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PORTLAND

Portland judge asks pimp of 15-year-old girl why he got into sex trafficking

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By [Bryan Denson](#) | [The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

JudgeHernandez.jpg

U.S. District Judge Marco A. Hernandez, seen here on the bench of his Washington County courtroom before President Obama appointed him in 2011, occupies a courtroom in Portland's Mark O. Hatfield United States Courthouse.

(Randy L. Rasmussen/The Oregonian)

A pimp named Gary C. Tanner Jr., who [shot lurid photos of a 15-year-old girl](#) in a Seattle hotel room and posted them to an online site for adult escorts, stood in a Portland courtroom Monday trying to answer a federal judge's questions about how and why he got into sex trafficking.



U.S. District [Judge Marco A. Hernandez](#) stared down from his bench, imploring the man in leg shackles and faded jail scrubs to explain himself.



Gary Charles Tanner Jr.

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"I was born into this lifestyle," Tanner said. "My father was involved -- my mom was involved (for a time). "I kinda went after his footsteps."

Hernandez clearly wasn't satisfied with the answer. He told Tanner he was brighter and more articulate than many of the men and women who had stood at the defense table before him.

"You had a choice," he said. "You're not hapless."

Hernandez pressed for more.

"Was it the lifestyle? The money?"

"No," Tanner said, his word weighted with resignation. "It's not fun. It's a headache. A lot of times you're alone. You're down on your luck."

He had wanted to quit, he said. "But I couldn't see a way out."

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Hernandez appeared to be caught on the horns of a dilemma. He would have to balance the arguments he'd heard from lawyers in the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Leah K. Bolstad had pointed out that Tanner served a previous prison term in Washington for promoting prostitution, his victim in that case a 17-year-old girl. Now he was before the court again, having pleaded guilty to sex trafficking by force, fraud or coercion.

The government's position, Bolstad said, was that Tanner deserved 15 years, 8 months in prison.

Tanner's lawyer, Noel Grefenson, had pointed out key reasons why Hernandez should go easier on his client: He had endured an "abysmal" upbringing. He also suffered memory loss, anxiety and antisocial personality disorder, the result of an accident that nearly crushed his skull. A thick scar snaked down the back of Tanner's head like the letter C.

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Grefenson asked the judge to sentence his client to the mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years.

Hernandez rustled papers on the bench, his brow furrowed, and reminded Tanner that under sentencing guidelines he faced up to 24 years in prison.

"The bottom line," the judge said, "is that you transported a minor for purposes of prostitution from Washington to Oregon."

Then he passed down a sentence that could be seen as merciful: 14 years behind bars.

"Good luck to you, Mr. Tanner," Hernandez said.

"Thank you," Tanner replied.

Deputy U.S. marshals led him away.

-- Bryan Denson

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