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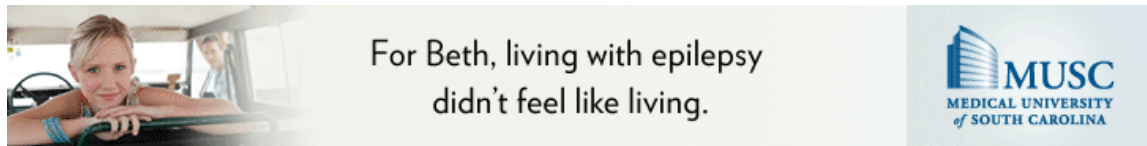
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Former teacher avoids prison

Coach admitted asking 12-year-old girl for sex

BY ALLYSON BIRD
[abird@postandcourier.com](#)

Thursday, May 12, 2011

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Former First Baptist Church School teacher and revered coach Charles "DJ" Fishburne Rhodes III admitted to asking a 12-year-old girl for sex through text messages, but won't serve time behind bars and won't have to register as a sex offender.

Just weeks after Rhodes propositioned the girl, his wife gave birth to a severely handicapped child. A judge took pity on Rhodes' family and decided that sentencing him to lockup would punish his family the most.

Rhodes appeared in circuit court Wednesday afternoon, a standout in his dark suit and flanked by two attorneys. Most of the other defendants entering guilty pleas arrived in jail or prison jumpsuits.



Charles 'DJ' Fishburne Rhodes III, 26, a former teacher and coach, is accused of soliciting a student for sex.

Rhodes, 28, has a master's degree, a wife and a son who is about to turn 2. Just a month before his arrest, the Legislature honored Rhodes and First Baptist's baseball team for winning the 2009 S.C. Independent School Association Class AA state championship.

Investigators arrested Rhodes on a charge of criminal solicitation of a minor, but he pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of unlawful conduct to avoid a trial, according to Assistant Solicitor Debbie Herring-Lash.

She said the girl did not want to testify, which is why prosecutors decided to strike the plea deal.

"The girl just couldn't do it," Herring-Lash said.

Rhodes admitted to sending text messages to the 12-year-old student at the school for two or three weeks that summer. He asked the girl to come to his house and perform a sex act on him.

When the girl's friend saw the exchange and replied to it, Rhodes said both girls could come over. Neither did.

Circuit Judge Roger Young sentenced Rhodes to 30 days of community service and to serve two years of probation. Young also ordered that Rhodes complete sex-offender treatment and that his name be added to the central registry for child abuse and neglect -- but not the sex offender registry.

Rhodes could have served up to 10 years in prison on the more serious offense.

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Melonea Locklair, executive director of People Against Rape, said she worried that the sentence makes a dangerous statement that Rhodes' family is more important than the girls.

"I understand what the judge did, but was (Rhodes) thinking about his wife when he was doing that to those young girls?" Locklair said. "And what's going to stop him from doing it again?"

When the girl's parents addressed the judge, Rhodes closed his eyes and hung his head.

"Our family has been through a tremendous amount of hurt and pain with this man we deeply trusted," the girl's mother said.

Rhodes' attorneys offered no excuses for his behavior, but noted that when Rhodes sent the text messages, his wife was in her final six weeks of pregnancy, his father had just been diagnosed with a terminal illness and Rhodes was studying for the state teacher's exam.

Shortly after his arrest, Rhodes' son was born with severe medical problems, including brain injury, that require 38 daily therapies. Rhodes' father died in the past few months and, barred from teaching, RHodes took his place in the family sheet metal roofing company alongside his grandfather, Charles Rhodes.

The elder Rhodes told the judge he works alongside his grandson and shares lunch with him daily. He described DJ Rhodes as "a broken young man."

"We need him in business. His wife needs him at home. And his mother needs him in her situation," the senior Rhodes said.

Rhodes' wife, Fran, apologized for her husband's actions and asked the judge, "Please allow him to be home with his family."

The judge asked if Rhodes had been tested to determine whether he has a sexual appetite for children. Attorneys said testing showed he did not. He has no prior criminal history.

Addressing the judge and the court, Rhodes cried as he said, "I've spent the last two years figuring out what I was going to say on this day." He settled on this: "I'm sorry from the bottom of my heart."

Young said he sees men daily who cry on the stand and added, "That doesn't necessarily move me all that much.

"You just don't text 12-year-old girls number one," the judge said, "and you don't text them inappropriate things."

Reach **Allyson Bird** at 937-5594.

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post reader Score: 1

11:37 PM on 5/12/2011

Anonymous1, I must say that you are definitely close to the situation, perhaps too close from the family standpoint. But I promise you, DJ Rhodes had ASKED his students for their phone numbers. He is a real jerk who was power hungry who thought he was without reproach. He was revered by the school since he led the baseball team to a coveted state championship, he was on the top of the world. And speaking of his son, is it not true that his problems were caused by complications during delivery-that the pregnancy was a good one, that this unfortunate brain injury was due to STRESS at the end of his wife's pregnancy? Wonder what caused that stress? If DJ Rhodes really loved his wife, he would not have texted these girls to come to HIS home when his wife was not there to perform sex acts. And he is the TEACHER, HOW DARE you blame this girl and the other ones that he has been in touch with. If you recall, this is not the first time something like this has happened at this school. From having to deal with similar problems in the past, this school is very explicit when it comes to teacher/student interaction. IF she started this first, which I highly doubt, then he should have been man enough to stop interacting with her right then, and if it continued from her, then he should have talked with her parents. You are so very wrong. I wonder how you and his wife would feel if someone does something similar to this to his severely brain damaged son when they're not around to protect him? Bet you'd change your song then, wouldn't you?

Lizabeth, you are right on.

Report Abuse

two sheds Score: 1

11:27 PM on 5/12/2011

Here's what should happen: if the judge has any kids, then Mr. Rhodes should be placed in a home right on that judge's street. Then let the judge try and relax in his own home while not worrying about his kids and that may help him to understand parents' outrage over this decision.

Report Abuse

reality check Score: 3

11:12 PM on 5/12/2011

Anyone who commits such an act is despicable, but it's even worse from someone who is in a position of authority and leadership....a position of influence among children and the community. It begs the question....."WHAT were you

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thinking?!"



usc2008

Score: 1

10:37 PM on 5/12/2011

What the marbles Charleston County? How can you let someone with his position who abuses his power get away from a serious crime like this? I think the prosecutor did not convince the jury hard enough. If this happens in Williamsburg County, we would most definately would send him to prison no matter what circumstances.



Name withheld

Score: -1

10:31 PM on 5/12/2011

This comment is under review.



anonymous1

Score: 1

9:54 PM on 5/12/2011

His son is severely handi capped, he has a brain injury from a problem with his wife womb, seizures, internal problems, and many other things. He is developmentally delayed but still the sweetest boy you will every meet; he is just starting to be able to sit up on his own and manage food; and while it was wrong - she should have never been in the schools office to find his phone number anyways and started texting him first. She also has texted other teachers before. shes 12 and shouldnt even have texting! This girl is still at the school and still causing trouble.. you can see his son at

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/charlie>

Charlie has several therapists and wasnt even expected to live. So please, pray for the son and pray that DJ can find peace and help. When this happened, he turned to church and a therapist. He is a huge aspect to church and turns to the Lord often. Pray that it wont happen again, that he will find help, rely on his family, and begin a better life...

I do know he has a private seperate number now and doesnt do anything with children anymore. Look at his sons blog and pictures, read the journal, youll see. He's a sweet son and deserves therapy and help. All his therapists have said DJ has changed tremendously.

3 replies



roladur

Score: -1

8:30 PM on 5/12/2011

Every individual that leaves a commit never once asks "Why"; so many allow their minds to think sexual thoughts or allow their minds to fantasize about children. I believe many of these individuals have not a clue or could care less why so many choose such life threatening consequences. In addition, I believe the reason why many choose such distasteful commits is because it arouses their self-image with so much frustration and hate against others that have made poor choices. Truthfully, you, your next-door neighbor, people you work with, even who you sit beside in church and everyone anyone other comes in contact with could be dangerous company dealing with disturbed thoughts of some nature. I know if more individuals writing these commits put their time in finding ways not



only to protect victims, but put their true feelings in a more spiritual way this epidemic would decline. For those who believe in God's book, which was written by many sinners, which He chose and forgave. If we all would teach our children passion with outstanding honor, I believe many would never cross that forbidden path of unrighteousness'.

I know all the commits that will follow this writing from anger, which truly allows the incentive results displacing society today. Some will commit what in the name of Jesus are you trying to say.

Does anyone know the reasons why humans chose the wrong ways throughout life or how they can regain their sanity? The true answer is not revenge when you have faith and love for all God's creations.

Someone wrote a book called www.whyamithisway.com from their heart, with great intention of helping the weak and disturbed minds throughout the world, for he cares about all mankind.



justjennings

Score: 0

7:42 PM on 5/12/2011

Thirty days of community service? What a joke! People get more time for shoplifting a candy bar.



retired

Score: 2

7:18 PM on 5/12/2011

floydlee:

Thank you for your kind words.

As for me, I have prosecuted many child molesters and done so with some degree of success. (Far worse than this case.)

What you and some of your friends seem to ignore is the weakness in the prosecution case and the fear, not unusual, of the defense that the prosecution may convince the girls to testify. Hence, they worked out a deal. Not unusual when both sides fear the other side. In order that the deal be accepted by the Court, the defendant must admit his guilt.

Many an innocent man has pleaded guilty for the above reasons. I am not implying that the defendant in this case is innocent.

And I hope that he is able to live a good life after this incident.

Don't you wish the same?

As for the girls, I think that schoser said it best. Have a nice evening.




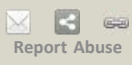

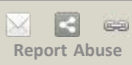

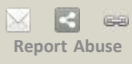

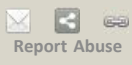

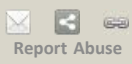

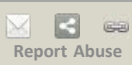

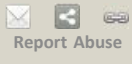
floydlee

Score: 2

5:49 PM on 5/12/2011

In this case; The Pedophiles is arrogant, The Prosecutor is arrogant, The Judge is arrogant. At least the church school fired this predator creep. I know this is not the first time Ms. Lash allowed a pedophile to escape the sex predator list. The court failed to hold The honorable (visited privately w/ the pOpe) reverend father James Nyhan who admitted to copulating w/ four little children. Oh yea, Mr. "retired" arrogant blogging judge, you must be an "A" hole pedophile predator freak too for you to try to make someone's twelve year old baby responsible for the actions of a 28 year old low life pity party freak. If not sending him to prison, at the very least put him on the sex predator list so parents can have the due diligence tools to help protect their babies from you bunch of arrogant



pedophile predator freak "A" holes.	
 <p>schoser Score: 0 4:29 PM on 5/12/2011 Also, this guy is NOT a pedophile. He IS a predator. A child sexual predator.</p> <p>2 replies</p>	 <p>Report Abuse</p>
 <p>schoser Score: 1 4:24 PM on 5/12/2011 Not too mention that Chris Hanson used to run that show To Catch a Predator. Guess all those guys should have been let go too.</p> <p>11 replies</p>	 <p>Report Abuse</p>
 <p>schoser Score: 2 4:18 PM on 5/12/2011 We are all the time calling for authorities to do more to stop rapes, assaults, murders, pedophilia...all types of violent/sexual crimes before they happen. Here is/was a great chance, and they blew it! (no pun intended). The judge did actually. So now we have to wait until someone really suffers, even though we know what this pos is all about. Also, if it were my daughter I would be mad as hell at her for not bringing this to light immediately and exchanging sexts with this creep. She wouldn't have a phone again for a long, long time-if ever. Not one that I would pay for anyway.</p> <p>1 reply</p>	 <p>Report Abuse</p>
 <p>dmoney Score: -2 4:10 PM on 5/12/2011 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMtZfW2z9dw perfect song for this perv!</p>	 <p>Report Abuse</p>
 <p>schoser Score: 0 3:55 PM on 5/12/2011 I have a question for those who think this judge did the right thing here. How about if we start letting attempted murderers off if they don't follow through? The police run the stings, catch 'em, but then we let them go because it was not carried out. Crazy isn't it? This is the same thing to me.</p> <p>2 replies</p>	 <p>Report Abuse</p>
 <p>coldbeer Score: 2 3:18 PM on 5/12/2011 rowen, I don't know about race and class blind, but in this case it's crime blind.</p>	 <p>Report Abuse</p>
 <p>terridabomb Score: 0 3:07 PM on 5/12/2011 This guy is a straight up sexual predator. Hide your kids, hide the neighbors kids. Hell, hide any kids. This guy is on the prowl with his shady CBC roofing business. He's waiting for a roofing job where the parents are gone and the teen daughters are home alone. That is what scares</p>	 <p>Report Abuse</p>

this whole city. The guy needs to be castrated so no children are ever harmed.



oversite

Score: -2

3:04 PM on 5/12/2011

I would definately recommend the defendants roofing company - I hear they do excellent work. You can safely ignore the panicky statement below posted at 2:36pm - which only seeks to further damage our economy by attempting to shame and punish a local company.

8 replies

Report Abuse



harpo

Score: 0

3:02 PM on 5/12/2011

OK, what he did was wrong and he might have really done some serious damage to the child if she'd let him. He's one of the really stupid internet predators who target your children in the ether. It's all about what his intentions were .. and it looks like he was trying to score a BJ from a young girl.

So I think the judge did a fair job on this one .. since none of it came to fruition .. and this little turd will be able to help raise his own disabled child now instead of being in prison; that does count for something.

I'd like to see this guy make a television commercial as part of this plea deal .. and just tell the audience that text messages and email just isn't as private as we seem to think they are.

I also have a problem with a 12-year-old having a text-enabled cell phone, too. All they need is something that handles phone calls and 911 .. they don't need to become addicted to the #@! telephone at such a young age.

Disable texting on your child's cell phone .. they don't need it until they hit 18.

3 replies

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oversite

Score: -2

2:42 PM on 5/12/2011

"Text is not sex." This man is not a sex offender.

6 replies

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cream



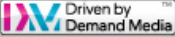
Score: 0

2:36 PM on 5/12/2011

May I add that if I needed a roofing job done, and I knew CBC of Charleston (which I understand from the article he now works in his grandfather's business) might be sending this man out on a job at my home, I would definitely hire a different company to do my roofing job. I would not knowingly invite a sexual predator to come anywhere near my children or my neighbors' children. It's not that a citizen has the ability to get a SLED report on each worker who comes to the home, but a citizen can darn sure take action when they KNOW such a person's criminal background.

4 replies

Report Abuse

 <p>oversite Score: -3 2:33 PM on 5/12/2011 Since when should a debatable text message cost the tax payers in excess of \$400,000.00 anyway?</p> <p>1 reply</p>	<p>Report Abuse</p>
 <p>oversite Score: -6 2:27 PM on 5/12/2011 If the fanatics, man haters, seekers of death and violence, and all around non-sensible idiot-type predator-panickers would actually read the article - neither of the two girls were ever touched by the defendant.</p> <p>6 replies</p>	<p>Report Abuse</p>
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