

Surviving: a journalistic podcast
exploring life beyond abuse

By

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Abstract

In an effort to bring better visibility and more nuanced coverage to an underreported issue, this project compiles available research on the topic of domestic violence, establishes the need for increased quality and quantity of coverage and creates a pilot season of a podcast focusing on the diverse identities and experiences of survivors. Specifically this project aims to highlight the stories of those not regularly portrayed in media. It includes interviews with a victim of child abuse, a victim of financial abuse and a victim from the LGBT community. The continuation of the podcast would go on to include countless more survivor testimonies overlaid with expert observations, statistics and scenes from organizations making a difference in the lives of survivors.

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List of Abbreviations and Terms

Adobe Audition	Audio editing software that allows for multitrack editing
Ambient sound	The sound a room makes when nobody is talking (i.e. the hum of an air conditioner)
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
DV	Domestic violence
IPV	Intimate partner violence
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer
NISVS	National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

This creative project is a three-part journalistic podcast telling the stories of domestic violence survivors, emphasizing life beyond abuse. Before launching this project, DV was already on the forefront of my mind. I joined an organization my freshman year that educated me on how pervasive DV is. Initially I was shocked, because I thought an issue that affected so many people would have been talked about more frequently in all types of media, but especially news. From then on, I was hyper-conscious of coverage of DV — or rather — the lack thereof.

Nearly four years later, I've taken courses in media literacy, ethics and production, and I have the necessary tools to start my own responsible reporting on an issue that has been underrepresented and misrepresented for too long.

I chose to complete this story as a podcast because, as the old adage says, “The medium is the message,” (McLuhan, 1964). Podcasting, as a relatively new medium, offers journalists the opportunity to do in-depth reporting, with short episodes usually hitting at least the 10-minute mark, which is double the length of a regular radio feature. Podcast is also ideal for serialization, meaning that episodes can be used to address many different angles or stories surrounding a single central topic. These two features made podcast an obvious choice for my project. The length allows me to share large portions of my interviews with survivors, and the unlimited number of episodes permits me to focus on a different subject each time, relating it back to DV as a whole.

This project is a largely successful first attempt at addressing an under covered issue in a responsible, ethical and socially conscious way.

Review of Literature

The objective of this portion of my research is to establish a few basic facts that will serve as the basic premise of why a project like mine is necessary:

1. Domestic violence is pervasive and affects people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.
2. Abuse is not sufficiently covered in news media by number of stories nor by quality of reporting.
3. Representation matters.

Using these truths as a framework for the project, one can begin to understand the importance of a long-form storytelling medium optimized for serialization. By using podcast as a format, journalists can emphasize in each episode the jarringly common nature of domestic violence, its relative invisibility in media and begin to introduce listeners to characters with whom they may connect and identify. Each of these steps is essential to increase awareness about domestic violence, promoting more and better coverage and letting potential victims know they have support and resources to leave.

Domestic Violence as a Public Health Concern

Domestic Violence is a slippery topic and often difficult to pin down and define because it encompasses so many types of abuse. As a baseline, it's important to know that DV is first and foremost the use of power and control over a victim, usually by a family member or intimate partner. However friends and roommates can also perpetrate domestic violence, as can strangers and acquaintances in cases of sexual violence. Because of the broad range of acts and behaviors that fall under the domestic violence umbrella, it is incumbent upon researchers to be specific in their phrasing and understand

that most statistics don't include data for all types of domestic violence. Most studies also do not break down data based on factors like sexual orientation, gender identity or overlap in types of abuse. For those reasons and many more, it is difficult to know exactly what portion of the population is directly impacted by domestic violence, but what is certain is that the portion is significant.

According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey administered by the Center for Disease Control, one in three women and one in four men reported experiencing "rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime." The same report shows that 24.3% of women and 13.8% of men have experienced "severe physical violence by an intimate partner...at some point in their lifetime," (Black, 2011). Those numbers are staggering. As Myra Beasley from the Domestic Violence program of Rutherford County put it, even if you aren't directly affected by DV, you know somebody who is.

While the NISVS includes data on male victimization, some studies ignore male victims and opt to approach DV and IPV from the perspective of "violence against women." While nationally and globally violence against women is a pressing issue and falls squarely within the scope of DV, it excludes a large group of people. That lack of representation in research, as will be discussed in the next section, can lead people to believe that DV simply doesn't affect men, which the data unequivocally disproves.

The WHO published a meta-analysis on data collected from regions all over the world about intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence, which the organization defined as any forced sexual act committed by anyone other than the victim's partner. The region with the lowest rate of lifetime IPV still showed a 23.2% rate

of victimization. The region with the highest rate of IPV victimization based on the available data had a rate of 37.7% (García-Moreno, 2013). This study, despite alarmingly high rates of abuse, included only the responses of women and only with regard to IPV and sexual violence.

There is a lack of nuance in detail in a lot of the DV data we currently have access to. This is understandable given the nature of DV, its many manifestations and the diverse groups of people it affects, but the framing of the research must change in order to have a more accurate picture of how DV works and who it impacts.

Specifically, there is a lack of comprehensive data on IPV in the LGBTQ community. According to the Human Rights Campaign, “Most of the limited existing data on LGBTQ domestic violence is not generalizable or comprehensive, making it challenging to generate attention or funding to combat this issue in LGBTQ relationships,” (2017). The CDC said in its 2013 report that analyzed IPV victimization by sexuality, “To our knowledge, the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) provides the first nationally representative prevalence estimates of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence among those who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual,” (Walters). The NISVS was conducted less than a decade ago.

That study provides some data on the prevalence of IPV in LGBTQ relationships, but in some cases, like the perpetration of severe violence against bisexual men, did not have large enough sample sizes to draw conclusions. In cases where sample sizes were large enough to publish results, the CDC found that gay men and lesbian women experienced similar if not increased rates of IPV when compared with their straight counterparts. The study showed that straight, bisexual and lesbian women experienced

rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner at rates of 35%, 61.1% and 43.8%, respectively. Among straight, bisexual, and gay men lifetime victimization rates were 29%, 37.3% and 26%, respectively.

The CDC did not include data on the prevalence of IPV perpetrated against people who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming. A meta-analysis conducted in November 2015 by the Williams Institute at UCLA's School of Law said in its executive summary that, "studies suggest that transgender people may confront similar levels, if not higher levels, of IPV as compared to sexual minority men and women and cisgender people," (Brown). According to the report, a study by Langenderfer-Magruder is the only one to date that looked at IPV perpetrated against trans people and compared the results directly with those of cis-gendered people. The Langenderfer-Magruder study showed that among its sample of over 1,000, 20.4% of cisgender respondents and 31.1% of transgender respondents reported lifetime victimization of IPV (2016). So, in review, the data from the CDC show that members of the LGB community are at similar or higher risk for IPV than their straight counterparts. Data from the Langenderfer-Magruder study then show a statistically significant increase in risk of IPV victimization for transgender people in comparison to their lesbian, gay and bisexual peers.

It is important to note that each of these studies has its own set of limitations, key among them is that DV, IPV and sexual violence are all sensitive subjects that not all participants may be comfortable reporting even when anonymity is granted. This could cause lower reports of victimization than those that actually exist. While most studies cited here are nationally or globally applicable, the respondents to the Langenderfer-Magruder study were all residents of Colorado, so the results of the study are only

representative of that area. However, with more study and attention to demographic factors like sexual orientation and gender identity, researchers can provide more accurate figures on a national level and begin to make the same comparisons.

Insufficient Coverage of Domestic Violence

Based on what is known about the prevalence of DV and IPV, it stands to reason that it would be well-represented in news media. However, I posit that the issue is vastly underrepresented in news coverage and misrepresented when it does appear.

I can personally attest to the quantitative under coverage of DV, because I contributed to it. For a full summer I worked as the assistant news editor for MTSU Sidelines. Part of my responsibilities was combing through police reports each morning for news. The paper was always sent three sets of reports attached as documents: arrest reports, incident reports and domestic violence reports. We never opened the DV reports. A major part of that conscious choice was maintaining the privacy of those involved in DV calls. It also would have been impossible to report on every incident of DV. The intensely personal nature of domestic violence and its extreme prevalence make it a difficult topic to cover responsibly in the news.

In a 2008 article published in *Journal of Communication*, researchers compared articles from a nationally representative sample of newspapers and compared the percentage of articles that mentioned IPV out of all violent stories to the percentage of reported IPV out of all reported violent crime. The study showed that while IPV accounted for 22% and 3% of the violent crime perpetrated against women and men respectively, it was mentioned in only 8.2% of violent crime articles published during the same time period (Carlyle).

The study also found that newspapers tended to over represent the occurrence of homicide in IPV situations. “The CDC (2003) reports that IPV results in approximately 2 million injuries each year but only 1,300 deaths; however, the victim was killed in 56.7% of IPV stories in this sample,” (Carlyle, 2008). Even a simple search through the crime section of a local daily newspaper will reveal that non-fatal IPV are difficult to find, and certainly not represented proportionally to their occurrence in real life. Authors of the study said that this can skew perceptions about what qualifies as IPV.

The same report concluded that in the newspaper articles that did address IPV, the issue was frequently represented as an isolated incident rather than a cyclical pattern of behaviors. This misrepresents the very nature of domestic violence. The study also found that many articles addressed IPV as an individualized issue, not a large-scale problem with root causes. Researchers said that this type of coverage can make victims “more likely to feel blamed for their own victimization. For example, some of the primary reasons why many cases of IPV do not get reported are the prevalence of beliefs such as privacy of the family, victim-blaming attitudes, and the imbalance of power that exists between men and women in society,” (Carlyle, 2008). It should be noted that the “imbalance of power” affects male and female victims in different ways, but can cause a reluctance to report abuse in both cases.

The current rate and quality of reporting on DV is not sufficient and does not accurately represent the reality of the issue, but so what? Why is that important?

Representation Matters

According to the textbook *AS Media Studies*, “...media are one of the chief means by which we reach an understanding of this world. In consequence, many people believe

the media are a powerful means of shaping our attitudes and beliefs,” (Wall, 2008).

Media, including print and broadcast news, play a major role in how we perceive reality.

Authors Rayner and Wall went on to explain how media messages are simplified to fit into limited airtime or space on a piece of newsprint. That simplification can lead to stereotyping, which Rayner and Wall said can “dehumanise people by denying them the complex psychological make-up that an individual possesses...” (2008). While the context of this quotation was with regard to racial stereotyping, the same can apply to any group frequently stereotyped, including victims of DV.

Victims are typically stereotyped as straight, cisgender females who were physically abused by a male romantic partners. This stereotype is powerful, so powerful that one the most important domestic violence protection laws in the country is called the “Violence Against Women Act.” And while the stereotype may be descriptive of many cases of domestic violence, it is far from the experience of all victims. Because media shape the way we see the world, the repetition of this single stereotype can lead people to believe that other types of victims and types of abuse are either not significant or do not exist, neither of which are true.

This stereotype is especially harmful to victims themselves who do not conform to it. Carlyle gives the example of the overrepresentation of physical abuse, as opposed to emotional, mental or financial abuse. Carlyle says, “This type of overrepresentation strengthens the conceptualization of IPV as having a physical dimension only, and the effects of other forms of victimization go unacknowledged despite the severity of their effects,” (2008). In effect, abuse that does not match the stereotype is ignored, and may be treated as if it does not qualify as abuse at all. Similarly, victims who do not see

people like themselves or situations like their own represented in media may be led to believe that they do not “qualify” as victims or that their abuse does not “count.”

Multiple podcast interviewees said as much during our conversations. Roddy Biggs said he had been told that because he was a man, he couldn’t be raped. Rose knew what domestic violence was, but said she had never heard of financial abuse until after she had left her partner and entered support group for victims of DV. Media representations likely shaped the perspectives of these survivors and the people around them. More accurate representation — that which includes non-physical abuse and victims of all races, classes, sexual orientations and gender identities — can help audiences understand that DV doesn’t just affect one group of people; it can affect anybody.

It is incumbent upon media to accurately represent the world as it is, not as the version that is easiest to depict. In many cases we are able to simplify stories to make them fit into limited real estate on-air or in print. However, when that is not possible, it is our responsibility to break down complicated issues and explain them in a way that informs the audience. Moreover, it is our responsibility as journalists to give a voice to those without one. The Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics states that members of the press should seek the truth and report it. “Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information,” it says, “Boldly tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience. Seek sources whose voices we seldom hear,” (2014). It seems that previous coverage has fallen short, and in completing this project, I let these principles guide my work.

Methods

Planning

In preparation for this extensive academic and creative project, I first needed to understand podcasting as a medium. I accomplished that in three major ways by first studying radio as a foundation for audio storytelling, digging deeper into the process of creating a podcast and consuming a wide range of radio and podcast content to help me decide what elements I wanted to include in my own piece.

My study of radio began in my first media writing class in the fall of my sophomore year. It was there that I learned to write clearly and concisely including only the essential facts. My professor imparted on me the value in reading my words out loud before turning in any assignment. By the next summer I was writing my own radio stories at WMOT. Another huge influence on my understanding of radio is *Sound Reporting* by Jonathan Kern (2008). It's considered a foundational text in the world of public radio and addresses themes with great relevance to podcasting as well as general radio reporting such as conversational tone of writing and how to gather the best sound to tell a specific story.

By far my greatest study of radio came from my semester-long internship at Nashville Public Radio where I wrote six news spot pieces, collected and edited sound for newscasts, wrote copy for hosts and produced three original radio features, one of which was picked up by American Public Media for national syndication. This experience gave me the chance to regularly conduct interviews with people from a wide range of backgrounds, write and voice scripts, edit stories together and promote finished stories on social media to help increase the number of page views. All these skills

contributed greatly to my planning for this project and helped me understand what the process would look like.

Another step I took in preparation for creating this audio series was enrolling in a podcasting course through the College of Media and Entertainment. This class began by practicing basic radio skills again, but by the end of the semester each student had created three episodes of a podcast. It was in this class that I learned the basic components of all podcasts like a consistent intro, music, clear transitions and calls to action. The classroom also gave me a place to imagine my target listener and narrow my project so that I could best serve them. Finally it served as a laboratory for me to experiment and get rough drafts of what are now my final products. My peers in the course were able to critique that work and give me tips for future improvement.

Throughout the planning and execution of this process, I consumed a wide range of journalistic audio content from several outlets including National Public Radio, Nashville Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media and the Maximum Fun Network. In both the radio podcast content, I made note of strategies that I would like to incorporate into my own podcast. For example, after listening to Snap Judgement, I made sure that the music breaks between portions of my interviews matched the tone of words that were spoken. Often times that meant having to find exactly the right portion of a song to help elicit the right emotion from listeners. I also used other journalists' podcasts as a way to help me introduce experts and new sources in the middle of an interview without it seeming like an interruption.

I think by observing and emulating other long-form audio journalism in the planning stages of my thesis, I was able to avoid a lot of the pitfalls that I may have otherwise encountered.

Execution

The first step of execution was conducting background research, much of which has been included above in the Review of Literature. I needed to first establish why this podcast was necessary as well as why podcast is the ideal medium for this kind of storytelling. Outside the Review of Literature, producing this podcast consisted of the following steps:

1. Identifying and reaching out to contacts

I found my sources for this podcast through several different channels. I used a directory from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence to find Bridges Domestic Violence Center in Franklin, Tennessee, which connected me with my first survivor, Shayna Qualls. I drew upon my previous contact with the Domestic Violence Program to speak with Legal Coordinator Myra Beasley with the Domestic Violence Program of Rutherford County. I met Roddy Biggs, the subject of Episode 2 by chance at an on campus event to raise awareness for DV. For my final episode, I developed a relationship with a contact I first met doing a story for WPLN. Zac Oswald connected me with an anonymous source who was willing to share her recent story about financial abuse. That interview including the anonymous source as well as Oswald and DarKenya Waller, executive director for the Legal Aid Society.

I reached out to dozens more sources for this project, including other shelters in Middle Tennessee, businesses that aid domestic violence survivors and national advocacy

groups. I often received responses that nobody was able to speak with me or no response at all.

2. Following up

When I received no response or communication dwindled over extended period of time, I had to send follow-up emails or make extra phone calls. When sources didn't respond after my first attempt for contact, I followed-up with additional phone calls and emails

3. Setting up interview times

Coordinating schedules and arranging venues for interviews was one of the more cumbersome steps of this process. Often I had followed up and finally gotten a response with contacts when we realized that our schedules were not going to line up. In the cases in which we were able to set up a time to meet, I generally sent a several times and in return asked for their availability. After landing on a day and time that fit into all parties' schedules, we had to choose a place.

As a general rule in radio, it's best to find a place that is going to have little sound interference, as it can be distracting in the background of an interview. That makes coffee shops, parks and many other regular meeting places less than ideal. In some cases I was able to meet with professionals in their office spaces which helped sound quality. In others I arranged to meet with interviewees at libraries where noise interference would be held to a minimum. In one case I was able to do what is considered best for interviews on intimate topics like domestic violence by meeting a survivor in her own home. This is considered best because the subject often has more control over the noise level and there are soft objects like sofas and rugs to help reduce echo. Additionally, it allowed me as the

interviewer to draw on observations I made in the home, like portraits of family on the wall and ask questions about them to help warm up the subject making her more comfortable. Conducting the interview in a subjects own space can also decrease their anxiety level, helping them to open up more than they may have in a more public setting.

4. Preparing questions

I took this part of the process very seriously, as the questions I asked were essential to getting the quotes I needed to appropriately tell each story. For each survivor interview, I reviewed RAINN's guidelines for interviewing survivors. I made sure that I wasn't asking any unnecessary questions and that I was careful not to imply any blame for what happened to them. I was sure to ask open-ended questions that would elicit longer and more detailed questions. I also left room for follow-ups so that I could dig deeper into a response if I felt it needed elaboration or expansion.

5. Conducting interviews

At the outset of each survivor interview, I assured each person that if at any time they needed to take a break or felt unable to answer a question, they were allowed to stop. This helped establish trust and put them at ease before the questions began. I also made small talk and warmed up many of my interview subjects before asking DV-related questions, as it is difficult to dive directly into stories about trauma and abuse with a complete stranger.

As is taught in the introduction to radio writing class, a journalist's most important interviewing skill is listening. After asking a question, I made eye contact and thoughtfully listened to each response, taking note of the timestamp on my recorder when the subject made a particularly impactful quote. After listening, I'd often ask my subjects

to give me an example or tell a story of when they experienced a particular phenomenon. This helped give color and specificity to the stories that one can hear in the final project.

I wanted these interviews to be a space where survivors could have a real voice, not just a 10-second sound bite in a piece in which somebody else is telling the story. For that reason, I tried to make sure that each interview followed an arc that would take listeners somewhat chronologically through their experiences. I was also intentional in trying to frame these interviews as “life beyond abuse” which ends up being a tagline of sorts. This was intentional, because often when domestic violence is covered in media, victims are static, helpless and unable to escape a specific stereotype. I wanted this podcast-- and accordingly wrote and ordered my questions-- to help illustrate that victims need not stay victims forever.

6. Logging tape

After conducting my interviews, I uploaded them to an online transcription service called Trint. The service automatically transcribed upward of three hours of conversations into an easy to read word document with a high degree of accuracy. From there I was able to use the interactive document to correct the tape, highlight portions I wanted to include in the final podcast and strike through unnecessary content.

7. Selecting quotes

For survivor interviews, I was able to keep most of the content. I needed to eliminate irrelevancies and portions of interviews where subjects rambled or repeated themselves. However, for expert interviews, I needed to choose excerpts that could concisely and impactfully present a piece of information. For example, I had a 45-minute interview with Myra Beasley at the Domestic Violence Project of Rutherford County, but

her voice is only featured in two to three minutes of each episode in which she appears. I had to find portions of our conversation that addressed a topic related to the survivor highlighted in a particular episode. After identifying those parts of Beasley's interview, I had to choose the very best quotes that would help illustrate a point to listeners.

8. Writing scripts

Each of my scripts had to include some essential elements: a welcome in which I identified myself as the host, background information on DV, a preview of the episode's topic and special guest as well as a warning to listeners that some content could be upsetting. Each script also included cues for music and short cut-ins where I would introduce a new voice, give context to a quote or add in a statistic to help back up the experience of a survivor with data.

At the end of each episode I included a thank-you to my guests and a call to action. The call to action is of major importance in podcasting, as it is an opportunity to ask listeners to increase their interaction with the podcast. I chose to ask listeners to engage with the podcast via email social media and subscribe to catch future episodes. This step is often what keeps a listener coming back. In future efforts with the podcast, I would make an effort to be responsive to listeners on these platforms to help encourage future listening. I may also ask in future calls to action that listeners tell a friend about the podcast, rate it or share about it on social media.

9. Finding music

I used the Free Music Archive to find free use music that fit the emotional tone of the podcast. After listening through dozens of artists in several genres, I chose to use music from A. A. Alto. I use his track "Rack Focus" as the intro and outro music as well

as for some inside music breaks. I also included tracks “Canyon” and “Side Story” to help break up some of the interviews. Those music breaks are important because listeners have limited attention spans. It’s difficult to stay focused on the same one or two voices for an extended period of time. By placing beds of music in the middle of episodes, I can refocus the listeners on what’s being said. They are often placed after a subject has said something that made me pause during the actual interview. The music breaks also give listeners time to process quotes that are especially impactful, thought provoking or emotional.

10. Recording tracks

I did not have access to a studio setting while I was in the production phase of making this podcast, so I had to get creative with setting. A lot of times that meant finding an empty study room in the library to record my vocal tracks. I had to be sure that the hum of computers, lights or air conditioning was not overpowering in the room. Additionally, I had to make sure that I wasn’t in an area where nearby students would be disruptive or otherwise be audible in the final recording.

A huge part of voicing is making sure that I modulate my voice, emphasize the right words and emote correctly according to what I’m reading. Nothing makes for a more boring piece of audio than somebody is obviously reading directly from a page in a monotonous voice. Conversely, a journalist with excellent voicing can make an otherwise uninteresting topic seem fascinating. The power of a host’s voice cannot be overstated.

With that in mind, I used several exercises I picked up while working at Nashville Public Radio to help me prepare for my voicing. First I made sure to sit up straight in my chair and take deep breaths before recording to help expand my lung capacity. I placed

both feet firmly on the ground and put pressure on them to help engage the lower half of my body. I also used the idea of a kinesphere. This exercise was extremely helpful to me as a young woman in the field, as it is easy to feel like I am not experienced or skilled enough to be taken seriously. The kinesphere exercise encourages people to outstretch their arms and rotate. The idea is that all the space inside that sphere belongs to the speaker, and they may fill it with whatever they need. Before recording my tracks, I meditated on filling my kinesphere with energy, power, calm and authority. I reminded myself that I have studied this topic for years, completed the interviews, wrote the scripts and am the most qualified person to be telling this particular story. Then I hit record.

11. Editing episodes together in Adobe Audition

Easily the most painstaking process in the thesis process was editing episodes in Adobe Audition. I first had to select the order of each episode and which interviews would be included. For each episode, I loaded the necessary audio files into Audition. I listened through tape and identified portions I had included in the script and cut sections that I'd stricken through in the transcripts. I added markers in places on each waveform that would need to be separated for a break. I then put each track into the multitrack editor and started ordering clips according to the scripts. I made sure to fade music into and out of each portion so that the starts and stops were not jarring for listeners. I also made additional cuts so that pauses and verbal stops like "um," "so" and "I guess" were not so frequent that it became distracting to listeners. After ordering clips and spacing them correctly in Audition, I needed to listen all the way through watching the master volume bar at the bottom of the screen. This helped me monitor the overall sound level and determine if I needed to boost or reduce the volume for a specific clip or segment.

12. Revising with advisor

After creating drafts of all three episodes, I met with my advisor to listen to each in its entirety. We both jotted down notes while listening through, marking where some audio could be cut, where more explanation was necessary and where additional music breaks could be inserted. We also noted places where the volume could be increased a bit.

We also used this meeting to discuss limitations of both time and resources as well as how I might approach the project if I were able to start it over again. The conclusions of that conversation can be found in the Limitations portion of the Results.

13. Final editing in Audition

Using the same project file that I saved from my first editing session, I made recommended changes to each episode in Audition and gave all of them a final listen before saving a final draft and exporting them as .wav files and mp3 files.

14. Creating website and logo

I created a Wix website to host my podcast and created a logo using Canva. The website, while basic, has plenty of room for expansion should I choose to continue this project after graduation. I put the episodes into a built-in media player. I wrote a podcast introduction on the home page describing the content and premise of the project, I also introduce myself as the host and encourage visitors of the website to give the podcast a listen. If a visitor clicks on an episode, they can see more information where I've placed episode descriptions and credited A. A. Alto for the use of his music as is required under the free use license.

15. Writing short episode descriptions

I created a paragraph for each episode explaining who each guest is and what specific topics we address. These descriptions credit the artist for each song used in the project and serve to draw people into each episode.

16. Posting podcast to website

As stated above, I put the podcast episodes into a built in media player. I uploaded only the mp3 files because .wav files are too large and will not load properly. When I put the files into the media player, I was able to customize it using colors that match the charcoal and purple theme of the rest of the website. The color choice was intentional to represent, respectively, the serious tone of the podcast as well as the color for domestic violence awareness. I was able to upload the logo for the podcast into the media player as well, which gives the whole page a simple, sleek and intuitive look.

Results

I made a conscious effort in my reporting to more closely adhere to SPJ's professional code of ethics and offer more context, data and nuance to DV stories. I sought out perspectives that are often overlooked, like the stories of survivors of child abuse and financial abuse and survivors from the LGBTQ community. I followed best practices in preparing for and conducting those interviews by researching techniques for speaking to survivors. In my reporting I gave survivors the opportunity to offer powerful individual testimony, while still being sure to highlight important community aspects of the issue, like shelter and hotline resources. While each episode of the project focuses on one survivor's journey, I ensured that my reporting was not episodic in the sense that it focused on a single instance of abuse. Rather, each subject explained thoughtfully and in detail his or her experience which always consisted of a cyclical pattern of abuse.

Limitations

While I'm proud of the final product I present in this thesis, I acknowledge several material and logistical issues without which I could have created an even better project.

Time. The first and most important limitation I faced was time. While I had the better part of two semesters to finish this podcast, I was enrolled in no fewer than 17 hours each semester and had extensive responsibilities outside the classroom during the terms as well. These courses kept me on campus during large portions of the traditional work week when many of my sources would have been able to interview. It is also important to note that many professional podcasters work on projects like mine for a full year at 40 hours a week. Meribah Knight reported at the James Cayce Housing Development nearly every day for a year to create her nationally renowned podcast "The Promise." I believe that the time to build relationships and trust with my interviewees would have helped establish a deeper sense of character like that found in Knight's series. Working full-time on the project would have given me the opportunity to track down more sources and made me available to speak with organizations outside of Tennessee, giving the project more national relevancy.

Equipment. Another substantial issue I faced creating this project was the lack of access to consistent recording equipment and a studio. While I interned at Nashville Public Radio, I had access to a newer model Zoom recorder and several high-quality microphones. These helped me to record in places with higher background noise and still maintain good audio quality. However, Only two of my sources were interviewed while I still had access to that equipment. From then on, I used a significantly older model of

recorder which did not have a dial to help adjust gain, but only a low, medium or high setting. While the volume could still be adjusted in post-production, it did cause some complications while I was on-site for the interviews. Lack of access to a studio meant that my vocal tracks had a degree of ambient sound that I had to mix in with ambient sound from the interview sites. I also had to be aware of other students' movements nearby in the library while I was recording my own voice so that footsteps, voices and other noises would not show up on my track.

Status. A final limitation that I think impacted my reporting is my student status. However unfortunate, students are often not regarded as legitimate as professional journalists. Despite my experience and commitment to this project, it doesn't change the fact that I was completing the work for an academic purpose instead of for a publication. I believe that de-incentivized national and regional organizations from responding to me, because, frankly, their resources were better spent giving interviews to outlets that could guarantee publication. I wholeheartedly believe that if I had been working for a radio station or newspaper for this project, I would have received greater response, and indeed would have been in a better position to complete the podcasts with a higher degree of professionalism.

Conclusion

While what I've produced is by no means perfect by measure of content or production quality, it is a major step in the right direction. My reporting allows survivors to be empowered by sharing their own narratives as opposed to portraying them as static victims. My reporting combines compelling narrative with facts, statistics and expert

opinions to help paint a fuller picture of what DV is, who it affects and the many ways it can manifest in all types of relationships.

Going forward, I would like to continue work on this project. I see potential for pursuing it independently after graduation or pitching it to a future employer as one of my long-term enterprised projects. While there are a few DV-related podcasts out there, very few approach DV from a journalism perspective, and none that I've found have allowed survivors to tell their stories in their own words. There is a gap in the market for this kind of content, and I intend to fill it with responsible, ethical, top-notch reporting.

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Appendix A

Episode 1 Script

Note: Excerpts from interviews included in these scripts were transcribed by a third-party transcription service. Because the interview transcripts were used primarily for the purpose of selecting audio to be heard in the final podcast, some minor punctuation errors may exist.

Surviving Episode 1: Shayna Qualls

[Music]

Alexis Marshall: Hey there! Welcome to Surviving, a podcast shedding light on the often untold stories of domestic violence. I'm your host, Alexis Marshall, and to get started I'll be introducing what domestic violence is, how pervasive it is in the United States and why sharing these stories matters.

A warning: this show contains descriptions of violence that some may find triggering or upsetting. Listener discretion is advised.

A lot of times when we think about domestic violence, we get a certain image in our heads. We tend to think that abuse is physical, that it affects almost exclusively women, or that DV is rare and doesn't really affect people we know. But all of those assumptions are wrong.

I spoke with Myra Beasley the legal supervisor at the Domestic Violence Program to learn more about these misconceptions.

Myra Beasley: [00:28:57] Well I think one of the big misconceptions about domestic violence is that domestic violence is always hitting. We don't see that many people who have actually been hit. You know violence is control. It's you know if you tell anybody I'm going to take the kids and you never going to see them again. It's stalking, stalking is a huge thing. I get people who come in and go 'well, you know they've called me 15 times today alone,' or 'They show up at my job,' or 'they're always at my front door,' or.... One time we had a judge who said a spouse couldn't stalk a spouse. Which is not true. Spouses absolutely can stalk spouses. We have an abuser who can't go to work because he's too busy following his wife around, where she goes, who she talks to, checking their phone, checking the bank account daily just to see what they're up to. So those are all forms of domestic violence, that nobody realizes are violence.

Myra Beasley: [00:29:58] I have victims come in and go. I know my case isn't as bad as some of the others will in their cases absolutely as bad as some of the others. They just didn't get hit. [00:30:06][7.6]

Alexis Marshall: [00:30:08] And is that a misconception that's common among survivors themselves? [00:30:13][4.3]

Myra Beasley: [00:30:14] I think it is. I think it's I think it's because they'll come in and say well he never hit me. Well that doesn't really matter. You're still a victim. Or maybe he just bumped you in the hallway but he let you know you were-- or she-- let you know

that they were in control. Another misconception is that women are the victims. One in five men are victims of domestic violence as well. So men are absolutely controlled and men. Men are absolutely abused. It's just that they don't report as often because it's harder to be taken seriously if you're a big man walking through my door saying 'You know I've been abused' and so it's hard. That is a misconception though that they that men are not abused men absolutely are abused. [00:31:01][46.6]

Alexis Marshall: According to a 2015 report from the CDC about a third of men and women in the United States have experienced some form of stalking, sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetimes.

Beasley adds that DV isn't limited to violence between intimate partners. It includes child abuse, elder abuse and conflicts between roommates. Sexual assault and rape also fall under the domestic violence umbrella. It includes a huge range of issues, and odds are, that it's a lot more common than you think.

Beasley:[00:12:29] Domestic violence affects everybody. One in three women and one in five men are victims of domestic violence nationwide. But if you're not a victim you know somebody who's a victim. So you may not touch you directly but it touches you in some way. [00:12:46][16.2]

Alexis Marshall: My guest today grew up acutely aware of domestic violence. She and her mother were abused throughout her childhood. When she was able to finally move away, she clung to her religious faith to help her through her recovery. Shayna Qualls now works at Bridges Domestic violence Center in Franklin, Tennessee and is the

founder of a non-profit to help other domestic violence survivors. We caught up at the Williamson County Public Library.

Shayna Qualls: So my organization is called Wings of courage. What we do is we provide escape bags for victims who are escaping their abusive situation. So it's filled with about two days' worth of items they would need to be able to aid in a safer escape so like hygiene items a blanket gas gift card food gift card a backpack or their items. Document holders for safety plans or legal order of protections that type of thing. So it's really just like an all in one backpack, because if sometimes when they leave their abusers they only have the clothes on their backs they have nothing. So we try to give them a resource to get them from point A to Point B or until they can find a safe place.

Alexis Marshall: [00:01:13] And what inspired you to do specifically that type of work? What was it that sparked the idea of having a go bag for survivors.

Shayna Qualls: [00:01:33] So of course there's more more more clients than we have shelters so there's sometimes there's not enough space. And then also not everyone wants to go to a shelter or they need to go to a friend's house or a family member or they have somewhere to go but they just aren't able to take their things. But personally domestic violence has affected me. I lost my mother and my sister due to domestic violence.

Shayna Qualls: [00:01:55] So it inspired me to create an organization, and as a kid I experienced domestic violence as well. So I felt as if if we ever needed to get out of the situation there was not a single time that I had clothes packed. We would have just had to have left. So that kind of gave me the idea to start it and then long term with the

organization. We're going to be doing transitional retreats. So it's basically a transitional house. It's not a crisis center but once you're out of shelter uh, it's more or less a retreat for healing so to have life skill classes massage therapy counseling. There will be a sanctuary in there it's a Christian based organization someplace where you can actually go to heal because there's a lot of healing that needs to be done. Once you're out of that situation that sometimes clients don't have time to do because everything's moving so fast.

Shayna Qualls: [00:02:47] So it'll give them time to just kind of regroup and work on themselves, like self care is really important.

Alexis Marshall: [00:02:54] Are you in the process right now of getting that facility completed and where are you in that process?

Shayna Qualls: [00:03:04] Yeah so it's a start up organization. We do have 501 C3 status so we are non-profit and right now we are launching our flight bag campaign which is for the escape bags and that's going to be program number one. And then long term will lead into the transitional houses. But the vision for the organization is to have a transitional retreat in every state in the United States.

Alexis Marshall: [00:03:25] You spoke a little bit about the loss of your mother and your sister and I'm sorry about that loss. what has seeing them go through that--How has that affected your work with others?

Shayna Qualls: [00:04:01] So a lot of times when your abuser or you go their abusive situation and you feel like people don't understand or they can't relate to you. So with me actually having been a victim and having family members who have died due to domestic violence I have a lot of knowledge and unfortunately experience in the cause, so that really helps them relate to my clients and it gives me a better buyin on being able to help them.

Alexis Marshall: [00:04:25] And what has your personal recovery experience looked like?

Shayna Qualls: [00:04:29] So for myself it's a lot of it has been acceptance just accepting that the things that I've been through and also getting the counseling and therapy that I needed and making sure that especially with working in-- anyone that works in social work or therapy should really be doing their own self care tactics daily if not weekly and for sure monthly. So I make sure that I stay on top of my own care as well.

[MUSIC BREAK]

Alexis Marshall: [00:04:54] What do you think some of the biggest misconceptions about domestic violence are?

Shayna Qualls: [00:05:00] Really I think the biggest thing is that the fact that it's hidden you will never. You'll never really fully comprehend the amount of people that it actually happens to the stats of course say one in three. But if you're literally standing in a room full of 40 people you don't realize how many people in that room have actually been in a

domestic violence situation or are currently going through one. So like the biggest misconception is that it doesn't happen to certain people but it can happen to anyone.

Alexis Marshall: [00:05:31] And what are some of the biggest changes that you would like to see in how we address domestic violence as a society and then also in law enforcement as shelters as mental health providers?

Shayna Qualls: [00:05:46] As far as the society just being able to shed the light and I know we've gotten better especially I do a lot of work in Nashville as well and there's a lot of especially during October. There's a lot of chatter around domestic violence awareness month. So if that chatter will just continue every single month that will be amazing just being able to shed the light just letting people know that it is real it does happen

Shayna Qualls: [00:06:16] And so just as a whole as far as the society goes just allowing it to be talked about without feeling so much shame about it. And then as far as law enforcement I think a lot of times they do do amazing jobs. You know there they even with Bridges like the law enforcement in Franklin. They're amazing with Bridges we go out on crisis calls is great but not every client gets what they need as far as justice goes with their abuser. So unfortunately I think there's a little tweaking that needs to be done. As far as that goes and then we all have a work to do. Like everyone has work to do with domestic violence.

Alexis Marshall: [00:07:02] And I guess for my project I think that I'm going to be in contact with a lot of college age students, and those are really formative years.

Alexis Marshall: [00:07:15] Those are a lot of times like your first relationships or your first serious relationships. What would you encourage people in that demographic to be vigilant of to be cognizant of whenever they are starting out in some of those first formative relationships?

Shayna Qualls: [00:07:35] Yeah. Especially with being a younger woman myself I went through that a lot of that stuff growing up I learned the signs of domestic violence really fast. So when I started dating in my own relationships I could kind of catch on pretty quickly a lot of times your abuser will love bomb you and they'll make you feel like you're the most important person on the planet. And then all of a sudden they'll start doing things and controlling ways or making you feel like everything you're doing is wrong or you just can't do anything right. So do you ever feel like no matter what you do you can't make this person happy then that's definitely a sign that you want to look out look out for. Or if they're calling you multiple times over and over and over again you know texting you threatening text messages or doing things such as gaslighting which is you know basically where you're lying and making the person feel like they're crazy when they're really not. There's a lot of subtle things that you can look out for. But my advice to young women is just to be slow it go slow and be true to yourself. And if it doesn't feel right it's probably not. And just learn to love yourself more and that way you won't allow anyone else to treat you how you wouldn't allow yourself to be treated.

Alexis Marshall: [00:08:48] So growing up you said that your mother was in domestic violence situations. Were you also subjected to that abuse as well?

Shayna Qualls: [00:09:07] Yeah one of her partners in particular physically abused me, mentally abused me mentally abused me and verbally abused me.

Shayna Qualls: [00:09:16] I was definitely pulled around by my hair called Words You know those type things. Very controlled very isolated not able to do certain things. So that was that definitely carried on into me as well as a child. So growing up I had to learn that even though all I've seen was abusive men doesn't mean that every man is dangerous. So I had to learn that growing up you know you can't separate yourself from your childhood. And I think I think in most cases a lot of people have to do that. You have to separate yourself from how you were growing up

Alexis Marshall: [00:10:05] And that's really a difficult separation especially when you're at such a young age. But how did those experiences like inform your relationships with other men in your life going forward.

Shayna Qualls: [00:10:26] Well I mean fortunately like by going through and watching that when my mother went through I learned what was wrong and what was right.

Shayna Qualls: [00:10:37] So if I was in a relationship where I felt this is familiar or I can tell what's about to happen, then you would know you're educated you know that you'd probably need end that relationship. And it takes a lot of self-love to learn and know that

so you have to really be true to yourself and make a decision on what it is that you're going to accept and what you're not going to accept.

Alexis Marshall: Is there anything that will specifically be helpful to you like how did you get out of the abuse was it just like you like your mother in that partner like separated or or how did you get out of your abusive situation and and recover.

Shayna Qualls: [00:12:40] So as far as my abuse stopped when I was 12. As far as with me. But as far as my mother she ended up committing suicide when I was 17 due to domestic violence and her suicide letter was basically dedicated to him and all the things that she he made her feel and how she was never going to be able to live up to his standards. But as far as my own healing goes it wasn't until I was a little bit older that I really understood the effects of domestic violence. And then at that part you just start educating yourself and getting involved. And like I said it's a lot of a lot of self-love and a lot of therapy if needed and just education. There wasn't really any support groups as far as I knew when I was growing up. I'm from a really small town but a lot of it to be honest with God and my faith. And I prayed a lot and I read the Bible a lot which is why my organization is faith-based and it's dedicated to God and whatever he wants to do with that he will do. So it was really basically living the life that I lived and then staying faithful to my faith that there was something greater for me even though I was going through what I was going through. I knew that I was a conqueror and I'm a cycle breaker, so I really leaned into my own belief of myself, and that's what got me out.

Alexis Marshall: [00:14:21] That's really powerful. Thank you for speaking with me today.

Shayna Qualls: [00:14:24] You're so welcome. Thank you.

Alexis Marshall: Huge thanks again to my guests Shayna Qualls from Wings of Courage and Myra Beasley at the Domestic Violence Program of Rutherford County. You can find Myra's organization at dvpshelter.org and Wings of Courage Ministries on Facebook.

If you or somebody you know is suffering from domestic violence, there is help. Contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at thehotline.org or call at 1-800-799-7233.

Next week on the show I'll be speaking with another survivor about their path to recovery, and we'll dig into the difficulties facing survivors in the L-G-B-T-Q community. Subscribe to keep up with this conversation, and be sure to follow [@Survivingpodcast](https://twitter.com/Survivingpodcast) on Twitter. Email survivingpodcast@gmail.com to send questions, comments and recommendations for future episodes!

Until next time, I'm Alexis Marshall, and this is Surviving.

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Appendix B
Episode 2 Script

Surviving Episode 2: Roddy Biggs

[Music]

Alexis Marshall: Hey there! Welcome to Surviving, a podcast shedding light on the often untold stories of domestic violence and exploring life beyond abuse. I'm your host, Alexis Marshall, and this week my guest is Roddy Biggs. Our conversation focuses on his experiences as a survivor and the difficulties he faced coming forward about his abuse as a gay man.

A warning: this show contains descriptions of violence that some may find triggering or upsetting. Listener discretion is advised.

Before we get started, I want to begin with the numbers. The majority of intimate partner violence research has focused on heterosexual relationships. From the information that is out there about L-G-B-T-Q relationships, we know that lesbian women and gay men suffer from similar if not increased rates of victimization.

The same study showed increased rates of intimate partner violence against bisexual men and women. And as for transgender folks, there is a lack of comprehensive national quantitative research.

Groups like the Human Rights Campaign advocate for increased research on domestic violence in the L-G-B-T-Q community. There is also a push for increased visibility of these survivors, as they are often not well-represented in research or media.

My guest Roddy Biggs decided to lend his voice to the cause. He's a student at M-T-S-U, and I first met him at an on-campus event, where he spoke about his own experience in an abusive relationship. We met up at the library a few weeks later to dig deeper into his story.

Alexis Marshall: Now, I first met you at an event for an on campus group and you were there speaking at a candlelight vigil for survivors of domestic violence. What made you decide to start doing those types of events and can you describe briefly what you speak about those events?

Roddy Biggs: [00:01:42] I've gone through a lot myself and it took people willing to speak to get me through it. So now that I'm at a position where I am more or less over a lot of what happened to me I feel that I have to speak to help others who need that voice to get past things.

Alexis Marshall: [00:02:10] Would you mind describing. Or you telling me a little bit about your story and what you've been through as a survivor of domestic violence.

Roddy Biggs: [00:02:20] So I came out as being gay around the age of 12 and was bullied harassed beaten up physically and verbally assaulted. At the age of 16 I was in a domestic violence relationship and was raped beaten up, made to feel like I could never

break up with them because they'd kill me if I did. And that went on for three years and then finally they broke up with me.

Roddy Biggs: [00:02:51] So yeah.

Alexis Marshall: [00:02:54] What were the patterns of behavior? Can you tell me kind of how that relationship started and how it got to the point of physical and sexual violence?

Roddy Biggs: [00:03:26] So it started like any other relationship like very well, very happy, and for the most part. It was a semi-okay relationship. There were ups and downs like every other one. But when it was bad it was really bad. But it was always the hope of some that something would change and that it may not continue. And then the times when it did it's like OK so this is happening again. But then it would be really good again. So it's my mind saying it's done it's over. And then right back in. But the fear of leaving them kept me in it.

Alexis Marshall: [00:04:16] And what kinds of things would your partner say to bring you back when you were at the point where you thought like "I have to leave?"

Roddy Biggs: Threatening me saying that if I did leave them that I never see the end of that. They knew where I live that they killed me that killed my family telling me that they loved me and that they're a sign that they're going to change, and then changing for a little bit and then going back to it.

[MUSIC]

Alexis Marshall: What Roddy is describing is called the cycle of abuse. It's when somebody uses power and control over over their partner to make them stay in an abusive relationship. Signs of abusive behavior are often not so pronounced at the beginning of a relationship. Which makes sense right?

You wouldn't go on a second date with somebody that hurt you or made you feel bad the first time. But Myra Beasley with the Domestic Violence Program says as the relationship progresses, abusive behaviors become more pronounced.

Myra Beasley: [00:21:00] They don't know how they got there. They don't know the dynamics of the Predator mentality they don't understand how they even got in this relationship you know. The person they were with was kind and loving and charming until they were involved deeply in the relationship and then it changes. So I don't know that that's different for any particular group of people. [00:21:25][24.8]

Alexis Marshall: Back to my conversation with Roddy

Alexis Marshall: [00:04:53] Did your family know or did your family and friends know about these abusive behaviors that your partner exhibited toward you?

Roddy Biggs: No.

Alexis Marshall: And Did did you hide it from them or was it just something that you never talked about

Roddy Biggs: a little bit of both. I really never said anything because I was afraid if I did say something what would happen. And I was in denial that it was happening. So even if I wanted to say something I wouldn't have been able to because I didn't really recognize or know what was going on.

Alexis Marshall: did your family know that you were in a relationship in the first place?

Roddy Biggs: [00:05:47] Yes.

Alexis Marshall: [00:05:49] And they were familiar with and knew your partner at that time.

Roddy Biggs: yes

Alexis Marshall: Were they supportive of you and of your relationship?

Roddy Biggs: [00:06:01] Off and on. So it just kind of depends they come from a conservative Christian background.

Roddy Biggs: [00:06:10] So they're more open than a lot but it's that it was at that point the dynamic of "We love you but..." so it was like "We love you but we don't know if we support this" we love you and support this we love you support you... "but this."

[00:06:30] But there's so yes and no.

Alexis Marshall: [00:06:37] Do you think that played any role in you being reluctant to tell them about the abuse that you were suffering?

Roddy Biggs: [00:06:49] More than likely.

Alexis Marshall: [00:06:52] And what was it that brought that relationship to an end?

Did he just break up with you one day?

Roddy Biggs: [00:07:03] So like I said he broke up with me and said I wasn't what he wanted and that was it. But it took almost three years.

Alexis Marshall: [00:07:15] How did you feel when that ended?

Roddy Biggs: [00:07:18] I cried for months because I realized like I was finally out of it and that he couldn't hurt me anymore. And that's when I realized that I had to talk about it. So had to go to counseling, went to counseling off and on because trying to trust a counsellor after that it's like I can't. It affected relationships from then on. It's affected my current relationship because it's just... the pain is there. So it's how-- it's now learning to deal with it and move on and not let it affect my life in a negative way.

Alexis Marshall: [00:08:08] And did you seek out counseling afterwards or was it something that somebody else suggested to you?

Roddy Biggs: [00:08:16] Combination. So I told one of my friends at the time after and they said "go to counseling." And I went I quit. I'd go back. I'd quit because like I couldn't build a relationship with someone. I couldn't fully talk about it. Tell someone what's going on and then not know if they'd believe me not know if things would get better. And so I would self isolate and not deal with it. And if I don't deal with it it doesn't exist, which is not the case. But that's what went through my mind.

Alexis Marshall: [00:08:58] So do you feel like even though the physical and sexual abuse stopped after that breakup that the ramifications continued and followed you?

Roddy Biggs: [00:09:11] Yeah I mean they're following me today. So I just finished counseling again, and this time I think it actually helped a lot more because I was in a place where I was willing and able to actually go through the counseling process. But it's always going to be with me. There's always going to be ramifications and pain existing. It's not something that just disappears. So it's not really something that counseling can just fix and it be ok like some things.

[MUSIC]

Alexis Marshall: [00:09:55] And what was your experience telling people that you were a survivor of that type of violence and abuse?

Roddy Biggs: [00:10:15] Kind of mixed.

Roddy Biggs: [00:10:17] So some people were very supportive and believed me from day one. Others still don't. I've been told oh well you're a guy so that can't happen. I've been told that I'm weak because it happened. I've been told that it's not my fault. I've been told that it was my fault.

Roddy Biggs: [00:10:39] I mean a very big mix of things, but I choose to believe the ones that believe me and push the others out of my life.

[MUSIC BREAK]

Alexis Marshall: [00:11:40] And so what was your experience like as a gay man going through this? Did you feel like did you feel like you were having to overcome additional stereotypes or stigmas when you told people about your abuse?

Roddy Biggs: [00:12:06] Oh yeah because people already think that gays are promiscuous and horrible people. So then you say that you were raped and it's "oh well you're a whore. You were asking for it." So instead of dealing with that just don't talk about it. And so for years like I said I didn't talk about it.

Alexis Marshall: And Myra Beasley from Domestic Violence Program says that silence is common.

Myra Beasley: [00:17:10] They're not always taken seriously. We strive really hard here to make sure that everybody is equal and that everybody gets the same service. So in the community though, because the LGBTQ community is not fully accepted in our community. [00:17:32][22.5][00:17:34] It's harder for them to find resources once they leave our facility. It makes it you know sometimes people will go "well, you brought it on yourself" or "we don't take those kinds of people here" or you know "if you weren't if you weren't doing the things you're doing then God wouldn't let this happen to you." [00:17:58][24.0]

Alexis Marshall: And this issue of perceived legitimacy isn't just an issue for the LGBTQ community. Less than half of women report their abuse, and for men... that number dwindles to 3% by some estimates.

Roddy Biggs: [00:12:30] It's only been like the past six months to a year that I've been so open about it, and very few people have known about it until then.

Alexis Marshall: [00:12:41] What was the breakthrough in the past six months that made you decide it was important enough to speak about?

Roddy Biggs: [00:12:52] It was about it's been about a year. But the MeToo movement and watching people say things and people's reactions shift, whether it's to support or to the far opposite to hurt. But knowing that there were a lot more people who -- well not knowing because I knew -- but seeing a lot more people speaking and knowing that I had to as well.

Alexis Marshall: Can you tell me a little bit about your recovery and what that journey has looked like for you?

Roddy Biggs: [00:14:17] Yeah. So like I said I've gone off and on through counseling. So I started going to counseling even before that happened because I was bullied for being gay. And quit counseling for that because I couldn't trust them then.

[00:14:33] And so then during the assault definitely didn't go to counseling because I was told not to.

[00:14:43] And then after not going because not being able to trust people. So I mean it's not-- it's been a very hard very long road and it's nowhere near done, but we'll see what happens.

[MUSIC]

[00:14:59] And can you describe to me. We've gone over some of this. I promise I'm listening. But just to make sure that I'm getting like a full picture. Can you describe to me I guess some of the some of the hardships that you think you faced as a gay man going through this that somebody else might not face.

Alexis Marshall: What have you found from being able to share your story with others. Being able to speak about it publicly now.

[00:16:33] What has been your experience ?

Roddy Biggs: [00:16:37] Again kind of mixed. So there are gonna be the people that rally behind you and support you and believe you and there are going to be those that do not. But it's knowing that you're not there for the ones that don't. You're there for the ones that do. And for the ones that need to hear that someone like them believes them and that there are people like them who have gone through something similar.

Alexis Marshall: [00:17:13] Do you think that if you had heard somebody in a situation like yours when you were still in it that it might have encouraged you to come forward earlier?

Roddy Biggs: [00:17:33] Absolutely.

Alexis Marshall: [00:17:35] Can you expand on that?

Roddy Biggs: [00:17:38] At the time there weren't a lot of people talking about being abused.

Roddy Biggs: [00:17:45] Because it's not something that historically been talked about. It's seen as "oh well they were asking for it. "

Roddy Biggs: [00:17:56] It's their fault. So people other than being ridiculed chose to stay quiet. So because of things like the MeToo movement. Well it's that radical shift in idea people are able to feel like that they can talk about it and know that there are people there for when they do talk about it and everything goes wrong that they have someone to fall back on. But when I was 16 that didn't exist. So I didn't know if I say something now what's going to happen.

Roddy Biggs: [00:18:38] And I was 16.

Roddy Biggs: [00:18:40] That's not something a 16 year old thinks about doing is "oh let me go talk to a counselor because I'm being raped." Like you don't think that way. It's "I'm being raped" and then Freeze. So I would blank out I would. So like I said self-isolate not talk to people. And then when I talk to people it's "oh no life's wonderful. Everything's OK. I'm not being bullied I'm not being raped I'm not self-harming. I'm not trying to commit -- to end my life" because why would you let people know that?

[MUSIC]

Alexis Marshall: [00:19:32] I guess pulling back a little bit. What positive changes have you seen in your life since then?

Roddy Biggs: [00:19:53] So I have been with the same person for two and a half years, got engaged moved to a new city am pursuing a bachelor's degree in religion. And people say I'm crazy because I'm the gay kid that's going into seminary, but I'm going into seminary so I'll be getting a master's. I've seen people more willing to speak about hard things. I have found a faith community that supports me and tells me that they believe everything about me, and that I'm not a horrible person which isn't what I grew up with. So I mean everyone goes through really awful things in their lives. Some people might think that I've had it worse, but I really haven't. Everyone's gone through something and my abuse and rape and being gay is mine.

Alexis Marshall: [00:22:05] And what would you just say to somebody today who is in the same type of abusive relationship that you had for three years?

Roddy Biggs: [00:22:17] No matter how hard it is. Get help from someone, tell someone and know that there's somebody out there who is going to stand behind you and support you.

[MUSIC]

Alexis Marshall: Huge thanks again to my guests Roddy Biggs and Myra Beasley at the Domestic Violence Program of Rutherford County. You can find Roddy on Facebook and Twitter @RoddyBiggs. Roddy says he'll be attending seminary after graduation, and says he plans on becoming a minister in the Unitarian Universalist Church. You can find Myra's organization at dvpshelter.org.

If you or somebody you know is suffering from domestic violence, there is help. Contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at thehotline.org or call at 1-800-799-7233.

Next week on the show I'll be speaking with another survivor about their path to recovery, and we'll explore the economic impacts of domestic violence, and speak to a survivor of both physical and financial abuse. To keep up with this story, subscribe to Surviving on your favorite podcasting app and be sure to follow @SurvivingPodcast on Twitter and Facebook. Send questions, comments and recommendations for future episodes!

Until next time, I'm Alexis Marshall, and this is Surviving.

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Appendix C

Episode 3 Script

Surviving Episode 3: Rose

[Music]

Alexis Marshall: Hey, I'm Alexis Marshall and welcome to another episode of surviving. a podcast where we dig deeper into stories of domestic violence and explore life beyond abuse. Today I'll be speaking with Rose, who experienced a form of domestic violence that's so common, but seldom talked about -- financial abuse.

For safety reasons, Rose is using a fake name

To preface this conversation. I want to hit on something we addressed in a previous episode, and that's the nature of domestic violence. Experts and advocates alike classify the basic components of DV as the use of power and control over another person. We know that abuse occurs physically, verbally, sexually and psychologically, but it's rare that we address how abusers can impact a victim's financial wellbeing.

In my conversation with Rose, we'll hear how her partner used their shared housing as a way to control her, and how lawyers at the Legal Aid Society helped her to leave the abusive situation.

A warning: this episode contains descriptions of abuse that some may find upsetting or triggering. Listener discretion is advised.

Alexis Marshall: [00:06:25]the best place to start is probably just the beginning. So can you tell me a little bit about your situation and then I'll get into more specific details.

[12.4]

Rose: [00:06:49] Well I first met him probably I was still in high school. So honestly like I was seven years ago we'd actually been friends for a long time.

Rose: [00:07:06] Yeah just I've just known him forever and he'd always tried to. He's always tried to be more and I never wanted to be that just because. I know he was just like a player I guess you'd say.

Rose: [00:07:21] And then I moved back here and he had been trying for so long.

Rose: [00:07:25] I finally decided to give him a chance, and turned out I really liked him. And we just... everything was everything was pretty well. It was great. We were going good and then we decided that we were going to move into each with each other and we did. And then about a month into that everything kind of just spiraled out of control.

Alexis Marshall: When can you recall the first time that you experienced something that you recognized as abuse.

Rose: [00:08:35] Yeah it was actually before we moved in with each other. And I just kind of overlooked it because my sister came into town and we were all playing card games and everything and he just kept drinking and drinking and drinking. And then an incident happened in my room.

Rose: [00:09:04] And so I told him that I was taking him home and taking him home and he wouldn't let me leave.

Rose: [00:09:11] He confiscated my keys and everything to the point where I had to call my mom and we almost had to call the police just so I could get my keys back just to get home because he was not allowing to leave.

Alexis Marshall: [00:09:25] can you tell me what the incident was?

Rose: [00:09:32] Yeah I had he had gotten up and decided that he was too drunk to make it to the bathroom.

Rose: [00:09:40] So he peed all over my bedroom.

Alexis Marshall: [00:09:46] And I guess. How did that affect you afterwards? You say that you overlook it. How did it affect you in the days after?

Rose: [00:09:56] Well I didn't really overlook it I actually see this probably happened this happened in the uh,

[00:10:07] Yeah.

[00:10:07] So we moved in in January that happened in December and I'd actually broken up with him and I didn't talk to him for a week.

Rose: [00:10:17] I really had I blocked him on all my stuff but he kept trying to get in contact with me.

Rose: [00:10:24] I finally gave him a chance to talk to him again and everything and just kind of worked it out I looked at I looked over it and just went on with it. [126.9]

Alexis Marshall: Rose says this is the first and only time that she tried to leave her partner before they broke up for good, but statistics show most people have to leave way more times. According to the hotline.org, survivors go back to their abusers an average of seven times before leaving for good. That's because abusers can make their victims feel alone.

Alexis Marshall: [00:11:19] So when you were with him did you ever feel isolated. [4.8] [00:11:35] isolated from your friends or your family. Something like that.

Rose: [00:11:38] Oh yes for sure. Yes.

Rose: [00:11:43] There was an incident once where I wanted to go to my cousin's graduation party and it was going to be with my family. It wasn't like a party party. And he had a problem with it that I told him I was going anyway and I'd gone there and he was mad that I was there and he was calling my phone on a constant just it just kept ringing and ringing and ringing. And then I decided that after that I was going to go hang out with my mom for a little bit. And I told him that and he goes, "No you need to be home in 30 minutes" and blah blah blah. And told me all this and I was like "No I'm going hang out with my mom" and I hung up the phone and he kept calling and calling calling 'til finally he called my mom and told her that I needed to come home and hang out with him and that I could spend time with her tomorrow.

Rose: [00:12:39] And yeah and it just got worse from there really.

Alexis Marshall: [00:12:45] How far into the relationship that occur?

Rose: [00:12:49] That was actually a lot towards the end because that's when I got a lot bolder to actually say "No I'm actually go and do this thing whether you like it or not" and I didn't even want to bring him because I knew he'd spoil everything.

Alexis Marshall: [00:13:02] How did your relationship with him affect your other relationships?

Rose: [00:13:11] I mean I tried not to let it affect me too much. I mean I was definitely lying to everybody.

Rose: [00:13:17] I definitely did see my family though weekly, because I was watching my nieces twice a week, so I was able to spend time with them and everything bad.

Rose: [00:13:33] I was definitely lying. Especially when I had that bruise on my eye. You know they asked about that and had to come up with lies about that, and that was the only sucky part because we are really really close and we kind of tell each other everything.

Rose: [00:13:50] And I was lying to them the whole time.

Rose: [00:13:52] So that was really hard for me. [139.6]

[MUSIC BREAK]

Alexis Marshall: [00:15:27] After everything that you went through what ended up eventually giving you the strength to leave.

Rose: [00:15:41] I had gone against what he wanted me to do and I happened to be with my mom that day. And he kept calling call and finally she was like just answer the phone put it on speaker.

Rose: [00:15:57] She's like I'll listen in.

Rose: [00:16:00] And I answered the phone and he was really just like mumbling all this stuff I could tell that he was completely just drunk out of his mind like he was totally wasted and I can't even remember what he said.

Rose: [00:16:19] I just remember I hung up the phone and I looked at my mom and I just burst into tears and I was like I got to tell you something.

Rose: [00:16:25] And I told her everything and she.... I just knew that if I didn't say anything that I would I just knew if I went home that night I was going to like stuff it's just it was just going to get really really bad like I could just tell it and his voice on the phone and everything and I was just scared and if I didn't tell anybody then I probably would have gone back over there and it probably would have continued. And so I told my mom everything every detail. [93.1]

Rose:[00:17:05] we went and got really stuff that I needed the next day.

Rose: [00:17:10] And I mean he was on a constant roll of calling, my phone mom's phone and my dad's phone throughout the whole entire night.

Alexis Marshall: [00:17:21] So how did your mom react whenever you told her everything that had been going on.

Rose: [00:17:31] She was pretty mad.

Rose: [00:17:35] I wouldn't say mad I guess more like disappointed in the fact that I didn't say anything because I was like we were really close and I don't hide much from them.

Rose: [00:17:46] So I think she was just really disappointed in the fact that I was hiding it instead of talking to her about it and letting her protect me. Cause like she was just scared that something was going to happen. And that was it. [60.0]

Alexis Marshall: [00:18:47] whenever you did leave what types of difficulties did you face in the days and weeks after that.

Rose: [00:19:14] Well he wouldn't really leave me alone. That's for sure.

Rose: [00:19:23] I mean other than that like nothing seemed really difficult other than the fact that I needed to make sure that I got everything I needed out of the apartment before he went and did some stupid, sold it, set it on fire.

Rose: [00:19:40] I don't know he was he was all over the place and so I just felt free it felt great. It Really wasn't that difficult afterwards.

[MUSIC BREAK]

Alexis Marshall: [00:19:52] So where did the legal aid society come in to all of this?

Rose: That day that we went to get my stuff we stopped at the the leasing office first and talked to them about the situation and what we needed to do.

Rose: [00:20:17] So then me and my parents went up there and we tried to talk to him about you know like signing me off the lease you know just trying you know whatever we can. Me signing him off and he was just not having it.

Rose: [00:20:35] Yeah there was.

Rose: [00:20:37] He was not having any of it. [36.3]

Rose:[00:21:05] my aunt came to me and she was like I want you to get an EOP on him and I'm like "What is that?" Like, I don't know anything about any of this stuff.

Alexis Marshall: An EOP is an ex-parte order of protection.

Rose: [00:21:16] I really didn't want to make him mad enough to not do anything to where me because he was dead set on trying like ruin my credit and everything on this apartment like he was set on having all this held over my head. He still thought he had power doing that. So she was we were looking and like the laws of domestic violence and I tried so hard working with the leasing office and they were telling me the same thing that I had to work it out with him and everything.

Rose: [00:21:52] So I really didn't want to get him in trouble either because he was on probation and I didn't know if this EOP could put him in jail or anything but he kept harassing me and everything.

Rose: [00:22:08] So finally I went down there and I got it. And after that like I was looking for I was going to look for a lawyer to try to you know get me out of this thing.

Rose: [00:22:23] That's pretty much what the lady at the leasing office told me. And then a coworker of mine told me that I could call the Legal Aid Society and they would help with it.

Rose: [00:22:31] So that is how I started working with them. [90.1]

Alexis Marshall: The Legal Aid Society assigned an attorney to Rose's case who was with her at her hearing where she got an Order of Protection. According to Rose, her ex already had a new girlfriend at the time, and didn't fight the order.

Rose: [00:25:26] He came in there really cocky and everything and he was like Oh I'm fine.

Rose: [00:25:31] He just made it easy. Oh I'm fine with that. I just want the keys back.

Rose: [00:25:37] And I was like "OK."

Rose: [00:25:39] It's just that easy surprisingly.

Alexis Marshall: Executive Director for the Legal Aid Society DarKenya Waller says that's common among abusers.

DarKenya: [00:25:42] Often times when survivors are in situations like that.

DarKenya: [00:25:47] A lot of times when they walk into court and they see that the playing field has been leveled because the way domestic violence works is that it's there's power and control. There's this feeling that they are in control. And so there is a cockiness about them because they've always been in control and this is just an opportunity another opportunity to be in control in a courtroom.

DarKenya: [00:26:06] But then a lot of times when that survivor walks in with an attorney standing there beside them kind of levels of play playing feel real fast like who's that guy with them who's an attorney with them. OK. Well I don't care. [51.1]

Alexis Marshall: Zac Oswald is the attorney who worked with Rose's apartment to negotiate her out of the lease.

Zac Oswald: [00:26:58] So oftentimes what happens in our office is somebody will come in for one issue or another and we'll make sure that we're providing holistic representation. And one of the things we identified was the problem with the apartment complex that was potentially going to leave her responsible for paying for the rest of the lease or paying for an early termination fee or any of those things that just would have really piled onto this domestic violence situation. So we talked about it internally at the office. I handle the majority of the housing issues. And so I reached out on her behalf to

speak to the lawyer that represents her complex and we were able to negotiate something that let her out of the lease without having to pay any of the penalties that normally would have been associated with breaking the lease and leaving the abuser on there.

Alexis Marshall: [00:27:57] is that something that people usually find is a problem when they're trying to flee domestic violence situations and relationships?

Zac Oswald: [00:28:12] Yeah the housing issues that relate to domestic violence, you know it depends on whether or not the survivor of domestic violence wants to stay in the unit. That presents a myriad of issues as to how are we going to keep this person safe from the abuser? If the abuser knows where they are. Is the is the survivor of domestic violence going to be able to financially handle paying for the complex or the home or whatever it is based on their income alone? Because we've separated two incomes into one. And the final thing would be if the domestic violence survivor wants to get away from that situation and start afresh, how does that affect the landlord tenant relationship that existed or the mortgage the mortgage servicing relationship that existed beforehand if the domestic violence survivor is going to go elsewhere? [127.1]

Alexis Marshall: DarKenya Waller again

DarKenya: [00:30:34] So the mission of the Legal Aid Society is to advance defend and enforce the legal rights of low income and vulnerable people to acquire for them the basic necessities of life and this situation fits squarely into what our mission is. We are enforcing those legal rights. You have a right to be safe. You have a right to have shelter food clothing you have a right to have these things as basic necessities. And when we

find situations where people are at risk of losing those rights that's where we come into play. And so that's where we were able to come into play in this scenario to help restore safety to help restore shelter and overall that independence that can allow you to get to the next level. And so now surrounded by family and surrounded by you know those who you know love you and have your best interests at heart you're in a better situation to move to the next level and to start over from from where you may have survived. [67.1]

Alexis Marshall: Back to my conversation with Rose.

Alexis Marshall: [00:33:41] Before you went through this. [42.5][00:33:45] had you ever heard of the term like financial abuse.

Rose: [00:33:51] I did not actually. [5.7]

Alexis Marshall: [00:34:07] having survived that. What would you want people to know about it? [4.0]

Rose: [00:34:48] And [00:34:49] I counted the days. Every day I counted how many more weeks I was going to have to last in there because I didn't know how to get out. So honestly like I wouldn't I would I would tell people don't use anything as an excuse to tell your family tell your friends and find a way out of there. Because as soon as I did everything just kind of seemed so easy like everybody was helping me with everything.

[MUSIC BREAK]

Alexis Marshall: [00:35:47] Did you find people to be really understanding?

Rose: [00:35:52] Yeah they were. There was a lot of tears a lot of hugging.

Rose: [00:35:58] Everybody was just kind of we were like happy that I was OK. But no they were they were understanding, but they were really really upset that I was not talking to them. It actually surprised me.

Rose: [00:36:16] How upset people that really care about you actually will get the fact that you didn't tell them anything and they had no idea. [77.8]

[00:36:28] Zac,

Alexis Marshall: going back to DarKenya Waller with LAS

Alexis Marshall: [00:36:30] How common are these types of cases. How often do you see them coming through last and if OK that be your question.

DarKenya: [00:36:41] It's very common. It's very common in fact it's about one third of the calls that we get and the people were able to help are in fact victims of domestic violence or in some form involved in challenges within the family. And we're a ready resource and there are many other resources out there and a lot of times people just don't know about it.

[MUSIC BREAK]

Alexis Marshall: [00:40:03] how have you been since leaving that relationship?

Rose: [00:40:17] Well I mean it's it's been really great not having to walk on eggshells all the time but I can't say that I fully picked myself back up. I mean I guess I guess I can get really like depressed a lot and I don't really like to go out like I used to.

Alexis Marshall: [00:41:34] Are there any activities or resources that have helped you get through this kind of transitional time.

Rose: [00:41:41] I did go to therapy right after and then I actually he actually ran a six week domestic violence support group.

Rose: [00:41:55] So I was able to talk to more of the people more of the women that were also in the same situations too. [32.0]

Rose: [00:43:03] There was so much more aspects to it and I kind of like was able to realize a lot more just talking to my therapist about it. [9.2]

Rose: [00:44:27] like I didn't realize that it didn't have to be physically abusive to not be considered domestic violence.

[MUSIC BREAK]

Alexis Marshall: [00:44:39] So have you picked up any new hobbies or interests since you've left that relationship.

Rose: [00:44:49] I try to get out and do some karaoke every once in a while and bowling if I do get out. I will try to do those things. Yeah.

Rose: [00:44:57] Those are some hobbies that have picked up.

Alexis Marshall: [00:44:59] Are those things that bring you joy?

Rose: [00:45:01] Yes a lot actually.

Alexis Marshall: [00:45:04] How do you feel when you get to do them.

Rose: [00:45:09] I feel really good because I don't know it's kind of freeing I guess kind of like putting yourself out there but not really especially when you're doing karaoke.

Rose: [00:45:20] It's really fun and then being able to be around friends and just kind of enjoy yourself. It's really nice.

Alexis Marshall: [00:45:30] How have your relationships with your family with your friends changed since you left that relationship?

Rose: [00:45:39] They've gotten better a lot better actually.

Rose: [00:45:42] I feel actually a lot closer to everybody and it's nice because there's not a day that goes by that I don't see at least feels like almost everybody around here. So yeah we're always checking in on each other. And you know I think everybody's a lot closer now.

Alexis Marshall: [00:46:08] What would you want somebody who was in a situation like yours to know and.

Rose: [00:46:21] You're not alone.

Rose: [00:46:25] you might think you are, but you're not.

Rose: [00:46:28] And say something. You can't be afraid to say something, cause you do have opportunities to do it whether they know it or not. you do and you just have to.[25.3]

[MUSIC]

Alexis Marshall: Huge thanks again to Rose for sharing her story as well as to Zac Oswald and DarKenya Waller of the Legal Aid Society. You can find more information about their work and wide-ranging legal services at las.org.

If you or somebody you know is suffering from domestic violence, there is help. Contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at thehotline.org or call at 1-800-799-7233.

This is the final episode in the pilot season of Surviving. If you or somebody you know has a story worth sharing on this podcast reach out , subscribe to Surviving on your favorite podcasting app and be sure to follow @SurvivingPodcast on Twitter. Or email survivngpodcast@gmail.com Send questions, comments and recommendations for future episodes!

Until next time, I'm Alexis Marshall, and this has been Surviving.

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