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## Laurence Reisman: Q&A with Denise Brown, Nicole Brown Simpson's sister

By Laurence Reisman

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Denise Brown led a relatively normal life until the mid-1990s, when her sister and ex-wife of football star O.J. Simpson was brutally slain, he was acquitted and found liable for her death in a subsequent civil trial.

The Nicole Brown Foundation was founded in 1994 to “provide urgently needed funding to battered women shelters across the country,” according to [NicoleBrown.org](http://NicoleBrown.org). Since 1995, Denise Brown “has continued to raise awareness and educate our communities on domestic violence by speaking and supporting women’s shelters, schools, hospitals, prisons and corporate venues across the country.”

Denise Brown, who will speak on the Treasure Coast later this month, recently answered some questions via e-mail.

Q. Nicole’s death propelled you to become an advocate. What was your life like beforehand?

A. Much quieter. However, I worked my whole life starting at the age of 15. Nicole and I had our very first job together, wrapping flowers for kids who used to stand on street corners selling them.

Q. What was your relationship with O.J. Simpson like?

A. No comment.

Q. At what point did you suspect abuse?

A. After Nicole’s murder in her notes and diaries.

Q. Why are relatives so unwilling to think the worst when they see hints of abuse?

A. If you see one incident you think it’s an isolated incident. You don’t know there is a cycle of domestic violence until you’re educated on that cycle of violence. What can be done to change that? EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION.

Q. Based on your study of abuse, are there character flaws or traits or other hints you think women should be on the lookout for before they get too involved with a partner?

A. There are definite red-flag warning signs. Question relationships with partners who:

Abuse alcohol or other drugs.

Have a history of trouble with the law, get into fights, or break and destroy property.

Don't work or go to school.

Blame you for how they treat you, or for anything bad that happens.

Abuse siblings, other family members, children or pets.

Put down people, including your family and friends, or call them names.

Are always angry at someone or something.

Try to isolate you and control whom you see or where you go.

Nag you or force you to be sexual when you don't want to be.

Cheat on you or have lots of partners.

Are physically rough with you (push, shove, pull, yank, squeeze, restrain).

Take your money or take advantage of you in other ways.

Accuse you of flirting or "coming on" to others or accuse you of cheating on them.

Don't listen to you or show interest in your opinions or feelings ... things always have to be done their way.

Ignore you, give you the silent treatment, or hang up on you.

Lie to you, don't show up for dates, maybe even disappear for days.

Make vulgar comments about others in your presence

Blame all arguments and problems on you.

Tell you how to dress or act.

Threaten to kill themselves if you break up with them, or tell you that they cannot live without you.

Experience extreme mood swings ... tell you you're the greatest one minute and rip you apart the next minute.

Tell you to shut up or tell you you're dumb, stupid, fat or call you some other name (directly or indirectly).

Compare you to former partners.

Q. Do you think penalties should be enhanced for batterers? Any suggestions?

A. YES. Mandatory jail time and mandatory batterer-treatment programs. Restitution paid to shelters.

Q. There's a quote on the Nicole Brown Foundation Web site that says, "It could be said that centuries of a patriarchal privilege have defined a man's relationship to a woman in terms of ownership and entitlement." How strongly, if at all, do you believe that statement? Why?

A. This saying came from England and it's the "Rule of Thumb." If a switch was no wider than your thumb it was OK to use to beat your wife. It doesn't apply in this day and age, thank goodness.

Q. How critical is it that the National Victim Notification Network and the VINE project, which notifies victims when their attackers are released from incarceration, be expanded and/or online? Why?

A. The VINE program is all across the country. It's up to the prisons/jails if they use them. VINE started in Louisville, Ky., because a young girl's boyfriend was released from jail without her knowledge to stalk and kill her. If VINE is not in your community and you have a prison/jail start advocating for it immediately before another person loses their life.

Q. What argument would you make to cash-strapped governments to come up with more funds for abuse-prevention programs?

A. AREN'T HUMAN LIVES IMPORTANT?! I wish they would understand that domestic violence can lead to murder.

IF YOU GO

Denise Brown will be the keynote speaker at SafeSpace's inaugural "Every Woman is My Sister" luncheons.

What: "Every Woman is My Sister" luncheons.

When: March 18, Hutchinson Island Marriott Beach Resort; March 19, Oak Harbor Club, Vero Beach.

To benefit: SafeSpace, the Treasure Coast's only shelter for victims of domestic violence.

For tickets: Call SafeSpace at (772) 223-2399.

For more Treasure Coast opinion, follow Reisman's blog at [tcpalm.com/reisman](http://tcpalm.com/reisman). Contact him at (772) 221-4238 or [laurence.reisman@scripps.com](mailto:laurence.reisman@scripps.com). Facebook: [tinyurl.com/yjottff](http://tinyurl.com/yjottff)



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