



Lisa Brady

Follow @lisamfbrady

We all know Lavinia but not William Conroy, her rapist. Why?

JONATHAN Moran. Aidan Kestell. Shane Noonan. William Conroy. These names may ring a faint bell, or perhaps they don't. You may struggle to place them, and that, in itself, says something terrifying about Ireland. These are all the names of rapists.

And as we marked International Day For The Elimination Of Violence Against Women this week, it's worth searing them – once again – into the public's consciousness. Because in Ireland, a country that prides itself on so many things, the truth is when it comes to protecting women from sexual violence, we are failing badly.

Ireland is far from a utopia.

In fact, our very own Taoiseach this week admitted that violence against women in Irish society on an ongoing basis is 'depraved and shocking'. Something is going gravely, deeply wrong.

I was reminded of this by Lavinia Kerwick, one of the women who has fought tirelessly to make Ireland safer for women, and who has endured horrors no one should. I spoke to her on the same day her name was mentioned in the Dáil by Ivana Bacik, along with that of Natasha O'Brien – attacked by soldier Cathal Crotty in May 2022 – commending them for their bravery in coming forward and advocating for change.

I despair when I hear of another brave woman in that context, because that very adjective means she has already been failed by a society that continues to stop short of confronting the real source of the problem.

When Lavinia first revealed her identity, it was a radical moment in Irish history. For months, she was just a number in the judicial system, stripped of a voice, dragged in and out of court in a hostile environment that seemed built to protect the perpetrator rather than her.

Thanks to her efforts, we now have victim impact statements in

THE Women's Aid Centre for Learning and Practice Development has launched a new and 'potentially life-saving' free programme for the families and friends of victims of domestic abuse and coercive control. The Allies And Informal Supporters Programme is free and available to anyone who wants to understand how to safely support someone they know who is being subjected to domestic abuse and coercive control. One in three women suffers domestic abuse and rarely directly discloses this, so the more we can all recognise the signs, the better it will be. See Womensaid.ie for more.

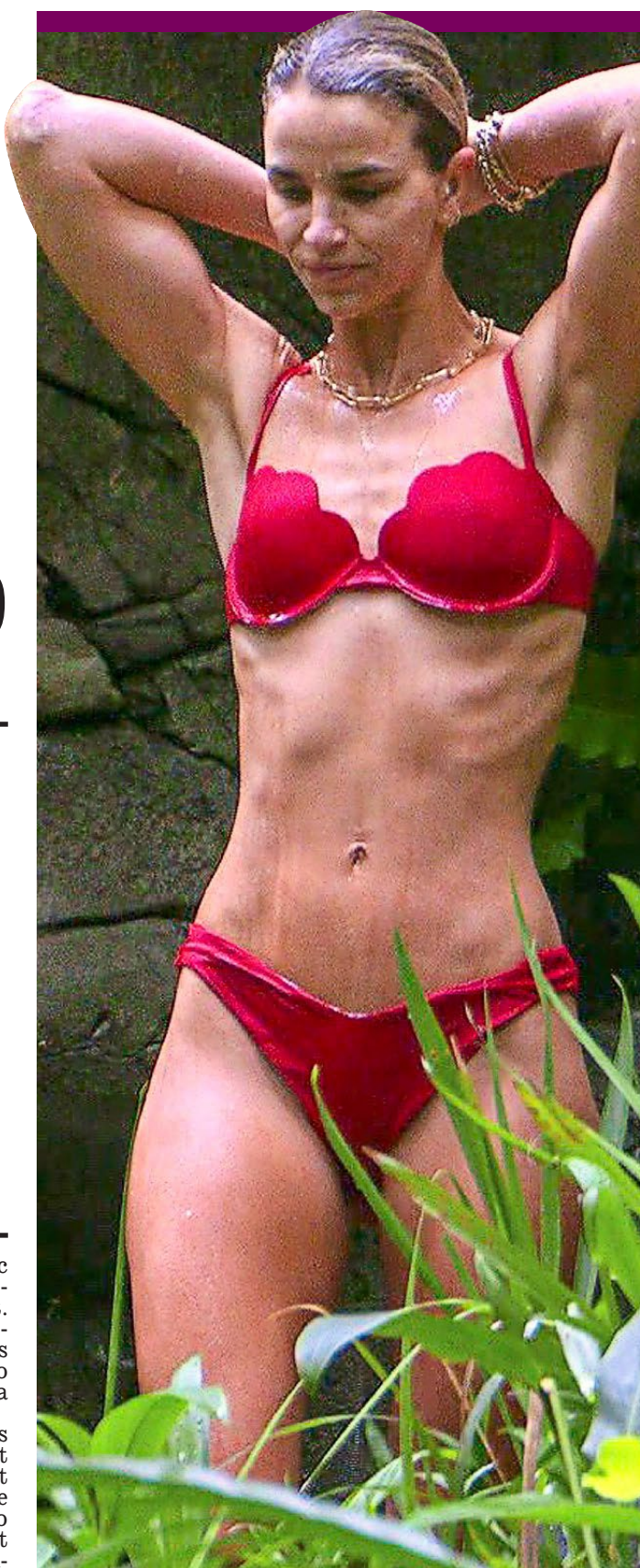
court, and the Director of Public Prosecutions can appeal sentences deemed unduly lenient. But Lavinia herself is uncomfortable with the label brave. This is not a label any of us wants to wear, nor should we have to. It's a desperate act to incite change.

I was 11 when Lavinia was raped. I didn't understand what was happening. This wasn't just because of my tender age; in the 1990s, the word rape was as taboo as a curse, and consent was not yet part of the public conversation. But her name stuck with me, and her face – the haunted girl with the dark hair – was ingrained in my memory.

BUT I do not remember the man responsible for smashing her head against a rock, and inflicting life-changing injuries. I had to Google William Conroy's name.

And 30 years later, this pattern repeats. I could not immediately recall Jonathan Moran, who subjected Bláthnaid Raleigh to stomach-churning violence.

I did not know Aidan Kestell's name either, despite the fact that he left Paula Doyle – who miraculously survived his brutality – 'lifeless, in the bushes, like a piece of rubbish, changed completely'.



Our Vogue really is Queen Of The Jungle

EVER since Vogue Williams, pictured, sashayed into the jungle on I'm A Celebrity, she's charmed us all – while possibly traumatising every insect in there (she's not a fan). Her first challenge produced a heroic amount of glamorous gagging – and I'm not surprised, given the task of chomping a full pig's brain. But our Vogue

successfully made it to the end, securing her place among the night's winners, and she's victorious in plenty of other ways too. She's officially the craic of camp – recounting chatty stories, comparing tweakments with Ruby Wax, and generally being so optimistic, with a beaming smile that belies any of the discomfort of the extreme living arrangements. Vogue for Queen!

Simon's anti-ageing talent is ahead of pack

IN THE great billionaire-inspired race to age backwards, Simon Cowell, pictured, seems to be taking a page straight out of Bryan Johnson's bio-hacked playbook. While Johnson indulges in bizarre bio-monitoring in attempts to stay alive until the ripe old age of 150, Cowell is now having his blood rinsed and filtered at a



high-end wellness clinic that sounds suspiciously like a spa for vampires. The Britain's Got Talent music mogul insists he's quite literally getting younger thanks to better habits, supplements, and the sort of stress-free living only immense wealth

can buy. However, Cowell has his limits. He told the Sun newspaper this week that he abandoned the idea of having his body cryogenically frozen so he could be brought back to life in the future after he 'found out they chop your head off, so you come back in 2,000 years as a floating head'. That's a big fat no from me too, Simon.

Shane Noonan raped Ciara Mangan in a bathroom in 2013, while she slipped in and out of consciousness. I knew her name; I did not know his.

Too often we remember the survivor, not the perpetrator. We focus on bravery, not accountability. It's symbolic of the retrospective way we approach violence against women in this country. Mourning the victims, praising women's strength, and rallying only after irreparable harm has been done. And as a woman, I'm sick of it.

I'm tired of hearing about our courage and bravery. Safety is a basic human right yet fear continues to be normalised. Women still navigate and plan our lives, day or night, armed with the knowledge that violence is a possibility, even

an expectation. That's why I dread seeing another haunted face speaking out in fervent hope of attempting to change things. Can we please shift the focus from women's resilience to men's responsibility? We need to be very clear here: This is not on women to fix.

A safer Ireland will only happen if everyone gets involved, and we reshape the cultural, social, and institutional norms that are perpetuating this cycle of violence.

There are promising signs. Minister for Justice Jim O'Callaghan has signalled legislation to restrict the disclosure of counselling records from complainants during sexual assault trials and to create a publicly available list of judgments against those prosecuted

for domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence. We need the law to reflect zero tolerance – not just with harsher sentences, but with a commitment to public accountability.

These will be steps in the right direction – but again, reactive not preventative. Asking nicely has not worked, and while conversations about consent and awareness tiptoe around the issue, we must confront the reality of rape in our homes and in our schools.

All the shame, the public recognition, and the legal consequence belongs to the rapists. Let's never lose sight of that.

I just pray for one less haunted face to remember – because then, just maybe, we'll know we're doing something right.