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LIVE WITHOUT FEAR

Karen and Helen's Story

Karen and Helen are separated by more than 40 years, but united in a common traumatic experience. During a four month period, in 1995-1996, each woman was raped by the same man. Helen and Karen are living proof that rape is a crime that impacts women of all ages. But they are also something more: A testimony to the healing power of the relationships that emerge between rape survivors.

Karen and Helen first saw each other from across the room at their local police station, just months after they had been raped. They were brought together to view a lineup of suspects - their rapist was not among them but it would be years before they could actually speak. It is a little known fact that rape victims who have been assaulted by the same man cannot talk to one another until after the trial of their assailant, as not to prejudice the case, so for many years Karen and Helen's interaction was limited by their shared history.

When their rapist was at last apprehended, years after Karen and Helen had been raped, they again crossed paths at the preliminary hearing during his trial. As Karen left the courtroom, she passed Helen, who was on her way in.

"Helen's hand was balled into a fist, and she raised it in the air, like a victory symbol, and smiled at me. There was something triumphant about Helen. There still is. To have gone through what she went through, and to have that energy after being raped while in her eighties, that just amazed me," says Karen.

Today Helen says simply, "What else is there to do? If we don't go on living, they may as well have killed us. We need to keep going."

In the years since their rapist was convicted, over long lunches, dinners and the occasional margarita, Karen and Helen have made up for lost time, learning to trust and talk to each other about rape, and so much more: their politics, their passions, their great love of fishing. These two women are, in Karen's words, "Mother and daughter by choice. We understand one another in a way no one else can."

It's a joyful bond, and a redemptive one - a singular and small mercy in the face of shared grief.

To learn more about
HAVEN,
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