



NEWS RELEASE

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Man Who Bought Teen from her Father Sentenced to 17 Years for Sexual Assault

Erik Castillo was sentenced to 17 years in prison Wednesday for sexually assaulting a 15-year-old girl whom he paid to bring to the United States from Mexico.

Castillo (DOB 01/25/73) pleaded guilty June 21 to second-degree sexual assault with serious bodily injury (F4) and attempted sexual assault (F5). Charges of human trafficking for sexual servitude (F3) and sexual assault by a person in a position of trust (F4) were dismissed as part of the plea agreement.

Castillo, of Thornton, arranged to have the girl sent from Mexico to Thornton, sending money to the girl's father, who lives in Mexico. The girl has since given birth to a child fathered by Castillo.

Castillo claimed he was trying to help the girl and that he didn't understand that his actions were illegal in the United States.

But Chief Deputy District Attorney Stephanie Fritts told the judge that Castillo has been living in the United States for nearly 25 years. "We would expect he would be familiar with our cultural norms by that time," she said. Fritts noted that the victim's brother and other family members tried to keep the girl away from Castillo, suspecting his intentions.

Fritts said Castillo approached the girl on Facebook and arranged to bring her to the United States. Once she was here, he repeatedly sexually assaulted her and isolated her, only taking her out of the house to go to the grocery store. The victim, a U.S. citizen who was raised in Mexico, wanted to come to the United States to improve her life and obtain an education, but Castillo never enrolled her in school, Fritts said. When he finally took her to the doctor for her pregnancy, Castillo told staff that he was her uncle.

"He did not have altruistic motives," Fritts said. "She was completely dependent on him for everything. She had been living in poverty in a high crime area, her mother had died and she spoke no English. He exploited these vulnerabilities."

Adams County District Judge Robert Kiesnowski, Jr., rejected Castillo's claim that he didn't know what he was doing was illegal. "You have been in the United States nearly 25 years," the judge said. "This was a 15-year-old girl. You are 44 years old."

"This is a particularly egregious case," Kiesnowski said. "The defendant tried to trade money for this young lady. This reflects a belief that people can be bought and sold. They can't be. That is immoral and inhumane, especially a 15-year-old girl."

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