The Hum Podcast

Episode 38: "I Remained This Beautiful Kid"

[Theme music fades in]

Sasha: And so kids who aren't getting access to help and who aren't able to come forward and talk about it, they grow up oftentimes believing that they are dirty, disgusting, and unlovable, and what happened to them was their fault. That's the trauma of a victim. The sooner that kids get help, the sooner that kids are having access to healing and to justice, the sooner they can start to rewire those negative self-cognitions about their own identity.

[Music increases in volume]

Gilad: You're listening to The Hum.

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Simona: When Sasha Joseph Neulinger was a young boy, he was sexually abused by his own uncles. Now a grown man, he went behind the lens to direct a deeply personal and intimate tale of trauma and his path to overcoming it and healing. The film is called *Rewind* and it draws from over 200 hours of home videos and frank conversations with his family and reconstructs Neulinger's childhood and reveals the intergenerational legacy and cycle of abuse. The film recently had its Canadian premiere at our eighth annual Human Rights Film Festival here in Toronto, and we're so honored to be joined by Sasha today.

Gilad: Can you walk us through your story a little bit and what motivated you to tell it now?

Sasha: Yeah. I'm a survivor of multi-generational child sexual abuse. Unfortunately, my story is not unique. At least in America, one out of every four girls and one out of every six boys are sexually abused before they're 18 years old and 90% of abusers are known and trusted by the family, so this idea of stranger danger is actually really the minority of abuse. The majority of abuse is inflicted by people who are trusted and given access to those children willingly by the family.

Sasha: I had the fortunate opportunity to benefit from a lot of therapy from a family that believed me, that chose to support me, not just through my healing process, but through the prosecution process of facing three separate abusers and confronting them in court about the things that they did to me. Because of that support that I received in conjunction with the human being that I've discovered within myself, who I am, I was able to process what happened and get to a place

where I could reclaim the sense of self-love, reclaim my sense of self, to own my voice again, to see beauty in who I was despite the trauma.

Sasha: Having come through that four years of abuse and then on top of that, nine years of prosecution, I really felt that it was important to share this story with the world, not just to expose the truths of what victims may or may not be feeling as they go through this, but also to create awareness. I think part of the reason why child sexual abuse is so prevalent is because of the stigma and the shame. Kids oftentimes don't know how to verbalize what's happened to them because they don't even know what sex is. If you don't even know what sex is, how do you know to talk about sexual abuse? It's just something awful that happened.

Sasha: At least in my case, I thought that what was happening to me was because I was dirty, disgusting, and unlovable because why else would these people that I love and trust do this to me? Kids who aren't getting access to help and who aren't able to come forward and talk about it, they grow up oftentimes believing that they are dirty, disgusting, and unlovable and what happened to them was their fault. That's the trauma of a victim. It's really hard to work out of that mindset to rewire. The sooner that kids get help, the sooner that kids are having access to healing and to justice, the sooner they can start to rewire those negative self-cognitions about their own identity.

Gilad: You touched on the feeling of being dirty, of putting the blame on yourself. At what point in your childhood, as you're processing this, did you start to realize that this had nothing actually to do with you, that this was way beyond you?

Sasha: Well, there are different stages. Abuse started when I was four years old, just slightly before four years old, but I say four years old. I was able to disclose when I was eight. For those four years, that was my belief system: "What's happening to me is my fault." First, there's the experience in the therapist's office where you know, I disclose and the therapist says, "Well, hey, no. This isn't your fault. What happened to you was wrong and it was..." But someone telling you that isn't the same as internalizing it for yourself.

Sasha: That journey, I think, is different for every individual survivor. I can't speak specifically to the collective experience of survivors, but what I can say for myself is that it took a long time to get to a place where I could truly internalize that and believe it because for four years of that silence and that isolation, I felt trapped and alienated in my own body. Even though it was just four years of holding this secret, those four years led to decades of working to overcome the negative beliefs about myself that were a result of the abuse.

Sasha: With *Rewind*, as you said, we draw from over 200 hours of home video. Basically, I was 23 years old when *Rewind* became a concept in my mind. I was just finishing up film school at Montana State University and I was actually working in an internship with Grizzly Creek Films, who's a partner company in the production of *Rewind*, but at the time I was just a production assistant and I was working on a Nat Geo show with them. I remember sitting in the editing bay, I was logging some footage late at night, and I remember thinking to myself, "I love where I live, I love this job that I have. I recognize how fortunate I am to have my whole life ahead of me despite what happened, but I also recognize that there were unanswered questions from my childhood that were limiting my ability to fully embrace the joyful life."

Sasha: For every joyful experience I had in adulthood, there would still be this voice in the back of my mind that said, "Hey, Sasha. You're dirty, you're disgusting, you're unlovable." I had gotten to a point in my life at 23 now where the trauma was far in the past and yet there is still this self-deprecating voice in my mind. I realized that if I didn't confront the source of this voice, which I believed was from unresolved trauma from my childhood, then it would be with me for the rest of my life and I didn't want that.

Sasha: I thought that maybe I could start to find some answers to where this voice was coming from by rewatching my childhood. I knew that my dad, he had videotaped a lot of it, he was a filmmaker, so I started by just calling him. I said, "Hey, dad, do you still have all of our home videos?" He's like, "Yeah, I've got like three huge boxes, but I should edit them before I send them to you because there's footage of your abusers and you might not want to see that." I'm like, "No, dad. That's exactly what I want. I want you to send me everything."

Sasha: After I watched the first six tapes, I realized I had to watch everything, so I actually gave my two weeks' notice to Grizzly Creek Films on this National Geographic show and devoted my time and energy to watching this footage. I felt that if I was going to take the time to do this, I might as well document the experience because if there were profound discoveries and if watching this footage led to bigger conversations with the people involved in my story, then maybe this could be something that would be valuable to the world. It just started as a hunch and became something that we were able to watch here in Toronto in December.

Simona: What was it like at 23 making this huge decision to walk away from a job that's in line with what you want to do for the rest of your life and then reopen the wounds and watching the physical footage of your abusers, of what looked like happy times in some of the films? What was the process and how did you, I guess, stay balanced or stay sane and grounded?

Sasha: Those are great questions. It was scary to walk away from Grizzly Creek Films at the time because I loved the fact that I was working on a show for National Geographic. I love nature, I love film, and I had a job that gave me access to both, but like I said, it was a crossroads where I realized that if I didn't pump the brakes and face what clearly was unresolved trauma right now, then I probably never would. It would be easy to just ignore it and cope with and just live with that self-deprecating voice and I didn't want to.

Sasha: Part of me, I guess, recognized that I was young enough that even if it was a sidetrack from this job that I liked, there'd be other opportunities. I didn't necessarily know that would be true, I just figured that at that point in time, my mental health was the most important thing, my ability to be happy was the most important thing. I couldn't really do that if I didn't face these demons that clearly were still latched on.

Sasha: Watching the footage was incredibly cathartic, because now I was years removed from the actual trauma and I could watch myself objectively. I could see this little child who always was beautiful. I could see myself as a child before abuse. I got to watch myself having these beautiful moments, moments that I had completely forgotten about because they were overshadowed by the trauma. I got to see myself in close proximity to my abusers and I got to see myself during the years that I was holding that secret. I got to see myself after I disclosed.

Sasha: What I was able to see objectively as an adult was that I remained this beautiful kid. Nothing about me was dirty, disgusting, or unlovable, just my perception of myself had changed. Furthermore, I could see my parents and how they were as adults and understand them as an adult myself. I could also see the behavioral patterns of my abusers and recognize that they were unhinged before I was even born. It was very much like recontextualizing my own story. For every answer that I got from this footage, from these questions that lingered in my mind up into adulthood, it also spawned this need to ask more questions, questions of my dad, questions of my mom, my psychiatrist, the prosecutor, the detective.

Sasha: Ironically enough, I stopped working with Grizzly Creek Films, but six months later, I had a little pitch video. Basically, when I quit working on this Nat Geo show, I had like 1500 bucks in my bank account and I just flew myself and one of my college buddies, who is a cinematographer, to Philly. We just did preliminary interviews and used some of the home video to create a pitch video to start fundraising.

Sasha: Thomas Winston, who is one of the executive producers of *Rewind*, he is the president of Grizzly Creek Films. Six months later, he saw the video we put together and he was like, "Sasha, we didn't realize that the story was your story.

It's completely up to you, but if you'd like our Emmy Award-winning film crew to help you make this film, we'd love to be a part of it, we'd love to help you on this journey." I was like, "Let me think about that." Of course, yeah. That's awesome.

Gilad: Yeah, duh.

Simona: Duh.

Sasha: Are you kidding me? That's amazing. Once we started working together, Tom's team at Grizzly Creek Films and my team at Step 1, that's when we were really able to start getting the resources together to make this film and what a journey it's been.

Gilad: Just so you know, I'm not sure if you're aware, but we had over 450 films submitted to our film festival this year and we only have the space to select seven features. I'm sure I speak on behalf of the whole programming team and no offense to any of the other films, I mean, they're all such strong films, but yours is the most well-produced, well-put-together film in our lineup and it really shines, the love that was poured into making that movie. The story really comes through beautifully.

Simona: I think that was one of the only films that we didn't have much of a back-and-forth argument with suggesting that it be in the film festival. It was something that unanimously, I think, across the board, we saw it was such a powerful documentary and with such a hard topic to discuss, it was done in such a beautiful way, especially with the use of the home videos, yeah.

Sasha: Well, it's an honor to be here. It's an honor to be able to share *Rewind* with a Canadian audience here at this festival. It was really scary, especially since *Rewind* is my first feature-length documentary, it's my directorial debut. I couldn't have told this story on my own. I was fortunate to have the support of my family. If anyone in my family said, "No, I don't want to participate. This isn't happening," then we don't have the film that we have today. If I hadn't been fortunate enough to be able to collaborate with this incredible team that I got to collaborate with on the film ...

Sasha: It required a lot of trust, bringing in other filmmakers, working with other filmmakers on a story that is very much mine, was subjective, was scary, but they earned that trust. I think that having other filmmakers that you can trust fully when telling such a personal story is vital because I think to tell a subjective story like that, you need to have a certain level of objectivity as you're looking at cuts, as you're looking at the crux of the story.

Sasha: At the same time, those objective filmmakers have to have an equal amount of trust in the person who's coming forward to tell their own story, so it was ... As you all know, I mean, film is a collaborative art form and I'm very grateful for the team that I got to work with on this and I'm very grateful that my family trusted me to tell our story and that they didn't shut down.

Gilad: I want to talk about family a little bit. I come from an immigrant family, immigrated here from Israel. I'm not speaking on behalf of all Israelis, of course, we're also obviously Jewish. My name, if that doesn't give it away, nothing else can. My family is really interesting in how we deal with our own trauma. We have trauma and challenges in our family just like most families, I'm sure, do. My family always taught me growing up to keep it in the family. If we're dealing with anything, you keep it in the family. You don't talk about it outside with your friends, with the community, and maybe not even therapists.

Gilad: It was refreshing to see, at least through your film, that therapy was an avenue that was offered to you from a very young age. I'm curious, in the making of the film, did you ever experience any of that pushback from your family? Like, "It's important to talk about this, yes, but this is a very public thing we're about to do. We're about to make a film about this that's going to be open to anyone." Did you ever experience that pushback of keeping it in?

Sasha: Well, yes. What I would say is that I first have to give huge props to my dad for saying yes to sending me the footage. In this story, without wanting to give much away, that was a big ask that I had of him, a lot of vulnerability that he had to kind of live in to just share the tapes, to say yes to this story. He was the first one that I called because he had the tapes and he said yes. I think because he said yes, my mom and my sister were more willing than maybe they otherwise would have been.

Sasha: My mom, when I called her, she was supportive right away, but my sister was actually the pushback that I got originally. She was like, "Well, hey, we just got through all the trials and everything else. Why do you want to bring this back up? Why do you want to share this with the world? It's so personal. We should just move on with our lives."

Sasha: What I said to her, I was like, "Becca, do you feel like we've really moved on with our lives? Do you feel happy, self-empowered, and free? Because if you don't, then we're not really moving forward with our lives. In many ways, we are stuck in this trauma. We survived it, but there's a difference between just surviving by the skin of your teeth and actually thriving in your life." To me, survival wasn't enough. I didn't just want to say, "Yeah, I survived it and it's this thing I can't look at or touch because it hurts too much." I wanted to be able to thrive in my life

and I knew to do that, I couldn't have this voice in my head that said, "You're dirty, disgusting, and unlovable."

Sasha: That challenge to my sister, I think, at first it was hard for her to hear, but then when we had such huge support from our Kickstarter campaign, it went viral. Upworthy shared the trailer, the Kickstarter trailer, I think four days into the Kickstarter and then it went viral. When my sister saw how much love and support and community was building around this openness and vulnerability, that's when she really saw that this could be a positive thing, not just for us, but for others who had been in similar situations. Since that time, she's been an incredible supporter of me personally and of the film and it's brought us all closer.

Simona: You touched on some of the challenges in making this film and keeping up the appearances and overcoming that, but can you elaborate on any other challenges that you had to face in making this documentary?

Sasha: Oh, yeah. Well, yeah, I think because I was 23 and it was my first film, because I lacked experience, I think I was just naive enough to think it would be relatively easy, which, if I had the experience I have now, maybe I would've been like, "I don't know if I want to make this film," because it was hard and it took a lot of time.

Sasha: The challenges I faced, I think, were ... Raising money to make an independent documentary is really hard. It's also really hard when you're the salesman, but what you're selling is your personal story, your very raw, vulnerable, personal story. Fundraising, realizing that it isn't just, "Okay, we're going to go make a film because we want to make a film," it's you raise some funds, you work a little bit, you run out of money, you raise more.

Sasha: Because I was so personally committed to this film, and because it's such an important story for me, personally, these lulls in production as a result of fundraising were pretty brutal, this question mark of when will we finish this. I am ready to move forward with my life, but I can't until I know that this film is done because lingering within this unfinished project is this huge chapter of my life, so that was challenging.

Sasha: Also, learning about boundaries. Yes, in the making of *Rewind*, I have to be extremely open and vulnerable in order to have the conversations that I have with my family or with the people involved in the case, but vulnerability, while it's an important means of connection, doesn't mean that it has to be what you lead with. To be vulnerable, there needs to also be trust because if you're just blindly vulnerable, people can take advantage of that.

Sasha: I had actually been scared to open up intimately in relationships. When I came out with the Kickstarter for *Rewind*, I was like, "Okay, I can be vulnerable. I can be vulnerable again." I threw myself back into dating in a really profound way and learned very quickly that you can't just lead with vulnerability, that people have to earn your trust, and that discernment is really important when you're deciding how you open up to another human being.

Sasha: Because as a director and as the subject of the film required vulnerability, I had to really be very clear with myself and others about the line between the vulnerability that exists in the project and where I'm coming from as a human being outside of that project.

Gilad: You touched on being vulnerable and developing that trust and how important that is. With the Me Too movement right now, we're seeing a huge rise in victims coming forward with some of the abuse that they've faced, yet there's still so much stigma attached to it and even so more towards boys and men, right? What do you think is preventing more men from coming forward with their own violence that they've experienced?

Sasha: Well, I'm so happy you asked that question. First of all, I'm a huge fan of the Me Too movement. I think it is so important that survivors are coming forward and able to share their truths, their trauma, but what I have experienced and what I have seen is that sometimes the Me Too movement can veer towards a hatred towards men, an anger towards men. Objectively, I can understand that, especially for victims who have been abused by men. I'm one of them. I'm a survivor who was abused by three different men.

Sasha: But with that blanket anger, when we get into anger like that, especially towards men, male victims may not feel safe in that environment to come forward. Maybe they're thinking that their experience is less valid or less important because men are the issue. What I would say is that I don't believe that men are the issue. I think human beings who've experienced extreme pain and who didn't get help can, and oftentimes do, grow up to inflict pain on others. The majority of rape is heterosexual, male and female, that's the reality, but men rape men, women rape men, women rape women. It's not so black and white.

Sasha: With *Rewind*, what I was curious in, especially since this is multi-generational abuse, is okay, yes, there's anger, there's frustration, but how did we get here? How did my Uncle Howard or my Uncle Larry or my cousin Stewart, how did they grow up to be people who could inflict this type of pain on children, right?

Sasha: Well, when you look at it, two of my abusers were themselves abused as children. I often ask the question, "What's the biggest difference between my abusers and me?" The clearest answer is I got help and they didn't. I had a family

that believed me and supported me and access to mental health practices that could help me process the trauma. They didn't.

Sasha: In that realm, I can understand how much pain they grew up with and how much self-hatred they grew up with. If you think about it, you have a child who thinks that they're dirty, disgusting, and unlovable. They're abused and they grow up feeling this way. They feel disempowered, like they've never had power in their life. Then they grow up, and I'm not saying that all of them do, but 80% of abusers were themselves abused as children. I think it's only 30% of people who are abused grow up to actually abuse, but 80% of abusers were themselves abused as children.

Sasha: What does that say? If these children got help and they were able to remember their beauty and reclaim a sense of ownership of their lives and power, maybe they don't grow up to rape, to hurt other people. I think survivors and abusers are both trying to achieve the same thing, which is to reclaim power. The difference is survivors get to do it in a way that's facilitated in a healthy environment, in a self-aware environment, and abusers are doing it in a violent way, but both survivors and abusers are trying to reclaim power.

Sasha: I think it's really important that people feel their anger in the Me Too movement, but then at some point, we have to move past anger, which is a part of the healing process, and start spending our energy on why, how: How does this happen? Why does it happen? I really do believe that it comes all the way back to helping children get the support they need so that they grow up to be healthy, self-empowered human beings that don't need to rape others.

Simona: Your journey has brought you from being a sexual abuse victim to a survivor to an advocate to now someone who is thriving. It's beautiful. Your experiences have inspired the creation of a child advocacy group called Voices For Kids, which gives you space to travel and share your story with the masses. Can you tell us a little bit more about the initiative?

Sasha: Yeah, Voice For The Kids is a company that I founded a few years ago. Basically, I do a lot of work training multidisciplinary teams. Multidisciplinary team means law enforcement, child protective services, mental health professionals, pediatrics, educating them on this epidemic through the eyes of the child from my own personal experience. Then also, helping with awareness campaigns and fundraising work that child advocacy centers are doing to help kids who have been abused so that they get the help while they're kids so that they don't grow up to be in pain.

Sasha: I've had the opportunity now to travel the world, giving hundreds of speeches and engaging with communities that surprisingly don't yet have the education on

just how prevalent child sexual abuse is. It's been a really beautiful experience to be able to help in that education, to help in that awareness, and also to inspire people to action because this juxtaposition, talking about the difference between the abusers, my abusers, and myself, I bring that with me. It's the question of, well, how come it's so prevalent? Well, and it's not necessarily popular, but what I do say is, "It takes a village to raise a child. It also takes a village to allow child sexual abuse."

Sasha: There's a great Ethiopian proverb, and I don't have it down word for word, but basically, it's, "If the child is raised within the village and doesn't feel the warmth from that village, it will grow up to burn the village down to feel its warmth." That's the reality of if we leave children to stew in that pain without the support and the services they need, there's a great chance that they're going to grow up and burn the village down.

Sasha: The second proverb that I bring around is the Chinese proverb, which, "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now." We can't change the past, we can't change the fact that so many kids have been abused, but how we move forward as a society can dictate what things look like in the future.

Gilad: You mentioned earlier the process was, you said, four years of trauma and then there was ... Did you say seven years of-

Sasha: Nine years.

Gilad: Nine years of prosecution. I just have two questions related to that. In the process of prosecution, and this is something that's been coming to light more as we're talking about any victim coming forward and having to take the stand and recount very traumatizing experiences that have happened years ago, while you take the stand, what you're saying is scrutinized. It's really tough for me to remember what I had for dinner yesterday, let alone something that happened 20 years ago, so that experience can be very traumatizing for those who are being asked to recount what's happened. When it comes to children and them taking the stand and them having to talk about what has happened to them, where is there room to improve in that process?

Sasha: Part of what I'm doing with Voice For The Kids is creating awareness about the importance specifically of child advocacy centers. I didn't have a child advocacy center in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania when I was going through all of this.

Sasha: I'll pause on the child advocacy center piece and walk you through the experience for a child victim without a child advocacy center. When I was eight years old and I disclosed in the therapist's office, I thought that, "Okay, I did the

hard part. I talked about what happened to me, and now I have been told that what was happening was wrong, and now I can just move forward with my life, right?" Before a child advocacy center, which I'll get to in a moment, what I didn't realize then was that for the next nine years of my life, I'd be asked to relive my experiences over and over and over again. I had to tell my story of stories of abuse from the three different abusers to the detective, to the prosecutor, to Child Protective Services.

Sasha: Well, then what you have is you have all of these different testimonies that are attributed to me, but you're talking about an eight-year-old child, so maybe by the third time you're being asked to talk about the fifth time you were raped, maybe the child doesn't want to disclose such vivid detail on that specific interview. Well, now CPS's interview, Child Protective Services' interview is a little bit different than the detective's interview. All of a sudden, you have multiple testimonies attributed to this one kid, but there are slight discrepancies. It's because that kid is getting exhausted and retraumatized by the experience of being asked to talk about multiple rape experiences over and over and over again.

Sasha: Just the process of gathering information to discern whether there should be a criminal case, that alone is secondary trauma that is horrible for the child, but then the prosecution process, being asked to get up on a stand as a little child to point at the person who swore that if you told they'd kill you and talk about what they did to you, I would say that, I mean, again, the abuse that I experienced happen over a four-year period, prosecution process, nine years. The prosecution process, you could call it secondary trauma, but it was almost worse than the abuse itself and it was disruptive to my ability to move forward with my life, because I'd have to leave school to prepare for court back and forth, back and forth.

Sasha: Specifically, with my Uncle Howard, who was the cantor at Temple Emanuel, the largest reformed synagogue in the United States, the congregation held a fundraiser for his defense funds, so they had millions of dollars from which to work with. When you have that much money, you can file a lot of motions and you can delay the process for a long time. It was brutal.

Sasha: Child advocacy centers, which is what I'm bringing awareness to and the organizations that I'm working for through Voice For The Kids is that we're talking about the importance of a child advocacy center. A child advocacy center, it's one place where all of the members of the multidisciplinary team come under one roof instead, so the child, instead of like I had to, where I had to go to the prosecutor's office and then the detective's office and then the hospital and then Child Protective Services, instead, if a kid goes to a child advocacy center, they're going to one building, it's child-friendly, there's toys, bright colors, even

sometimes treehouses, playground equipment, and the child is met by a child family advocate, someone who is trained to connect with kids on their level. They explain the process to the child and the family of what's going to happen here, so there's no question marks.

Sasha: Then the kid gets a forensic interview. A forensic interviewer is trained on a nationally approved model in the United States. They're trained to interview the child in a neutral, non-leading, and forensically sound way. While they're interviewing the child, the interview room has cameras and audio equipment, so that testimony is captured in the child's words. There's no mouth-to-pen translation, it's what the kids said. Furthermore, that interview is being live fed to a room down the hall where the prosecutor, the detective, Child Protective Services, mental health professional are all watching.

Sasha: The kid only has to tell their story one time. If any of the people from the multidisciplinary team have questions regarding that concern their own investigations, they can actually ask the interviewer, who will take a break, to ask those questions. The kid is only interfacing with one adult telling their story one time. Once they leave the child advocacy center, they get access to, oftentimes, mental health professionals through the child advocacy center at no cost to the family.

Sasha: My grandparents had to sell their house in retirement and downsize to help pay for my therapy. Again, we didn't have a child advocacy center. These kids, not only has their secondary trauma been reduced significantly by only having to tell their story once, but that recorded interview is now forensic evidence and it can be used in court.

Sasha: Oftentimes, when defense attorneys see that disclosure from that child and they draw a picture that no child should know how to draw or that child discloses information that no child should even know how to disclose, a lot of times these defense attorneys are immediately trying to get a plea bargain because they don't want to even touch this with a 10-foot pole in court, protects the kid from secondary trauma and the prosecution process as well. It's vital. It's vital to the health of our community. It's vital to the health of our children and I'm passionate about it, which is why I'm traveling internationally talking about this model.

Gilad: It seems like a much more streamlined, healthy way to go about investigating.

Sasha: Yeah.

Gilad: I'm happy that that's something that's being used more and more. Sasha, where are your abusers now?

Sasha: Great question. My Uncle Larry, he spent, oh, gosh, I believe it was 14 years in prison. Now, from what I understand, he does group therapy. I believe he lives with one of my cousins, his son, but I don't really know. I mean, we don't talk.

Sasha: My cousin, Stewart, passed away. I'm unsure of his cause of death, but he was 42 years old. I know there's a history of heart issues on that side of the family.

Sasha: Then my Uncle Howard, Temple Emanuel allowed him to retire even though he pled guilty to sexually abusing me. He lives in Manhattan. I don't know if he's watched the film, I doubt it, but on May 11th, *Rewind* will be having it's US TV premiere on PBS as a part of the Independent Lens lineup, so it'll be in 280 million homes. If he'd like to watch it, it's available to him.

Gilad: Thank you for taking the time to share that with us today. I think to anyone listening, I hope it inspires them to just be open, to just be open.

Simona: And get help.

Sasha: Thank you. I would say to anyone who's listening: It's really never too late. No matter how much time we may feel we've lost in pain, is really never too late. I always go back to that Chinese proverb, "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now." Everybody deserves to love themselves.

[Theme music fades in]

Gilad: My name is Gilad Cohen.

Simona: I'm Simona Ramkisson.

Gilad: This podcast is edited and produced by Brandon Fragomeni and Alex Castellani. Our associate producer is Ron Ma.

Simona: This is an initiative of JAYU, a charity that shares human rights stories through the arts.

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Gilad: If you enjoyed this podcast, help us make more of them by donating whatever you can. Visit us online at jayu.com/donate.