

Dear Jared

You don't know me. We met once, but let's get onto that later.

I first became aware of the song called "I wish I were a misogynist" the Saturday following the election. This is the song you wrote and performed with your band when you were 21. You've suggested that the song was written on the basis of a conversation you overheard in Wetherspoons, and you're cross that the words have been "taken out of context" by "right-wing bloggers". Well I'm not a right-wing blogger, I don't have a fixed party political position, and what I'd like to do is look at that song, and add a little more context into it. And seeing as you either ignore or block people trying to ask you about your attitude on social media, I feel that there is no alternative but to send you an open letter about it.

When I first heard about the song, I felt angry. Yes, I know, there are lots of songs that catalogue misogynistic attitudes, and that these are frequently written off as "musical irony" (as your friend from Reverend and the Makers so charmingly put it). Well maybe I've had a sense of humour bypass, but I fail to see the humorous or emphatically opposite meaning behind any of those lyrics. And yes, I've listened to the song in full to try and figure out the context. From what I can tell, it's about a man fantasising that he were a misogynist so that he could "put her in her place ... smash her in her face". And the grounds for this is that he's tired of her "playing games" and he "just want[s] a snog, is that too much to ask?". Excuse me if I've got any of these words wrong, but it's a pretty terrible recording, and listening to say 2 and a half minutes of hate filled bile sets my ears on edge slightly. I'm no music critic, but I think I can speak for many people when I say I'm glad you never pursued a career in music.

Back to the lyrics. Sure, there's a line in there that says "but i'd never do that" - but it doesn't sound very convincing. It sounds ... questioning. Regretful, almost. And in the context of the rest of the song which is screaming about how this man would really really like to "smash her in her face" it's a bit pathetic really. "Misogynistic bullshit" as an acquaintance of mine put it. Your first excuse for this song was "it was a long time ago". 14 years, yes, that is a long time. But excuse me, didn't you know you wanted to be a politician when you were 15? That's what has been reported in the press, and apparently it's what you told your school. And haven't you got a degree in journalism? For someone with such longstanding ambitions of being a politician, and someone who has academic training in a profession that uses words, I'd have expected that 21 year old you would have had a better understanding of the damaging effects that words can have. And then there's the interview that you gave, and that was reported by South Yorkshire Briefing on 23rd June

[\(http://sybriefing.co.uk/2017/06/23/sheffield-hallam-mp-jared-omara-dismisses-allegations-misogyny-smear-attempt/\)](http://sybriefing.co.uk/2017/06/23/sheffield-hallam-mp-jared-omara-dismisses-allegations-misogyny-smear-attempt/)

where you say that it's written based on "a conversation overheard...in Sheffield: 'This guy was talking about his missus and he was saying "oh, she winds me up but I'd never lay a finger on her". I thought that sentiment or that idea might make a song."

A couple of points here. If it was a sentiment about "I'd never lay a finger on her" wouldn't that be the main focus of the song, rather than 2 and a half minutes of hate-filled bile screaming about wanting to "put her in her place ... smash her in her face"? And if it really was based on a man "talking about his missus" surely they'd have got past the snogging stage, and the game playing stage of her just wanting to be friends, which seems to be the focus of the song?

I don't know if you've ever met a survivor of domestic abuse. I don't know if you've ever known anyone who's been the victim of abuse, and the devastating lifelong scarring that that can leave on someone. I'm just going to leave that thought there for a while.

I mentioned earlier that we'd met before. It was on the night of Sunday 5th March (or rather the early hours of the 6th March) in West Street Live. We'd been out for our very belated work Christmas party - we work in a pub, so it isn't possible to celebrate during December when most people are out celebrating, and we always have a bit of a do later in the year. We'd had a lovely evening - we'd closed the pub early, had a few drinks, been for a meal, and were

continuing the party. It being Sunday night there weren't many places open, but some of the younger members of the group suggested West Street Live. I'll admit I wasn't keen on the idea - it's just not my kind of place - but we were having fun, and as it was the Christmas party and I was paying for most things that night, it seemed rude not to.

We had a few more drinks, and hit the dancefloor. And it was fun, in a tacky kind of way. To the best of my knowledge there are no cloak rooms in West Street Live and, as I mentioned earlier, I was paying for most of the evening as a thank you to everyone. So I'd taken a considerable amount of money out with me, and I wanted to keep an eye on my belongings without being that 80s cliché of a woman of a certain age dancing around her handbag. So I'd folded my coat up, and put it at the side of the dancefloor. There were no signs saying "don't leave belongings here" and, anyway, it was a fairly quiet night so I figured they'd be safe. And they were, until you walked across the floor, took one look at my coat, and kicked it. You didn't "move it with your foot" as you later claimed to one of my friends, you very deliberately kicked it. I had no idea who you were - the bouncers later shouted that you were the owner - but I ran across to my belongings to check they were ok (they weren't) and to see whether anything had fallen out of my pockets. I asked you what you were doing, and why you'd done that. You took one look at me and, without speaking, called over the bouncers. You didn't even have the common decency to speak to me, and I will never, ever forget that sheer arrogance and contempt in your expression that night.

Now I work in the licenced trade, and I know that the minute the bouncers get called over, someone is going to get thrown out. Fair enough, that's your call - you don't need a reason to throw someone out of your premises. But because you'd refused to talk to me, I continued to press you for an answer about why you'd kicked my stuff. I did not, at any point attack you as you claimed in that article from 23rd June ("Her friends attacked me."). I'm calling that a downright lie. There was no attacking. I'm only just 5 feet tall, and there was certainly no need for you to call the bouncers over at any point.

At this stage, one of my friends came across to find out what was happening. He put his hand on my arm, and said something along the lines of "Come on, it's not worth it". At this point, your bouncers grabbed him, and grabbed me, and one of them hit me in the face. Still, you said nothing. Now I've got my Personal Licence, and I'm fairly certain that there is no provision for hitting anyone - man, woman - in the face anywhere in the Licensing Laws. Please do correct me if I'm wrong. Just for emphasis, let me repeat: I did not attack you.

One of my other friends then asked one of the bouncers who had removed himself from the fray why we were being thrown out. He said he had no idea. You'll remember her - she's the one you denied ever having met, and said "I wouldn't touch you with a manky woman's cock, you ugly bitch". Admittedly I didn't actually hear you say this, but I have no reason to doubt what she said; while we were stood outside phoning the police to report the behaviour of you and your bouncers, one of your bouncers kept repeatedly shouting across at us "He says he's never fucking met you, and he wouldn't fucking touch you you ugly bitch.". Turns out now that you do remember meeting her, so why deny it at the time?

We were confused about this at the time, and couldn't figure out why. We thought maybe you were embarrassed about the fact that she'd turned you down, and you didn't want your friends to know about it. We moved on and told the police that we didn't want to take things any further than them talking to West Street Live about their behaviour (which to the best of my knowledge they did) - at the time we thought that you were just an arrogant, contemptuous club owner and, after all, West Street Live does anecdotally have a reputation for picking fights with customers. My black eye faded after a week or so, and while I was waiting for it to do so I joined the legions of women who cover up their bruises on a daily basis.

So when I heard that you'd be elected, my first thought was surprise. We had a bit of a laugh about it in the pub ("Guess who the new MP for Sheffield Hallam is! Remember that wazzock who had us thrown out of West Street Live by his bouncers, and they gave me a black eye?"). And then that Saturday morning, when someone alerted me to the rumours about you on the internet, and that song ... I felt physically sick. And the arrogance and the contempt

suddenly made more sense. Did you refuse to speak to me because I was a woman, and you don't like being challenged by women? Did you deny ever having met my friend because she turned you down and challenged you? Do you think that women should be "put in their place" by whatever means necessary, even if this means calling in people who are considerably stronger to do so?

It's been over a month now, and you have still never acknowledged that your past behaviour might possibly be ever so slightly misogynistic. I'm not really expecting a response to this which is why, in the light of Yvette Cooper's excellent speech calling out vitriol the other day, I'm taking the liberty of copying this to some of your colleagues in the hope that somewhere along the line you can acknowledge your behaviour.

For my own part, the negativity and the memories were making me sick. So at the pub we're trying to do something positive by raising money for Women's Aid and Refuge, who both offer vital services to survivors of abuse. Maybe you should talk to them about how unironic a song about domestic violence is.

Liz