



PRESS RELEASE

Former Youth Minister Sentenced To 27 Years In Prison For Enticing Minors To Engage In Sexual Conduct

Friday, March 22, 2013

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Louisiana

LAFAYETTE, La. – U.S. Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced today that a former youth minister and Half Back Media owner Eric Michael Manuel, 23, of Lafayette was sentenced to 27 years in prison by U.S. District Court Judge Elizabeth E. Foote for enticing minors to engage in criminal sexual activity. Manuel also is required to complete 15 years of supervised release.

A federal grand jury indicted Manual in January 2012 on 18 counts of production of child pornography and two counts of using a facility of interstate commerce to persuade a minor to engage in criminal sexual acts.

In the factual basis for the guilty plea, Manuel admitted he would text underage boys to convince them to engage in sexual acts. Manuel also would pay the boys to allow him to perform oral sex upon them. The defendant attempted to entice a third boy to engage in sexual conduct with him, but the boy refused.

Additionally, Manuel admitted to creating a Facebook page in the name of a young girl, Emily Brandt. While using the false persona of Emily, Manuel convinced 18 boys between the ages of 13 and 17 to produce sexually explicit images and videos of themselves and send them to him. When one boy refused to send the sexually explicit images to Manuel, he threatened the boy.

The FBI-Lafayette Resident Agency, the Louisiana State Police, and the Lafayette Police Department investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney John Luke Walker prosecuted the case.

This case is part of Project Safe Childhood, a U.S. Department of Justice launched nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by U.S. Attorneys' offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

Investigators are available at all hours to answer hotline calls concerning child exploitation. The Lafayette FBI office number is (337) 233-2164.

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Topic

PROJECT SAFE CHILDHOOD

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