



NO MORE SILENCE

STORY CHALLENGE





LET'S
STAND UP
AND
BREAK
THE SILENCE!

Let's humanize the all-encompassing sex offender label. This label is one that our justice system, media, and society use to portray those convicted of a sexual offense as sub-human, unworthy of empathy, and incapable of change. Let's remove the shaming and the one-size-fits-all story by allowing these men and women, and their families, to tell their stories and convey their messages of ways in which reform and advocacy is needed, both inside and out.

We want to shine a light on these truths, by sharing the stories of how this label affects them, their families, friends, and futures. Let them share the pain of knowing that their time is never fully served, and how that continued punishment affects their civil liberties and a chance for a normal family life.

Let them share their struggles, but most importantly their accomplishments, goals, hopes, and dreams for a better life. These stories will be used for advocating and appealing to those who have the power to initiate change. There is power in numbers!

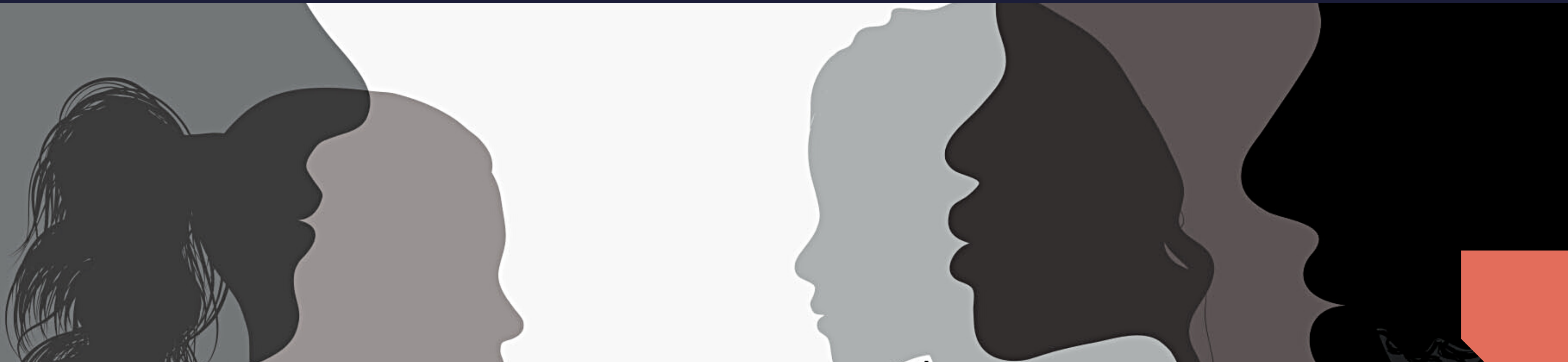
Let's stand up and break the silence!!



TOOLS TO HELP SUBMIT YOUR STORY

View the following pages for:

- Tips on how to tell a great story
- Sample letter
- Release form
- Mailing instructions



TIPS FOR TELLING YOUR STORY

1. KEEP IT SHORT

Goal: Pack a powerful punch in as few words as possible.

2. USE SPECIFIC DETAILS WHILE REMAINING COMFORTABLE WITH WHAT YOU CHOOSE TO REVEAL

Examples: Personal struggles of incarceration, how it has affected your family, friends, dreams, and hopes for the future.

Goal: Help your listener remember your message.

3. DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE HONEST AND EXPRESS EMOTION

Goal: Be yourself and show your humanness.

4. MAKE SURE YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR MESSAGE IS

Goal: Your listener should come away having learned 1-2 specific things about the truth within the system concerning justice, reform, education, and what you want them to remember.

5. TELL WHAT'S AT STAKE AND WHAT HAS BEEN GAINED OR LOST BY YOU AND/OR YOUR FAMILY

Goal: Communicate urgency, emotion, and the need for solutions.

6. MAKE SURE TO END YOUR STORY WITH AN ACTION THAT YOUR LISTENER CAN TAKE

Some ideas: Call your lawmakers, spread the word about the need for reform, sign up for email updates at www.uv4sor.org, join the UV4SOR advocacy group on Facebook.

SAMPLE LETTER

SECOND CHANCE BY NOLAN



My name is Nolan, I was twenty-three years old at the time of my offense. I had been coaching volleyball for five years. When I was 19, I was asked to coach middle school girls at the high school I graduated from. I then taught at a local volleyball club and helped with college sports while finishing my Bachelor's Degree and beginning my masters. During my post graduate studies, I was asked to help coach at a local high school. I thought long and hard, discussing with my family and peers before deciding to accept. It was an assistant position, but I thought it would help prepare me for future coaching positions after I graduated.

My life over the past year had been an emotional one. My oldest sister was going through a very difficult divorce. My nephews were being mistreated by their father and harrassed by friends at school because of the public choices their father made. It was tearing me up. My parents were also facing some trials in their marriage and looking at separation. My youngest sister was starting a brand new business. During this time, I was working three jobs, working on my masters, and battling depression. I was on an emotional overload. That's when it happened. That's when I fell in love with one of my high school players.

SAMPLE LETTER

CONTINUED....

Don't misunderstand, I am not making excuses, I just want you to know my frame of mind. I consider that time to be one of the most vulnerable times of my life. Just because you are considered an adult, it doesn't mean you always make adult decisions. I felt broken, alone, and most of all in need of understanding and love.

That's when she contacted me. At my lowest. Her mother needed me to pick up her daughter for practice. A one time ask became several. The mother had me picking her up from her grandparents, aunts, and family events. We talked on each occasion and discovered we both had challenging things happening at home that we had no control over. We both suffered from depression and long story short, we fell in love. It was consensual, except in the eyes of the law. In many ways, I believe we saved one another's lives, however we were wrong. I knew it had to end.

After much heartbreak, we ended it and that's when it blew up. It came to light. My life was ended, dreams were gone, and my family devastated. My hope of future marriage and a family were destroyed, because who wants to be with a 40 year old felon/sex offender? I had disgraced and dissapointed my family that I love with all my heart. The closeness I shared with my niece and nephews thrown away. All I wanted at this moment was to curl up and die.

SAMPLE LETTER

CONTINUED....

After being picked up, I cried for days. Even after being bonded and coming home it all just seemed like a horrible nightmare. The feds picked up my case for reasons we will probably never know, and I was offered a one-time plea. I had three days to decide, with no criminal history. SEVENTEEN YEARS. That number kept ringing through my head. I will never see my only living grandparents again, my parents may even be gone, my niece and nephews will forget me, and my education will be useless. If I didnt' take the plea, they said I would get over 50 years. I was scared to death. How did my state case of six years end up federal and seventeen? I thought I was doing the right thing by telling the truth, by cooperating with police without a lawyer. I was so naive. I believed in our system. I sealed my fate that day. I was sent to a holding center 5 hours from my home. My family would drive 5 hours for a fifteen minute visit behind glass. After that, I was sent to a facility in Terra Haute, only 2.5 hours from my home, but my life was threatened as soon as I walked into my cell. I spent the next 4 months in PC (protective custody), same rules as isolation for bad behavior. When the caseworker looked at my file, he did not understand why I was there. Soon to find out that the prosecutor failed to file paperwork dropping all charges except one, which barely qualified me for low. I was moved, but to another medium facility where I current have already been recommended for low transfer. So I wait.

SAMPLE LETTER

CONTINUED....

I now live my life in a 6x8 foot cell, surrounded by concrete and steel. The noise and chaos is constant. There is no privacy and trust does not exist here. With covid, life here is mostly unbearable. There are frequent lock downs, no programs, rationed commissary and little to no physical activity. It's like if you picture a pervert hiding in the bushes waiting to commit a heinous crime to a child. You see there is no distinction between acts in sexual offenses. We are all thrown away in a pool of hate and sometimes violence with no rehabilitation or counseling.

When I return to society, I am forced to register, take periodic polygraphs, wear an ankle brace, live in a percentage of geography determined by the law and the list goes on. I will become a target for shaming, for crimes of violence and hate. Ostracized from society. Isolated from living a free life. I know many will say I deserve it, but even if that were true, my family doesn't. They did nothing wrong. They have sacrificed, supported and loved me through it all. I can never repay them for all they continue to do for me. Making 5 hour trips for 15 minute visits on the other side of glass. Making 4 hour trips, for one day, 2.5 hours of visitation, forms filled out, masks in place, temp taken, hand stamped, glass separation, and NO HUGS. Sending books, magazines, letters, money for calls, emails, stamps and hygiene supplies. It has been devastating to all involved.

SAMPLE LETTER

CONTINUED....

Though covid has diminished, the majority of programs and activities I can do to better myself, I have already completed. I have done all that I could and have been working on my masters degree. I have done a lot of growing up, but really wish the system had help for sex offenders offered earlier than your last two years of incarceration. I work hard every day to improve myself spiritually, physically, and mentally. I want to be home, taking care of my loved ones, being a productive member of society, and receiving therapy.

When my debt to society is served, I pray that the registry has been abolished, that laws are reformed, and mandatory sentences are repealed. I also pray that charge/crime pooling is ended and distinctions are made. A lifetime of punishment isn't freedom and certainly isn't a life.

I pray that you will see the injustice in our justice system and you will make a priority to address sex offender reform. Call, email, or write a letter to your senators, representatives, to the media to encourage them to initiate reform for sex offenders. We are people. People with family, friends and a life to try to amend. Please, I plead with you, help me get home to have hope for a life and a family of my own one day.

To reunite with the family I love and miss.

Sincerely, Nolan



INSTRUCTIONS

SEND STORIES OR QUESTIONS TO:

Email: contact@UV4SOR.org or

Mailing address:

UV4SOR

526 W. 14th Street, Suite 287

Traverse City, MI 49684

Please include with story:

- First name or initials only of the author
- State and/or facility
- Photos of those 18+ only, if included
- Signed release form from author and each person in photos