

April 8, 2013

On the night of my high school graduation back in June of 2004, I had sex with my girlfriend, a freshman, who was 5 weeks from 15 while I was 2 weeks past 18. The sex was consensual. It was poor judgment on my part, one that I regret still. We both attended a high school for students with learning disabilities or emotional problems that prevented success in our home high schools. I have been battling depression and bi-polar for many years now so this was a great place to get the education I needed to succeed. Nine months after graduation, I visited my transition counselor who helped me graduate on time. My ex had seen me, but we didn't speak. She told the counselor that we had sex and because of Miranda's law, school counselors are required to report this information to the state social services agencies who report it to the police. I told the detective who came to my house what had happened.

6 months later, I plead to guilty Sex Abuse 3, a misdemeanor and was sentenced to 3 years' probation, 100 hours of community service, fines and registration as a sex offender, a social stigma that has haunted me since. I took a sex offender risk analysis by Dr. Frank Calistro, the state's top psychologist in this area. He determined I was highly likely to **not** re-offend and felt treatment wasn't needed. There are so many guys and girls who have done what I did and have never been charged.

Thanks to a bill passed by the legislature in 2007 I have been relieved of the burden of having to register. I thought that would help make life easier with finding a job while moving forward with my life. I have found painfully that this has not been the case in many ways. Most employers don't want to hire anyone convicted of a crime, especially a sex crime, even if I was no longer required to register. Many employers do background checks, and during these rough economic times I understand they have to start the process of elimination somewhere. They do find out even if you don't disclose it. If you disclose, I found they never call you for an interview. Damned if you do, damned if you don't.

I have worked very hard to move my life forward. As of last month, I have completed my associate's degree in web site development and design at Portland Community College and am considering transferring to OIT or Portland State to obtain my Bachelors in software engineering. I completed a six month internship with a national non-profit, which was rewarded with a 12 month extension. I worked so hard during this period that as of last month, I was hired on full time employee as a web designer. Though I have been able to obtain employment once I was given the chance to prove myself, I don't know if I would be to find other employment in my field with this record.

Another problem that causes great difficulty in moving forward is that many apartments in the Portland area are owned or run by corporate management companies who have the policy to never allow people convicted of sex related crimes, registered or not, to rent in the complexes. They don't care about the circumstances. They do a background check and if anything shows up they won't rent to you. This is important to me because I am currently engaged to

my best friend, my soul mate and live in an apartment in her name, though they know I'm there frequently as a guest so they don't ask questions. We will be getting married in August and need to be able to get an apartment in both names. In the future, I look forward to having children and raising a family. How am I able to provide when I face a social stigma that has haunted me for almost 8 years of my life and without this proposal passing, potentially the rest of my life? My fiancée doesn't deserve this, our future children don't deserve this.

Many other misdemeanors can be expunged. Because my crime is a sex crime though, this is not the case. It doesn't seem reasonable that a guy who had sex with his girlfriend should have to pay for the rest of his life.

Thank you for your consideration.