

Name: iO Tillett Wright  
Statement: First  
Party: Defendants  
Exhibit: ITW1

Date: 12 December 2019

**Claim No: QB-2018-006323**

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE**

**QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION**

**MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS LIST**

**BETWEEN:**

**John Christopher Depp II**

**Claimant**

**- and -**

**(1) News Group Newspapers Ltd**

**(2) Dan Wootton**

**Defendants**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF iO TILLETT WRIGHT**

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**I, iO Tillett Wright,**

**WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:**

1. I am an author, photographer, TV host and activist.
2. The facts and matters set out in this statement are within my own knowledge unless otherwise stated, and I believe them to be true. Where I refer to information supplied by others, a source of the information is identified. Facts and matters derived from these other sources are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I make this witness statement in support of the Defendants' defence of these proceedings.
3. I first met Amber Heard in 2011 when I was working on a photography project about queer people. Amber has become one of my closest friends.
4. I met Johnny Depp through Amber in 2013. We hit it off immediately. Johnny is really intelligent and can be charming, and we had similar interests in art, books and culture.

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He asked for my number and told me he felt we had an intense, kindred spirit connection. I felt the same way. Johnny and I became close friends; so much so that I came to refer to him as my brother. Johnny also referred to me as part of his family, and his kids called me "Uncle iO." During the time period when Amber, Johnny, and I were the closest, I would sometimes share a bed with one or the other of them – platonically; we were like family. I lived in their family compound on [REDACTED] from about August 2013 through about May 2014, when I was going through a very difficult time personally.

5. My experience of Johnny during the time that we were close – from 2013 through 2015 – was that he could be incredibly kind, generous and loyal – and great fun to be around. But he was sweet and kind until he wasn't – and he could be incredibly mean and vicious, especially when he was drunk or high.

Johnny's drug and alcohol abuse

6. Johnny was very frank with me about his struggles with drugs and alcohol. In late 2013, after a dental surgery, he became hooked on oxycontin. He called the oxycontin "*blue meanies*," because they were blue pills. I saw Johnny abuse oxycontin, and he also spoke to me about his struggles with his addiction to it. During the time I was close to him, he smoked incessantly – he literally has a cigarette or joint permanently connected to his face. Soon after I moved in to [REDACTED] I saw him start drinking hard liquor again. He wouldn't just have one drink; he would have six. Johnny wouldn't do a line of cocaine; he would do twelve – and then keep going, for four days straight. That was the way Johnny was.
7. From October through December 2013, I spent a lot of time with Johnny while Amber was away working. We were very close. In that period, Marilyn Manson was coming over a lot and I would see them doing loads of cocaine. He didn't tell Amber about it. I would talk to him about it and he was like, "*I don't know, I'll know I'll have to stop for Slim, but I don't want to*". Slim was his nickname for Amber.
8. I noticed when I was living at Sweetzer that Johnny would use his fights with Amber as an excuse to drink. If they had an argument, he would get himself a drink and say, "*fuck it, I'm having a fucking drink*". He would drink a lot and Amber would later text me for help in the middle of the night, asking for help to deal with him. This was also witnessed by my girlfriend at the time. I remember having a talk with him about it and told him,

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*“your addiction is a problem and it makes you aggressive”*. When he got drunk, he was a monster – his eyes changed, he got aggressive and nasty. He was really mean and could be so vicious with his insults. I heard him say things to Amber like, *“you think you’re talented, you’re nothing”* or *“you’re a talentless hack and when your tits sag, no one will want to be with you”*.

9. At some point it really tipped over and we became genuinely scared that Johnny might overdose and die. Our concern about this was openly discussed between Amber, myself, our friends and his assistants – and with Johnny himself. Initially, Johnny told me he was going to get clean for Amber. But over time, he became more and more indignant about us raising his substance abuse with him. He and Amber would fight, he could go ballistic and crazy and do a bunch of shit that he often didn’t remember. Then everyone would convince him he needed to get sober – and he would for a week or a month.
10. Towards the end, I believe he started to resent Amber because she represented him being held to his sobriety. He complained to me after another of their fights, sometime in mid 2015, that he knew he had to be *“a good boy, or there would be a fight”* and it was obvious that he resented it. She was trying to save their marriage, and he loved her so he would say *“I’m doing this for you”*. But then he would talk about her being *“his leash”* and stopping him from having his fun. I remember him say to me, *“fuck it, I already have a mum who was a bitch to me; I don’t need another one in my life”*.

### **Johnny’s violence towards Amber**

11. I knew Amber and Johnny’s relationship was volatile and involved a lot of verbal abuse and emotional lashing out. But it wasn’t until late 2013 or early 2014 that I understood that he was physically violent towards her.
12. Amber has since told me she had been keeping Johnny’s physical abuse of her from everyone to protect him because she hoped if they could fix the addiction issues, it would stop. She has said it was also partly out of pride and to protect them both from criticism from us: she was embarrassed about it and knew if she told us, we would tell her to leave him and she wasn’t ready for that. She also had no connection to the concept of herself as a victim so she rejected that as a part of her identity.

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13. I was close to both Amber and Johnny – and I spoke to both of them about their fights and about many of the incidents that I understand are particularly at issue in these proceedings. In late 2015 and 2016, I did not see or speak to Johnny but I remained close to Amber and she told me a lot about what was happening. This is what I recall about the specific incidents in issue in these proceedings.

**Boston-LA flight incident, 24 May 2014**

14. Amber told me that Johnny had kicked her on the plane immediately after it happened. This was a big deal and shocking for her – and for all of us – because it was the first time that he had so shamelessly assaulted her in front of other people. At this point, Amber had already told me that Johnny had physically attacked her on other occasions – I remember the plane incident being an escalation, not a revelation.
15. Amber contacted me when she landed in LA and told me “*something really fucked up and bad*” had happened and asked me to meet her at the Chateau Marmont hotel. I went to meet her there and she explained what happened.
16. Amber told me that Johnny had been drinking on the plane. On the plane were Stephen Deuters, Jerry Judge, Savannah McMillan, and perhaps one or two others, along with Amber and Johnny. She said Johnny was taunting her and saying all kinds of demeaning things to her in front of everyone. Amber said she was trying to ignore him by reading, but he was throwing things at her. When she tried to walk past him, he kicked her so hard that her leg buckled and she fell. She said she was horrified that he did this in front of other people, and it really broke her trust in him. She was really upset and shaken by it. She told me she was ignoring Johnny’s messages, and, I don’t remember how, but somehow she knew that he didn’t remember what had happened, and he didn’t know where she was. She told me she went to the hotel because she didn’t feel safe going home and did not want to see him.
17. Since we were only two blocks from his house on [REDACTED] I asked her if she wanted me to go and talk to him and she said, “*yes, please talk some sense into him*”, and so I did.
18. When I got to his house, I first encountered his staff who were there so I spoke with them first. I remember speaking to Stephen Deuters and I asked him if Johnny had really

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kicked her and he said *"yeah, he did and it was really fucked"*. They said he was sleeping it off – sleeping off whatever he had done on the plane.

19. I went to Johnny's bedroom to talk to him. Either he woke up or I woke him up, and I said *"Johnny, do you know what is going on?"* He told me he didn't. I said *"you kicked her on the plane in front of everyone"*. He said *"no, no I didn't; are you serious?!"*. He was horrified at himself. And I said *"yeah, you did. This is what happens when you drink"*. He broke down in tears sitting in his bed and swore he wasn't going to do it again. He said, *"What kind of a man am I? . . . Oh my god, I can't believe I did that to my Slim, my love"*. I told it to him straight, that Amber was really upset and did not want to be near him and said, *"you kicked her in front of all these people and made fun of her about it; so demeaning"*. He appeared mortified.
20. We talked about it and I told him that *"you are going to lose your girl and your dignity if you don't make serious changes"*. I think Dr Kipper had been floating around as an option before this, but Johnny hadn't yet committed to doing the work. I said, *"you have to make this happen; you have to get sober because the monster is too hideous for this love to survive otherwise"*. And he said, *"I'll do it; I'll do whatever it takes"*.
21. I went back to the Chateau to look after Amber. I remember her being really embarrassed and shaken. She told me she was struggling with the fact that this man who she loved so deeply, and who loved her so deeply, had demeaned and physically assaulted her – and in front of other people. She was shaken and did not want to be alone, or anywhere near Johnny. So I suggested we go to New York for a few days – and we did.
22. In this period, Amber came to Al-Anon meetings (for families and friends of alcoholics) with me to help her cope. She talked to my Dad and his wife Nicole, who were giving her advice and guidance about how to deal with being the wife of an addict and how to emotionally deal with the pain, disappointment and the betrayal of what people do when they are high. She was even reading books about it; all so she could help Johnny and make sense of what had happened.
23. Johnny was in Boston filming and reached out to me, saying *"I am so sorry, please help me get my girl back."* Johnny was contacting me while we were in New York, trying to convince me of his intention to get clean and that he would fix things; I think because he

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thought by appealing to me – as one of her best friends – it would help him win back Amber. He told me he had demeaned his own character and that it was beneath him to do that to someone he loved so much; that words wouldn't suffice to explain how sorry he was; that he was sorry that he had let himself get so out of control and that he could do that to her. He talked about the monster, saying "*it wasn't me; it was the monster*". I said to him "*I know; I know where your heart is, but this is what you do when you drink and get high. You need to stop getting fucked up*". I kept saying to him that we believed in him and his ability to get sober, but I also said "*the forgiveness needs to come from your girl*".

24. I remember he came to New York and bought her this crazily expensive diamond bracelet and basically begged her to come back and that he would do anything it takes because he couldn't lose her. She didn't care about the bracelet, she cared about him. They started talking and he told her he was going to get sober and told her he had been sober on the set in Boston. Amber and I asked Johnny's security guard, Jerry Judge, whether it was true and he said it was, that Johnny had not been drinking. Johnny also said that Dr Kipper was brought in and he was starting treatment. I know this was a big selling point for Amber that convinced her to take him back; in fact I think she might have even said it was a pre-condition: it was the only thing that was going to save their relationship – and save his life.
25. I left them alone to talk and they worked it out. We met later that night for dinner and it had a tentatively celebratory vibe: our message to Johnny was "*we believe in you; you can do this and we will support you to do this*". But I continued to be worried for Amber.
26. It was after the plane incident that Johnny's violence toward Amber was more openly discussed between all three of us. Johnny would often apologise to me about how he treated Amber and would often reach out to me to try to convince me he was sorry and would fix things, as part of his efforts to win her back and ask me to pass on his apology to her.
27. When he was sober, he was horrified by what he had done to Amber. He would apologise, saying things to me like "I've really fucked up and I've got to make this right with my girl". He would make all these promises about fixing it and getting sober. I even believed him for a while – so I could understand why Amber stayed initially: when he got sober, he could be so clear-eyed about it. It was hard not to believe that if he stayed

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sober, he would remain the kind, wonderful Johnny. We all loved him and wanted him to get better.

### **Wedding**

28. I attended Amber and Johnny's wedding in the Bahamas in February 2015 as Amber's best man. The first thing Johnny said to me after the ceremony, as we walked to the reception, was "*now I can punch her in the face and no one can do anything about it*". He probably intended it as a joke, but it is only a joke if it's not real – and by then I knew he was hitting her.

### **Australia, 2015**

29. Within days of Amber and Johnny's return to LA from Australia, I heard about what had happened there. I spoke to them both about it.
30. Amber said that there was a huge fight and Johnny had partially severed his own finger and dipped it in paint and written all over the walls with his own blood and paint while having some sort of jealous freak-out. She said it had started about him accusing her of having an affair with Billy-Bob Thornton.
31. I also remember seeing cuts on her arms; thin slashes down her arms.
32. Johnny had to have a number of reconstructive surgeries on that finger. I talked to him about it one day in this period before he returned to Australia to finish filming. I asked "*what the fuck happened to your finger?*" He replied, "*honestly, I have no idea.*" He expressed that he and Amber had had a massive fight during which he had somehow partially cut off his finger. He said, "*Kid, I fucked up big.*" There was certainly no suggestion made at that time that Amber had caused his injury.
33. The last time I remember confronting Johnny about his addiction and about physically hurting Amber was some point after the Australia incident. I remember Amber calling me late because she and Johnny had a huge fight. I went over to the [REDACTED]. She was in bed, weeping and Rocky Pennington was comforting her. Johnny had gone back to [REDACTED] so I went over there to talk to him.

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**Los Angeles, 15 December 2015**

34. I was in Cincinnati filming a TV show. I remember getting a text from Amber. I was immediately worried about her. I cannot remember her exact words, and no longer have access to the text message, but she conveyed to me clearly that Johnny had beat her up badly. I told her I would get on the first flight back that I could get.
35. I was supposed to return home the next day, but I asked the production crew to bring my flight forward so I could leave as soon as filming was over that evening.
36. I remember Amber saying she was booked to do a television show. I remember having an exchange with her saying, "*can you get out of it?*" She said she couldn't get out of it, but that Melanie Inglessis (her make-up artist and friend) and Jodi Gottlieb, her publicist, were going to go with her.
37. I was on the plane flying back – with Delta – and they showed the James Corden Show, so I watched it on the plane. I noticed immediately, because I know her so well, that her lips and her face were swollen and she was not herself. I thought "*Oh shit, whatever happened was not good.*"
38. When I arrived in LA, I went straight to the [REDACTED] from the airport. Amber was still in her outfit from the show and she was in the kitchen with Rocky and maybe someone else. She had full makeup on but she was distraught. She looked emotionally crushed. She showed me the part of her scalp where a clump of hair had been pulled out and that her lip was hurt.
39. I asked Amber to tell me what happened. This is what I remember she told me. She described Johnny dragging her up the stairs by the hair; he pushed her face down into the bed in penthouse 4 while he punched her in the back of the head repeatedly. She told me he pushed her face so hard into the bed that she was afraid she was going to suffocate and she was going to die. Her voice broke recalling the fear, and she cried. She said she somehow got out of it and managed to stand up, they were then both on their feet and he headbutted her straight in the face. She said "*I'm not sure if he broke my nose*", but she said he used the full force of his body to headbutt her in the centre of her face.

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40. I remember for me this was a turning point in my feelings about him. I remember thinking, I don't know how this is supposed to continue after this.
41. I saw the aftermath too. I saw a clump of hair on the floor. It looked to be blonde, long hair that looked like Amber's length and colour of hair. I saw a wine spill or stain of some kind, like a bottle of wine had been spilt.
42. I went up to the bedroom to look around at some point and I saw blood on her pillow where she had slept. I remember my heart breaking because I knew then how bad it had gotten— it was just undeniable. There were no excuses to be made for him anymore. For me, it suddenly went from, *"I'm a child of addicts who has a lot of rope for behaviour that you're not in control of"*, to *"I don't care what caused this because nothing ever can make this ok."*
43. She told me she had felt that she had to go ahead with the James Corden show because it was too late to pull out. I remember her telling me Melanie, her make-up artist, had to cover her injuries with make-up. She told me she had collapsed crying onto Samantha McMillan's shoulder when she arrived to help her get ready and dress her.
44. Amber clearly appeared to me to be rattled. She said she couldn't reconcile being in love with someone who had been so violent towards her.
45. I asked her if she would be open to reporting him to the police. She said, *"I don't want to get him in trouble"* and *"what about his kids?"* – she was still trying to protect him and didn't want his kids to know he was doing this. At that point, the idea of making it public was still so unthinkable for her. I told her that her safety was more important, but she kept saying it would destroy him and she didn't want to do it. It was as if she felt guilty about taking action to protect herself if it meant causing harm to him. We talked about it and the understanding was, as soon as you call the police it will be the front page of every magazine around the world, and it would destroy him and destroy his career. She really did not want to do that.
46. I left LA after this happened because I had to go back to film. By this point, Johnny and I were not friends. I told Amber that I did not feel comfortable with her being alone with him.

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### **Bahamas, Christmas 2015**

47. As per usual, after the 15 December incident, Johnny resurfaced and made a huge show of contrition and that he wanted to try again, promising it wouldn't happen again. She was supposed to go to the island for Christmas with her family and Rocky's family. I told her that she had to put her foot down and not go on holiday with him after what had happened because she was not safe. We talked about it and she was concerned about letting people down.
48. I told her – *"you cannot go – he might kill you."* I explained to her that the Johnny I knew and loved would not hurt her, but he was not in control of his faculties and who knew what he would do next, given what had earlier in the month. Besides that, I told her the fact of her going would send him the message that what he did was acceptable, which was not okay.
49. I also spoke to Rocky and the others about it. I said, *"This is not casual violence – this is extreme. And none of you should condone it, by going with him on this holiday."* They all agreed not to go in solidarity.
50. But Johnny was still going with his kids. In the end, he convinced Amber to go. She told me she was heartbroken about not spending Christmas with him and about letting down the kids, Lily-Rose and Jack. She said something to the effect of *"I'm too weak willed"* (to leave him). I said, *"you're out of your fucking mind"*. I told her it was crazy to go with him to a private island, where there are no police and literally no one there who was not on his payroll or been flown there by him. The nearest help was a plane ride away. It was the worst possible situation and I was really worried about her. I went to see her before she left and pleaded with her not to go. She said, basically *"I appreciate your concern but I'm going to give him one more chance"*. It was as if she was suffering Stockholm syndrome. She texted me something I don't exactly recall about being too weak to break the tie.
51. I was really concerned about her being on the private island with him. Rocky was too – she also felt conflicted: she didn't want to go on the trip and condone Johnny's behaviour but she also didn't want her going on her own. Rocky and I spoke regularly, checking in to see whether one or the other had heard from her. We were genuinely concerned that something exceptionally bad might happen on the island.

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52. Sometime after this, in late January 2016, Amber and I took a trip together to Palm Springs. I don't remember exactly what was happening but things were getting even worse between them – and his addiction was in full force. I just said, *"let's get out of here"* and we drove up to Palm Springs.
53. When we were in the car, it was the first time I heard her express an awareness that their relationship had to end. She explained she was having a really hard time with the heartbreak, the embarrassment of how recent their marriage was and that it had already fallen apart, and the breaking of the dream of having kids together. She was having a really hard time of letting that go. She talked about wanting kids with him, but we also talked about how she did not want to have children with an addict.
54. She cried a lot on that trip.

#### **Amber's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday party**

55. I was not at Amber's birthday party on 21 April 2016, but I was told about it the next day, when I met up with Amber, Rocky, Whitney, and Melanie in Palm Springs to celebrate Amber's birthday. Amber told me that Johnny had turned up late and drunk and/or high to her birthday dinner, which led to another fight in which he physically attacked her.
56. Amber didn't see him for the next month. I remember in that month Amber was just devastated, suffering from the heartbreak of knowing that she had to leave him and anxious about the impending rupture that would cause.

#### **Los Angeles, 21 May 2016**

57. I was in New York at this time for my aunt's wedding and staying at my brother's house. I was walking home late that night when Amber and I got on the phone. She said, *"I am here with Johnny and he has something he wants to ask you"*. At this point, I hadn't spoken to Johnny for a while and he didn't want to talk to me. My immediate reaction was surprise and concern that she might get hurt. My first response was *"why is he there? are you ok?"* and she said, *"its ok, we are just talking"*. She said she wanted me to help her calm him down about something and assure him it was not true. She put me on speaker phone and explained that they had been talking about a theory that Johnny has and said, *"I just need you to address a theory that Johnny has about something he thinks we did."*

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58. Then she said, *"Johnny believes that you and I together shit on his pillow on our way to Palm Springs"*. I was like *"what did you just say?!"* She started laughing, and so did I, it was just so absurd.
59. The backstory to this – though this was the first time I had heard of it – was that the morning after her birthday party, the cleaner had found poop in the bed Amber and Johnny shared at the [REDACTED]. Somehow, Johnny got it in his head that it was a prank that Amber and I had together played on him to demean him.
60. It was just so ridiculous. First, Amber is fecal phobic: this was just not a prank that she would ever pull. Second, I was not even at the [REDACTED] at the time – and that's before you think about why she would put poop in her own bed where, at that point, he was not even staying in order to get him back for something. It made no sense, on so many levels. There was also a rational explanation: their dog Boo pooped everywhere, all the time, including in the bed, twice on my pillow – and once on Johnny while he was sitting in a chair. The dog has faulty bowels. She still does to this day.
61. I laughed and said something like *"well, my friend, I wasn't even there so unless I have POOP-PS, that's not possible."* He had never verbally abused me before, but my laughing seemed to antagonise him. He said, *"Oh yeah go ahead and laugh at me, you tricksters together"* and got really aggressive. I said *"Woah, bro – hold up, you were my brother until this shit started"*. Then he said something like *"You're in my bed with my woman; don't you like sleeping in my bed?"*. I was like, *"I have slept in your bed many times, with you in it too."*
62. He then goes in on me and I was like – *"okay dude, enough."* Amber then said, *"don't go in on iO, cut it out"*. Then I could hear him banging around, slamming things in the background. He was shouting at us about stupid shit we had laughed about together in the past, accusing us of having an affair, which never happened.
63. I said to Amber *"You need to get out of the house because you aren't safe there"*. Amber replied, *"its ok, he just went upstairs; he's just embarrassed because his perspective is embarrassing. He is just getting his things and is going back to [REDACTED] – its fine"*.
64. But then I heard him come back downstairs. I don't remember the exact sequence, because it happened quickly. I stayed on the phone because I was worried about her. I

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think I said something like, "*get out of there*", which he didn't like. He said something to the effect of "*Oh you think I'm going to hit you?!*"

65. Then I heard something that sounded as if the phone had dropped on the floor, and Amber yelled. I heard her pick up the phone and she said, "*he just fucking threw the phone in my face*". Then she shouted at him, "*you just threw the phone in my fucking face*". She even said something like "*he wound it up as a baseball and threw it at me*"; and "*oh my god, that really fucking hurt*". He said, "*you think I fucking hurt you? What if I fucking peel [or pull] your hair back? That will fucking hurt*".
66. I heard her drop the phone and scream, telling him to stop. I was still on speaker phone. I freaked out and said "*I'm calling the police.*" She said something to the effect of "*do it*" or "*call the police*".
67. I hung up with Amber and made several calls and texts in an attempt to help her. I called 911. I contacted Rocky, who lived next door, and told her to get over there right away. I called my friend Lauren Shapiro, who was in LA at the time and so could make a local emergency call, and asked her to call 911 and have police sent over to the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to Johnny and Amber's apartment. I was concerned the patch in from NYPD to LAPD would take too long. Lauren let me know she had called the police and they would be on their way.
68. After a little while Rocky got word to me that Johnny had left, that Amber was okay and that the police had come.
69. I spoke to Amber briefly before I could sleep and she said that the police had come and they asked her to file a report. I said "*did you?*" she said "no" and I said "*what the fuck?*". She said, "*think about his kids.*" I said "*what the fuck?*" She said "*I know I know, I called my lawyer and she advised me not to*" and I told her I thought "*that was fucking dumb*".
70. But she said it was clear to her that it was over. I encouraged her to get the restraining order and change the locks because we were worried he was going to come back and hurt her. She was very concerned that it was his house but he had asked her to give up her own apartment that she'd kept for years, so she had nowhere to go.

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### **Aftermath**

71. Once the fact that Amber sought a restraining order was out in the media, I heard that Johnny was denying that he had physically abused Amber. Before that time, he had owned up to it, at least to those of us in their inner circle. So I was shocked by the grandiosity of his denials.
72. It is surprising to me that Amber – and her friends who knew about this, myself included – are now being accused of lying. At the time, there was no nuance to the situation. There was no question of whether or not he was beating her. Nathan Holmes and Stephen Deuters, Johnny's assistants, Jerry Judge, Malcolm, many of the security team, her therapist, the doctor, the nurses, her makeup artist who covered up her injuries, Kevin, her inner circle of friends all knew about it – it was not a matter of "*is this happening?*", it was more "*how do we deal with this situation?*".
73. Amber fast became acquainted with what it meant to take an accusation against a powerful man. To her horror and dismay, she wasn't believed – she was accused of lying and being a gold-digger despite pictures, witnesses, and the fact that she wasn't asking for any money. She was devastated.
74. Amber asked family and friends to speak up for her character. That is when I wrote this Refinery 29 article about supporting her through this which is exhibited at ITW1.

### **Conclusion**

75. It was heart breaking to learn about Johnny's violence towards Amber. I loved Johnny and I didn't want to believe it either until I saw the wreckage – that this sometimes gentle, kind and protective person could be capable of violence. My heart ached for the tender, generous man who was inside all of this rage. But whether we loved him or not was irrelevant at this point: his behaviour was unforgiveable. I called him my brother, which meant that I also had to call him out. And to call the police when I knew Amber was at risk.
76. Johnny destroyed their world by being an addict. He hurts in his own skin. I worry he is going to destroy himself and everyone around him because he thinks he is going to go down anyway.

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77. Amber had already been through hell before she petitioned for divorce and obtained the domestic violence restraining order. Since then, there has been a campaign of victim-blaming run against her by Johnny’s people – and more broadly in the media – accusing her of being a liar, an abuser, guilty of “*an elaborate hoax*” or that she made the accusation just to get attention. Every battered woman watching what Amber has gone through has the message reinforced that if they come forward, they won’t be believed and will be blamed. This has to stop.
78. Women who have the courage and strength to get out of violent relationships and speak about it should be supported, not sued for speaking about their experiences.

**STATEMENT OF TRUTH**

I believe that the facts set out in this statement are true.



**iO Tillett Wright**

12 December 2019

Name: iO Tillett Wright  
Statement: First  
Party: Defendants  
Exhibit: ITW1

Date: 12 December 2019

**Claim No: QB-2018-006323**

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE**

**QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION**

**MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS LIST**

**BETWEEN:**

**John Christopher Depp II**

**Claimant**

**-and-**

**(1) News Group Newspapers Ltd**

**(2) Dan Wootton**

**Defendants**

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**EXHIBIT ITW1**

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# Why I Called 911

IO TILLET WRIGHT

8 JUNE 2016, 16:00



E140



ILLUSTRATED BY TRISTAN OFFIT

I called 911 because she never would. Because every time it happened, her first thought was about protecting him. Because every time it happened, the sweet, loving man we all cared for so much would come back with apologies, profuse, swearing up and down that he understood how bad what he had done was, and swearing never to do it again. We all loved him, but especially, especially her, and she wanted to believe that the behaviour wasn't going to last.

The reports of violence started with a kick on a private plane, then it was shoves and the

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occasional punch, until finally, in December, she described an all-out assault and she woke up with her pillow covered in blood. I know this because I went to their house. I saw the pillow with my own eyes. I saw the busted lip and the clumps of hair on the floor. I got the phone call immediately after it happened, her screaming and crying, a stoic woman reduced to sobs.

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I understood her heartbreak. He had been my friend, too, a person I loved very much. A person I had once referred to as a brother. A person with whom I had laughed at the absurdity of the media and their spicy claims about my role in their family. A person who came to my rescue in my darkest hour, who I have credited with saving my own life, who I lived with for a year by his invitation while I healed and worked. I knew him to be soft and gentle, with a temper and a dark side, but a golden heart. I didn't want to believe it either, until I saw the wreckage.

When you call someone your brother, you also commit to calling them out when they are wrong. As she, shaking and crying, described this 195-pound man throwing the full weight of his body

into head-butting his 120-pound wife in the face in a fit of rage, I found that an unforgivable line in my heart had been crossed.

I witnessed firsthand the absolutely baffling mental pretzel that an abused person puts themselves into, trying to balance the desire to protect their aggressor, with the knowledge that their swollen face is unacceptable. I listened as she cycled through things she could've possibly done to provoke him, or how she could've made him upset enough to do this.

“

**We say domestic violence is bad, we condemn it. But as a culture, we create the most fertile breeding ground for it to thrive.**

”

I sat and listened, my own heart aching because I had so much care for the tender, generous man inside of all this rage, and yet...the bottom, unequivocal line is, nothing she ever could have said or done deserves what she describes as him dragging her up the stairs by the hair, punching her in the back of the head, choking her until she almost passed out, and smashing his forehead into her nose until it almost broke.

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We say domestic violence is bad, we condemn it. But as a culture, we create the most fertile breeding ground for it to thrive. The cycle of abuse is perpetuated by every person who asserts that the victim more likely punched themselves rather than addressing the very real evidence of violence in front of them. The culture of victim-blaming is the very thing that protects abusers' ability to get away with this kind of behaviour.

Right now, every battered woman in the world is watching this media circus, internalising the message that when they come forward for help, when they break the cycle, they will be called a gold digger, a cheater, and be accused of having faked it all for attention.

I'm looking at every journalist, every editor, every person who puts a comment on an article pointing an uneducated finger. You are the lynch mob. You are a deafening chorus. Your searching for an explanation for why he would have hit her sends the clear message that there CAN be a reason why someone hits their spouse.

It doesn't matter what was said between the two lovers, it doesn't matter if the romance was

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coming to an end, because nothing warrants that response. No person, ever, should suffer violence at the hands of the person they love.

I watched a woman with a broken spirit go on national television the next night, covered in makeup, smiling through a bloody lip, who nearly jumped out of her seat when someone casually put a hand on her shoulder because she didn't know what was coming.

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That's why, when it happened again, when I was on the phone with both of them and heard it drop, heard him say, "What if I pulled your hair back?" and her scream for my help, I wondered like so many times before if I should break the code of silence that surrounds celebrities and invite the police into the situation, and in a split second decided that, yes, I was going to. Because I realised that as long as I was protecting the abuser from consequences, I was enabling the abuse and I could no longer partake. I had to stand up for my friend, and for what I believe in my gut to be the code of conduct by which human beings have to behave with each other.

Whether we loved him or not has nothing to do with it. When it comes to violence, "love" is no

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longer part of the equation.

*iO Tillett Wright is an artist, writer, and activist.*

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CELEBRITY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE 911 CALL FOR ABUSED FRIEND

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