

The voicemails you're about to hear contain intense and sometimes emotionally challenging material. Listeners are encouraged to attend to their own wellbeing in the service of engaging bravely and honestly with these stories. Voices have been pitched and identifiers removed in order to protect the speaker.

DAKOTA: Welcome to The Left Ear podcast. Before we begin, I wonder if you would be willing to listen from your heart. Can you take what you know and believe and represent and gently set it aside? Can you be a neutral and safe place for these voices to be heard? When you listen to a poem, you don't listen with logic. You listen with your entire being. You let it find its place in you. Here, I wonder if you can attempt poetic listening. To the listener. thank you for being here. To the speaker. we hear you. We witness you.

SPEAKER 1: Um, my story is basically that, um, I endured lots of sexual abuse at the age of 17. And like many girls, you kind of feel a bit lost. But in my situation, because I am, um, a Muslim and I'm Arabic, not really the Muslim part has anything to do with it, but because our cultural, I wasn't really able to talk about it. And because of that, I brushed it under the rug and now at 25, I'm still kind of dealing with the outcome. And I'm addressing this I think. Um, it needs to be addressed. And I think that a lot of girls, especially even in Arab countries, and in other cultures, they do experience a lot of things and they're told to not by others, but even by themselves to just not speak up because it's just not right or you don't want to hurt anybody or it's embarrassing. And that's what happened to me. So instead I had decided to go and, get married because that was the right thing to do in the fall of my life. Then I got married, and now that I've decided to get divorced, my son is stuck there. And all of this, it's all because I, I couldn't speak because I didn't believe that women were equal. And I feel like women do have the right and I feel like if the story were shared, the millions of other Arab girls that I'm sure have been through this around the country, even other different cultures that were able to go, um, you know that they're not alone, that it happens to other people. Thank you.

SPEAKER 2: Thank you for telling women's stories similar to Christine Blossy Ford. It happened in college. I didn't tell anybody. Not my roommates, not my parents, not anybody. Um, I was one of the lucky ones. I got away, I was not raped. I've been married for 20 years and I told my husband last week and I made sure I was never in a position for that to happen again. Um, I didn't tell anybody because society told me it was my fault. I had a crush on this boy and I went to, um, I certainly didn't ask to be assaulted, but I did go. And so society told me that this was my fault and so I never spoke up about it because I believed it was my fault. So I am pretty sure that I'm not the only one. Um, I am 50 years old, so this happened quite a long time ago. Um, but this was not my fault and thank you for telling everybody's stories.

SPEAKER 3: Yeah. Hi, I'm just calling to record, uh, an incident that I experienced, um, among many and including having a knife held to my throat and chased and being harmed by men. Um, but I used to be a dancer, um, in nightclubs and I was getting off early. I had a friend with me. Uh, he left his door unlocked, I realized I was being followed by someone, um, who blocked me into the parking lot and the look on his face was incredibly threatening. I knew what would happen if I didn't get away. Um, I eventually lost him having to detour multiple routes through the city. I was then, met by another group of men in a car. Um, who started throwing pennies at my car and calling me a slut, a bitch, a whore. Um, all kinds of things. I had to run a red light to get away from them. Um, and not much further down the road. I was met by another group of men who, uh, were yelling similar things and encouraging one of their passengers to get out and go home with me. Um, he did and got in my car, hence my friend leaving the door unlocked and I started hitting him to get out of my car and screaming and yelling as loud as I could. He eventually did. I had to run that red light and get away. Um, and then probably no more than a mile down the road. I was met by a group of men on motorcycles who encircled my car and were veering into it and doing all kinds of things to kind of mess with me. I'm making lewd gestures. Um, and they finally turned off and I was able to get somewhere else, but it was probably one of the more threatening experiences I've ever had. Um just trying to avoid being basically caught by people who meant harm. So, uh, one of many. I'm certain there's many others, but I just thought it was important to share considering what's going on today.

SPEAKER 4: I was 19 years old. For hours, I had a gun stuck in my mouth. I didn't think I was gonna make it out of that room. I got away, I went the next day to the police department and it ended up being that the man who raped me worked as an informant for that police department. I never did anything else with it. Why would I? Thank you.

SPEAKER 5: Um, I know that I'm not eligible for those because I'm a male. Uh, but I wanted to tell my story anyway because I've never told it to anyone before. And I wanted you to be the first because I was too afraid to tell it to anyone. Um, first of all, forgive me, my English is not perfect, so. Okay. So, um, this is so scary. Um, so I was raped when I was about 14 by my cousin. He was my neighbor as well. And we used to go to school together and he started to harass, harass on me, and um, kinda filled me in a way. Um, I used to go to his place to study and then when his parents would go to their rooms and we would stay alone, he would touch me and do stuff that I was not comfortable with. And so I asked him to back off. I used to push him, but he keeps going every day and I was too afraid to tell anyone because I was still young and that escalates. He started to touch my body started to strip me sometimes and I couldn't do anything because I used to get bullied at school. So he would like, he would protect me from the bullies and he would protect me from other people who would harass me. So he took advantage of that and he harassed me himself. Um, so he kept harassing me until one day, he eventually raped me and it kept on going. And he did it several times. And when he did it for the first time, I knew that everything would be, would get changed in my life, that everything will

not be the same anymore and couldn't do anything I, was too afraid to tell anyone. And I just want to say it for the first time to someone and I'm so grateful. Thank you so much for this and thank you for empowering all the women. Thank you.

SPEAKER 6: I want to share the fact that all women around the world deserve the absolute best. We were created equal to men. They should be no differentiation to what we can achieve, who we can become, and the kind of people we choose to be. So on this opportunity given to me for Global Citizen, she is equal. I just want to just emphasize the point that all women are equal to men. Thank you.

DAKOTA: Thank you for listening. Thank you for your time. And to the speaker, thank you for your bravery. We hear you. We see you. It's hard to not feel responsible for saving the world after hearing these stories, but just by listening with your heart, you saved someone even just a little bit.

Thank you for listening. We'll be back each Monday with more stories. If you or someone you know has a story similar to these, you can find help at the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-675-HOPE. That's 1-800-675-4673. Or visit [theleftear.com](http://theleftear.com), or the link in this episode's show notes for resources. The Left Ear was created by Dakota Johnson and produced by Spoke Media.