

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: Hi Dakota. I want to tell you my story about how someone I loved and trust and considered an uncle sexually assaulted me when I was 12 years old. I was watching a movie enjoying and playing games. He came up to me and told me to go take a nap in his room. I didn't think anything by it, but next thing you know, I woke up to him touching me in ways that I never thought someone I loved and trusted would. So with that being said, I am a strong woman. I didn't say anything for a very long time. Uh, I was 12 then, but now I'm 21. I hope this reaches out and let people know that it's okay to speak up.

SPEAKER 2: Hi, I am — . I'm a trans. I'm a trans woman of color. Um, I want to share my story that uh, age 14, I got raped by a close member of the family. Um, at age 22, I got kidnapped by a former military guy, who took me to abandon the house. He tried to rape me. He did sexually assaulted. He, um, he did give me three seconds to leave the house on a rainy day. And before I left, he told me that if I were to call the police, he will kill me, um, at least after that incident, he did stalk me. And I was afraid of even, uh, to call the police. So hopefully, um, my story can shine to other stories about women getting sexually assaulted and raped.

SPEAKER 3: The only thing I ever knew from a man was violence. Um, the first man in my life only ever showed me that, never showed me love. And that's where I learned what to expect from a man. And as I grew older, um, I didn't know how to say no, and I didn't know how to reject, um, what I didn't deserve because I was always showed that I deserved hate, I deserved violence. Um, that's what was normal to me. And I lost my virginity. Um, I wouldn't even count it as that to a man that took advantage of my body when I didn't want him to. And over the years I, um, somewhat attracted into my life, terrible men who were abusive and violent to me. And I've been through some terrible relationships and I've been, I've been raped and I've been assaulted, but I don't let that make me feel weak anymore. I, I am in control of my own body and what all of these men have shown me now is that I am in control. And I choose now to never, ever let anyone like that in again. And I choose now to take control of my own body and my own

life. And now I walk with grace and I work with strength. And maybe they did try and destroy me, but all it did was show me how resilient I am and how strong that I can be. And I just want to say to so many women out there that maybe you have been through this and maybe you will go through this again, but don't let that stop you from having hope.

SPEAKER 4: I want you to know, we really appreciate you doing these things so that we can all have a better life. Um, when I was three years old, my biological father molested me. I still remember, even though I was at toddler telling my mother that he touched my private spots, which, you know, a kid has named for and my mother not knowing what to do other than runaway. And when she did take me to be evaluated, it was too late. There wasn't enough evidence and it was my word against his. Um, he told them he was just changing my diaper, that he never touched me. But the funny thing is I was potty trained when I was three years old. I didn't wear diapers. And it wasn't until I was about 11 or 12 that he admit over a telephone call to my mother that he blamed the drugs that he was doing as to why he did it. But we still didn't have enough evidence at the time to have anything done. So he's still a free man. I probably have siblings. I don't really know because we've never spoken again. And I think that even if I was three, if people didn't believe me, something should have happened. It doesn't matter how long you wait to tell your story. You should be believed so that we don't have to walk in fear everywhere we go. Thank you.

SPEAKER 5: Hey Dakota, my name is — . And I'm a — year old female and for three decades I've never shared, but I was sexually assaulted by a high school teacher, a deacon of the Catholic church, my uncle. No one would ever know this. My mother and father died not knowing this. So thank you for this hotline and no sympathy from me. I've made it and I'm fine. But for all of those girls, for all those girls right now, for all those girls right now that are enduring this. This is about people of power. People do these things because of violence and they're associated with power and they get away with it because they are powerful either in their own families of origin, in their communities, in their government. We must ensure that this does not happen and that we protect those that require us to protect them. So I want to thank you for the hotline. All right. Go kick some ass. Okay. Bye.

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 thelefttear.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.