

## **STRONG VOICE AGAINST ABUSE DETROIT DEEJAY FRANKIE DARCELL TELLS HER SIDE OF A STORMY, VIOLENT MARRIAGE**

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After three years of healing, radio personality Frankie Darcell is telling the story of her stormy marriage and divorce. She hopes it will help other women walk away from bad relationships.

Darcell, WJLB-FM's popular deejay and afternoon host of the Talk of the Town listener call-in show, has written a book, "A Story to Tell." It chronicles her rise in the radio industry, her five-year marriage to Edward Foxworth III, executive director of the Detroit Police Athletic League (PAL), her divorce and the trials of single motherhood.

"This is a way to encourage and empower women who have dealt with domestic **abuse** and the challenge of single motherhood," said Darcell.

Darcell's book has only one chapter in which the domestic violence she suffered is detailed. But that time of her life was a defining period during which she grew to love herself, became **strong** and found inner peace, she said.

In interviews, Darcell criticized the prosecution of Foxworth, who pleaded guilty to domestic violence after telling Detroit Police Department internal affairs officers that he slapped his wife four times during an argument in July 1996 as their marriage was crumbling.

Foxworth, who declined comment, told investigators that Darcell pushed him over the edge during an argument. He said she stalked him from room to room in their townhouse in Detroit's Cultural Center neighborhood after he told her that he was planning to move out. Foxworth's divorce attorney, Ralph Richardson, also declined comment.

But Darcell portrays herself as a battered wife whose final closed-fist beating occurred when she was nine months pregnant with Foxworth's child.

Now Darcell says she only wants her 3-year-old daughter, Phallon, to have her father in her life. Foxworth has had no interaction with the girl. A year ago, any claim of custody for Phallon was terminated at Darcell's request.

Darcell, who is in her 30s, said she has begged Foxworth to visit his daughter, but he refuses. Darcell said her parents were divorced yet her father still played an active role in her life, spending so much time it seemed he still lived at home.

Darcell said that although she wants Foxworth to visit her daughter, she would allow it only if she or her mother were present. She said she'd allow independent visits later if a relationship developed.

"Now that she's talking, people are going to ask her about the Big D," Darcell said, meaning Daddy. "I keep his pictures in her scrapbook and tell her daily that your daddy loves you and you'll get a chance to talk to him and see him."

Good gone bad

Darcell and Foxworth were married Oct. 10, 1992, in Charlotte, N.C. Darcell said they met through friends.

"I believe we were madly in love our first few years of marriage," she said. "We met, dated and married all in a little over a year.... We had a good marriage when it was good, but when it was bad, it was bad."

The couple moved to Detroit in 1992 after she got a job at WJLB. He began working for PAL in February 1996. Darcell said their marriage was not unusual, except that he occasionally hit her when he was angry.

"It bothers me because I should have done something then and I didn't," Darcell said. "I have to hold myself accountable.... If we really loved ourselves, the day the man hits you, you would walk."

The final argument sent Darcell to Bon Secours Hospital in Grosse Pointe for treatment. Foxworth told investigators that his wife called him names, badgered him and provoked the slaps.

"I pushed her back on the bed and she stood up and pushed me back," Foxworth told investigators. "At that time, it just seemed appropriate for me to tell her that I was going to be out of her life and getting into this kind of back and forth was not going to do any good. As a result of her continuing to be in my face, I kinda let that push a button for me and I hit her."

Darcell's description is quite different. In her book, she writes:

"Nothing could have prepared me for the night of July 11, 1996, while nine months pregnant, a petty argument between my husband and I resulted in my laying on my back with the man that I loved and married standing over me, all 6 feet 4 inches of him with closed fist, beating me while I was carrying his child...."

Foxworth filed for divorce in April 1997, nearly a year after he had moved out of their home. He sought temporary care and visitation rights for Phallon and agreed to pay \$117 a week in child support, divorce records show.

But Darcell said he never came to see Phallon. As a result, she successfully petitioned the Wayne County Friend of the Court to terminate his parental rights.

Still, if Foxworth called tomorrow, Darcell would allow him to see their daughter -- if her mother or she were present.

## The blue wall of silence

Foxworth's criminal file for the misdemeanor guilty plea could not be located by clerks in the 36th District Court records room. According to a computer summary of the file, Foxworth was arraigned, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to one year of probation and counseling, all on the same day. After the year, a judge dismissed the charge.

Court officials said they couldn't explain why the file was missing. It would not have been routinely removed because of the dismissal.

But Henry Baskin, a Birmingham attorney and expert in domestic violence, said judges often clear criminal records if a defendant completes counseling and stays away from spouse or partner for a year.

Darcell said former Detroit Police Chief Isaiah McKinnon told her he did not want the case to go public because he would then have to fire Foxworth.

McKinnon disagreed.

"I had conversations with Ms. Darcell and I was emphatic and concerned about the allegations she was making," McKinnon said Thursday. "At no time did I imply, indicate or state to her that this matter should not go public."

In fact, he noted, it was prosecuted and therefore went public.

McKinnon said that when he was chief he formed the department's first domestic violence unit.

He suggested that Darcell's allegations may be connected with marketing her book.

Cmdr. Marvin Winkler, chief of staff for Detroit Police Chief Benny Napoleon, said Foxworth is employed by the PAL board of directors and that his salary comes out of PAL's budget.

## A better life

In the downtown studio of WJLB in the Penobscot Building, music blasts and Darcell has her own dance party. As she works the control board, she bobs her head to the music. Her favorite song is Sunshine by Coko, the former lead singer of Sisters with **Voices**, an R&B group. The song tells of a woman meeting the man of her dreams.

As Talk of the Town host, Darcell often discusses relationships between men and women. Some listeners call her a man basher.

No way, said Darcell. In fact, she's dating someone whom she said she hopes someday will play a father role for Phallon.

At a book signing at Apple Books in Detroit last week, Darcell greeted her audience with hugs. She made the women introduce themselves and began a conversation with her new friends.

She talked about her battle with domestic violence. Every 16 minutes, she told the audience, a woman is abused somewhere in the U.S.

"We can measure the physical violence -- imagine if we could measure the psychological violence," Darcell said.

Even after her last bout with Foxworth, she told the group, she didn't want a divorce, but "he decided to get out and it was probably the best thing that ever happened to me."

During the bookstore conversation, another woman talked about her abusive ex-husband to the roomful of strangers. Later, there was praise for Darcell.

"I listen to her every day on the way from work," said LaCarla Evans, 26, a Ford engineer who moved to Southfield three years ago. "She really represents black females...."

"I was shocked to learn that she was abused, but I guess sometimes you have to go through the bad to become **stronger** ."

Another woman in the group, Karla Hill, 24, works for a domestic violence shelter in Detroit. Hill, who asked that her shelter not be named, said Darcell's **voice** on domestic violence will benefit listeners and Darcell.

"I wouldn't say that I thought she was above it, but she put on a good game face," said Hill.

#### Home life

For now, Darcell is content living with her daughter and her 63-year-old mother, Rosa Blanding, who moved to Detroit from Virginia to help care for Phallon. Grandmother and granddaughter travel to Virginia every four to six weeks to visit the extended family. Blanding's mother, sister and brothers live in Norfolk.

"My mother is the best husband I could have ever had," Darcell said.

Blanding said her three sons take extra time with Phallon, to fill in as father figures.

"They want her to have that male involvement so they are very, very close," she said.

Darcell said she is setting examples for Phallon, in hopes that she will grow up to be a **strong** woman. She hopes to give Phallon the skills to never allow a man to **abuse** her, emotionally or physically.

"Phallon is not the first child whose father is absent, and she won't be the last," Darcell said. "I am not the first single mother, and I will not be the last. But the emotional and psychological health of a child is the most important thing. I want to give my daughter the world."

"A Story to Tell" is at local bookstores for \$14.95. It is coauthored by Julius Justice and published by World Wide Publications.

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Caption: Photo WILLIAM ARCHIE/Detroit Free Press

Frankie Darcell carries daughter Phallon, 3, while her mother, Rosa Blanding, watches in their Detroit home. Phallon's father is Edward Foxworth III of the Police Athletic League. Frankie Darcell signs a copy of her book during a recent visit to a bookstore on Detroit's Kennedy Square.

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