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David Sexton *The Viewer*

One woman's brave fight for change, and to prove No really did mean No



Japan's Secret Shame BBC2, 9pm

★★★★☆

FROM where we sit, it's easy to assume that #MeToo has had a similar impact all around the developed world. Far from it. In Japan, the response to the Harvey Weinstein revelations last October was "muted", this documentary tells us.

"A lot of women here are, like: 'What? Groped? Not sexually assaulted? Not raped? You're upset about being groped, or having someone try to pressure you into having sex? Like, that's your level of outrage? That's nothing, that's our daily lives'," says crime reporter Jake Adelstein.

In fact, in Japan, #MeToo has been re-cast as #WeToo Japan, as a way of showing solidarity — because it is so difficult for individual women in Japan to come forward and say #MeToo.

One who has had the courage to do just that is the journalist Shiori Ito — and this moving, flowing documentary, directed by Erica Jenkin, tells her story, revealing how painful the consequences for her have been.

In 2015, Shiori, 25, met well-known TV foreign correspondent Noriyuki Yamaguchi, 48, at a restaurant in Tokyo, to discuss a possible internship. She remembers feeling dizzy, going to the bathroom, and nothing after. "I woke up with this intense pain — the first thing maybe I say is *itai*, it hurts — he didn't stop." She realised she was in a hotel room. "I was confused, I didn't know what had happened, how I got there." She tried to find her clothes but he pushed her on the bed again. "I tried to fight but he was quite strong. I wasn't able to get any air. He was on top of me

and I couldn't breathe. I thought: 'This is it, I'm going to die here'."

She suspects she had been drugged

but she has no proof. Yamaguchi maintains she was conscious and consenting. In Japan, the concept of consent remains elastic. "In Japan, no means yes," says a campaigner.

Yamaguchi says Shiori was drunk, as if that were justification enough. On a TV chat show, unabashed, he says "really, she got herself drunk — I had no choice but to take her to my hotel to rest a while". The older men on either side of him nod agreement. One says: "I hate drunk women, especially if they vomit. You did well to put up with that. I'd have hated that."

Shiori and Yamaguchi exchanged emails in the following days. "You had

sex with me while I was unconscious," she accused him. "I think we both need to reflect," he replied. "I was also quite drunk and when a beautiful woman like you got into my bed half-naked, things happened." He denied there had been rape and said if she wanted to fight it legally, there was no way she'd win.

He was right. Although evidence from a taxi driver and the hotel's CCTV supported her claim that she had been incapable. Yamaguchi has never been arrested or indicted for a crime. Shiori has now launched a civil case against him for damages.

In May last year Shiori went public with her story, a shocking step to take in Japan, opposed by her own family. Much of the reaction was hostile, including from other women. She was told that a Japanese person wouldn't talk about that in public; that she must be a prostitute; to "go back to Korea". But others expressed support and she

has become a figurehead for change.

She speaks affectingly about her fight. She was brought up to endure and not complain. "Being enduring, being patient about this pain, being silenced, keeping this thing into yourself, I don't think has helped."

Despite the cost, speaking out has been better than being silenced, she concludes. Let's hear her.

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Lonely struggle: Shiori Ito's decision to go public was opposed by her family and prompted a hostile reaction from many women