

February 26, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Amanda Eckert and I am writing in regards to Senate Bill No. 636. I am strongly in support for the passing of this bill, and I think it is a very important issue. The concept of consent seems to be a difficult one for some people to understand, especially with the very popular phrase "no means no." The issue with this phrase is that there are more ways to say "no," than using the word. You can say "no" by trying to change the topic at hand, you can say "no" by not saying anything at all, and in extreme cases, you can say "no" by struggling to get somebody off of you.

I am 21 years old, and when I was in middle school I was raped by one of my best friends. However, I didn't realize it was rape until five or six years later. At the time I kept saying I was uncomfortable with what was happening, and offered suggestions, which the other individual refused to listen to. I assumed that since I never said "no," because it's a word I've always found hard to use, that the situation I was in was warranted, and I had no reason to feel hurt or scared.

I didn't realize I was raped until I was in high school and a domestic violence worker talked to my class about rape and what constitutes as such. The worker made sure to discuss the "yes means yes" aspect, along with other verbal and non-verbal ways to say "no." When the examples she gave paralleled my own experience, I was numb and in shock. I had spent so many years avoiding questions about my dissolved friendship with this person, because I thought that *I* was in the wrong, because I never said "no." I blamed myself for what happened to me, thinking it was my fault for not directly saying "no."

No one should have to live in a position where they feel like they deserved the abuse they received because they didn't, or physically could not, say the word "no." If I had learned about sexual assault in a "yes means yes" layout, rather than "no means no," I would have realized that I wasn't in the wrong, sooner, and I wouldn't have spent so many years punishing myself and convincing myself that I deserved it.

I know that this law and mindset could save so many people. It would stop the self-blame, it would help with any blurred lines between consensual and non-consensual sexual behaviors. With the culture we live in, and non-consensual relationships being displayed as consent more, and more (i.e. 50 Shades of Grey), this law is so important and life changing for past, current and future victims of sexual assault.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story. I support this bill 100%.

Thank you,

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