Twitter Thread by Felicia Sonmez

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I don’t know if anyone else out there is feeling this, but the more I think about the whole Phil Spector situation — and the more I read about his abusive behavior — the more enraged and depressed I become. If you’re feeling this way too, I just want you to know you’re not alone.

I’m no expert on this topic. But from the little I have read in the past 24 hours—mostly from digging into previous reports, and not the obituaries—Spector “surprised” his wife, Ronnie, with two adopted children as a “Christmas gift.” He reportedly imprisoned them, and Ronnie...

..and two of Spector’s three adopted sons have accused him of sexual abuse.

“Donte Spector, 33, said he was forced to perform simulated intercourse with his father's girlfriend. When he was 9, he was handcuffed and blindfolded for her amusement, he said.”
https://t.co/MAIRGW7130

From the same story:

“I was blindfolded and sexually molested," said Gary Spector, 36. “Dad would say, 'You're going to meet someone,' and it would be a 'learning experience.'”

There are many details that have been reported about Phil Spector’s abuse of Ronnie. His total control over her life — over her career, her contacts with the outside world. He even hid her shoes, so that when she finally did manage to flee, she did so barefoot. And years later...

...when Ronnie Spector and her band, The Ronettes, were being inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Phil Spector wrote to the nominating committee in an attempt to block them from receiving the honor.

https://t.co/uNc8f0RQzD

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given his own long record of domestic abuse, Phil Spector defended Ike Turner and publicly criticized Tina Turner for speaking out about his abuse of her in her memoir. He also minimized Tina Turner’s achievements...

https://t.co/OWDMXPNtAX

“Ike made Tina the jewel she was,” Phil Spector said. “When I went to see Ike play there were at least five Tina Turners on the stage performing that night, any one of them could have been Tina Turner.”

It mirrors Spector’s own efforts to diminish and rob Ronnie of her success.

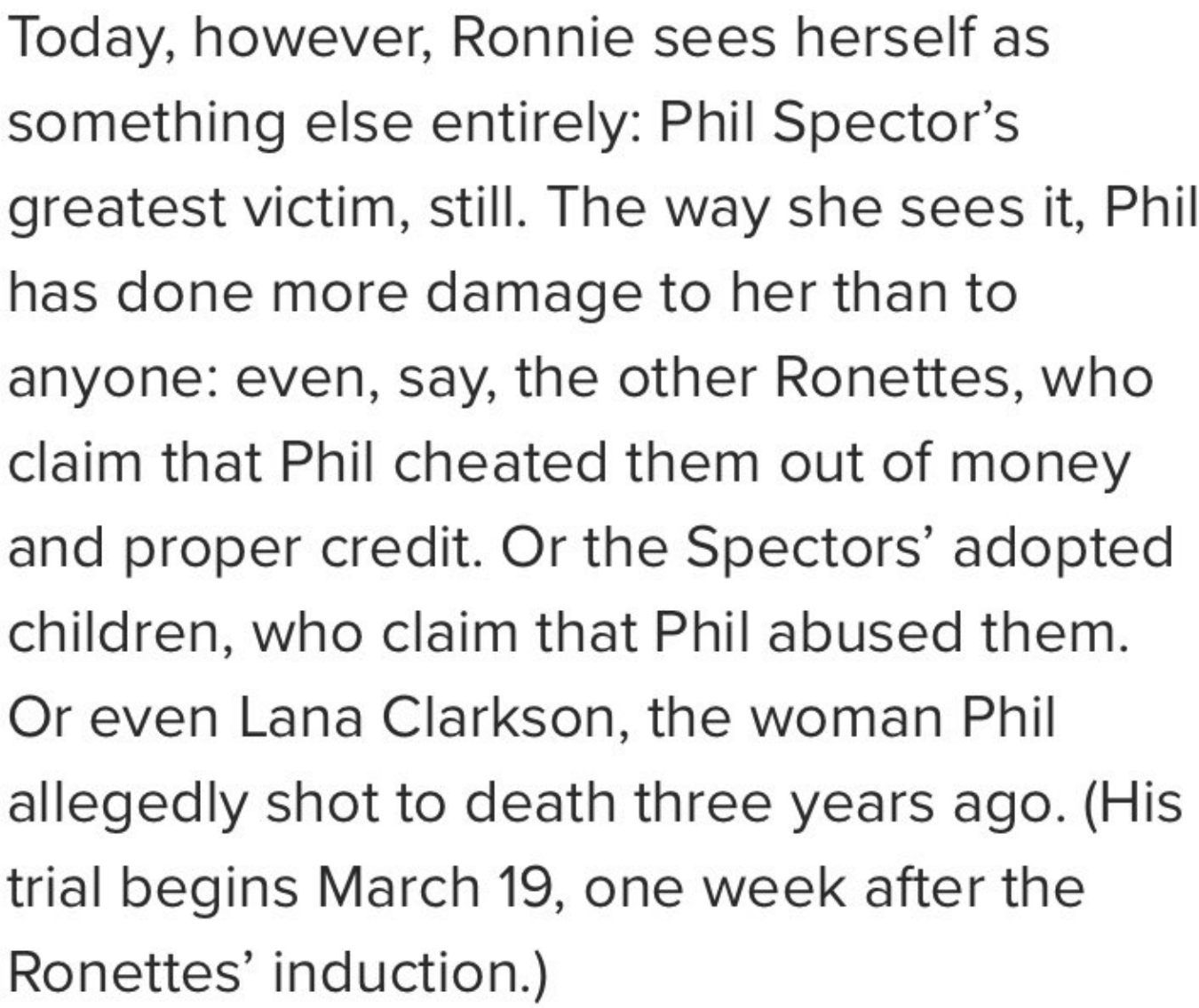
In addition to how horrified I feel upon learning of Spector’s actions—actions that shattered the lives of many of those around him, and took the life of Lana Clarkson—I feel equally horrified at how news orgs have repeatedly minimized his long, well-documented history of abuse.

The problems are many. And each of them weighs on my mind, makes my heart sink and fills me with despair, making me think that maybe this issue is just too deeply-rooted to ever truly change.

There are the subtle efforts to disparage or minimize Clarkson, such as nearly every article’s mention of her as a “B-movie actress” or “struggling actress” — as though this somehow makes her life less valuable than that of a global celebrity like Spector.

There are the not-so-subtle efforts to dismiss Ronnie Spector—a genius in her own right—as mentally unstable and therefore somehow deserving of the abuse she endured, such as in this 2007 story by the @nypost’s Maureen Callahan, titled, simply, “RON-NUTS.” https://t.co/Nx4FD7qiNv

The piece is horrifying for many, many reasons, including for its mocking tone toward Ronnie Spector (below) and the author’s decision to quote a Phil Spector biographer who attempts to equate the actions of the two, stating, “They’re both horrible people.”



Perhaps I'm more aware of this than most, given that in my own case, plenty of respected journalists in Beijing at the time cast both myself and the person who assaulted me as victims. This is not true, and news stories that use this type of framing cause great harm to survivors.

Then there are the other framing decisions news orgs make. In many headlines yesterday, Phil Spector was described first with glowing praise of his career — with "convicted murderer" tucked in at the end, almost as if the writer were whispering it, rather than shouting it.

It's as though it were a grudging inclusion, a parenthetical.

"Yes, this man killed a woman, abused many others and his own children. But that's not what matters."

Isn't it?

The issues go beyond headlines, as well. The effects of abuse are complex, and many journalists aren't well-equipped to handle this when they approach the topic. Survivors often continue to defend their abusers for years. Our reporting needs to

provide clarity when this happens.

So, for instance, when Ronnie Spector — who I imagine is still grappling with the trauma to this day — describes Phil Spector as “a lousy husband,” it’s not a great idea to just throw that quote in a headline without any context.

Another example: This 2010 Reuters piece does a better job than others of describing Spector in the lede.

“One of Phil Spector’s sons has praised a documentary that depicts the convicted homicidal music producer as a sociopath and a narcissist.”

But...

https://t.co/sYJmPGJZCC

...the piece also describes Spector as “witty” and ends with both the author and the documentary’s director, Vikram Jayanti, musing about whether Spector would have enjoyed the film.

(The implication: A convicted murderer’s approval is something we should care about.)

He said he has not had a chance to discuss the film with Spector, but doubted he would approve of the finished product.

"Everyone that I've ever made a film about gets quite depressed after they see the film," he said. "But I think in the long run he will see it as the best review he will ever get."

Reporting by Dean Goodman; Editing by Vicki Allen

I know that reading about Spector's violent abuse and misogyny, the widespread efforts to play it down and his victims' death and still-lingering trauma is triggering for many, myself included. It's excruciating to write about.

But I wanted to do so here because unfortunately, I know from experience that silence can lead to feelings of isolation, and that's far, far worse.

So even though I don't have the answers on how to fix all of this, I know that saying something is an important first step.

Things won't change on their own.