



Stirring Oscars Performance of 'Til It Happens to You' Raises Awareness of Sexual Abuse

By Kaitlyn Lioni

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BUFFALO, N.Y. -- It highlights Hollywood's biggest achievements, but as usual, this year's Oscars sparked conversations about more than the winners. One of the most memorable moments shone a spotlight on sexual abuse.

As a survivor of sexual abuse, Lady Gaga delivered a passionate performance of her song "'Til It Happens To You" during the Oscars Sunday night. It's from the film "The Hunting Ground," which addresses the issue of sexual assault on college campuses, and the struggle to bring perpetrators to justice. She had 50 other survivors join her on stage.

"It's super important what she's doing to get the public on board, to get the public awareness out there, so we're supporting each other, we're supporting survivors, and we're supporting each other as human beings," said Amanda Lowe, senior associate at Phillips Lytle LLP.

Lowe is part of the **Campus Accountability** team at Phillips Lytle, which works with colleges and universities locally and across the state on awareness, prevention and response to sexual assault.

"It's really important that they have a plan in place, that they have the correct policies and procedures in place, that they're following those policies and procedures and that they're training their staff and administrators, giving them examples of what they could encounter so they feel comfortable when something happens, they know how to respond," said Lowe.

While Lowe says New York has some of the strongest laws regarding sexual assault, and campuses are working to improve safety, she stresses there are no guarantees; and students should say something if they see something.

"We're getting better and better at teaching students bystander intervention, how they can protect themselves, and I think those things are very important, and it's a conversation you should have with your children before and while they're off at school," said Lowe.

"I'm asking you to join millions of Americans including me, President Obama, the thousands of students I've met on college campuses and the artist here tonight, to take the pledge. A pledge that says 'I will intervene in situations when consent has not or can not be given.' Let's change the culture," said Vice President Joe Biden, who introduced Lady Gaga at the Oscars.