerful connections.

In her interviews about their relationship, Carey says that she "had to get permission to leave [the house]." Also, "he wanted me to remain away from most people, like sequestered."

She was connected with Mottola not just as his spouse but also as a business connection. This proved to be the biggest setback for Carey as "it was difficult because there was a connection that was not only a marriage, but a business thing where the person was in control of my life."

After she found the courage to leave Mottola, Carey dedicated the song *Butterfly* to this experience in her life. On the other hand, Mottola denied any accusations of abusing Carey and added 'the singer should be grateful as he made her a real star'.

In his book, *Hitmaker: The Man and his Music*, Mottola addressed his relationship to Carey in this phrase- "If it seemed like I was controlling. I apologise. Was I obsessive? Yes. But that was also part of the reason for her success."

Kiranjit Ahluwalia

Kiranjit Ahluwalia's case attracted huge international and local media attention.

Her release set a historic precedent - the courts accepted that women who are victims of abuse may have more of a "slow-burn" reaction when provoked, rather than an immediate response. It also sent the message that women who kill as a result of severe domestic violence should not be treated as cold-blooded murderers.

Kiranjit grew up in Punjab, Northern India. Both her parents had died by the time she was 16 and so her brothers persuaded her into an arranged marriage. At the age of 23, she gave up studying law and married Deepak Ahluwalia.

She described him as "very good-looking, handsome and charming" but she never knew when he would snap. One minute he was as good as gold, the next he was horrible. Kiranjit attempted to leave several times but recounts that "her husband would find her, bring her back and physically beat her." Also, she asked help from her family, who merely told her to go back and honour her husband as "it was her duty to make the marriage work".

Resulting from rape by her husband, Kiranjit gave birth to two sons who were also physically abused.

The abuse started immediately after the wedding. "Deepak's manner changed dramatically". "Deepak was so obsessed with controlling Kiranjit's behaviour that he even forbade her to eat chillies or drink black coffee. She was not allowed to go out to see friends or family and was treated like a slave."

There are several news accounts of how Kiranjit killed her husband in May 1989. Some say that she set fire to his bedclothes; she was provoked to teach him a lesson for burning her face with a hot iron; while the BBC say that "while he slept in bed, she doused her husband's feet in petrol and set him alight. She grabbed her son and ran out of the house." Even though, Kiranjit had no intention of killing him. Deepak died of his injuries later on and she was charged with his murder.

At her trial, "the judge declared that the violence she had suffered was not serious... and she had merely been knocked about". Her guilt and embarrassment of the sexual abuse she had suffered led Kiranjit to not give evidence in her own defence. Moreover, her plea of manslaughter due to provocation was overturned due to the time elapsed between Deepak's last attack on Kiranjit and her retaliation.

In 1992, Kiranjit was granted an appeal on the grounds that expert evidence and psychiatric reports had not been presented at the original trial. Similar to Challen's case, a retrial was ordered which found Kiranjit guilty of manslaughter due to diminished responsibility. She was sentenced to three years and four months. However, she had already served this time so Kiranjit was released immediately.

Sally Challen

The outcome of Sally Challen's case has received huge media attention and coverage because it has set precedent for domestic violence cases and could pave the way for other abused women to challenge their murder convictions.

Challen's legal team successfully argued that she was a victim of sustained psychological and emotional abuse. Her psychiatric report found that she was suffering from mental illness at the time of the attack on her husband Richard in 2010.

One day, as Richard leaned to eat his breakfast, she struck him repeatedly with a hammer. "Sally then stuffed a tea towel in his mouth and wrapped him in old curtains. Before turning to do the dishes, she wrote a note - 'I love you, Sally' - and placed it on the body."

Sally provides a detailed account of her husband's abusive behaviour which led to this violent attack. At first, Richard was charming which gradually altered to abuse. He bullied and belittled her, controlled their money and her social interactions as she was not allowed to socialise without him. "Whilst he forced strict restrictions on her behaviour, he himself, would flaunt his money,

have numerous affairs and visit brothels. If she challenged him, he would turn it back on her and make her feel she was going mad."

Sally attempted to leave Richard several times but she was too financially and emotionally dependent on him to be able to leave stably.

At the time of her conviction, 'coercive control' was not recognised highly in England and Wales, only becoming recognised in law as a form of domestic abuse in 2015.

In February 2017, the Court of Appeal heard new evidence related to a psychiatric report. In June 2019, prosecutors accepted Sally's plea to manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility. Therefore, she was sentenced to 9 years and 4 months. However, due to the time she already served, Sally was also released immediately.