

Dear Honorable Court of Oregon,

My name is Dr. Nicholas Buekea. I worked closely with Portland State University, Pacific University, and the Early Assessment and Support Alliance to bring awareness to the greater population about the PSRB, and the sentence of Guilty, Except for Insanity.

I am a clinical Doctor of Occupational Therapy, who has successfully been reintegrated into society after being placed under the jurisdiction of the PSRB. In 2010, I committed a crime. I was found Guilty, Except for Insanity. Rather than going to prison for my crime, I was given the prospect to shine in my community in Portland. I was given the opportunity of rehabilitation through mental health services. I was suffering from an untreated diagnosis of schizophrenia at the time of my crime. The courts found that with the right treatment at OSH and Outreach Programs such as the Early Assessment and Support Alliance, I could regain a sense of wellbeing and go on to become an active and safe member in my community. I believe that the sentence of "Guilty, Except for Insanity," should be more applicable to people who have made mistakes while in active psychosis.

Many people, including myself, did not choose to experience psychosis. People, while in psychosis are not in a healthy state of mind to make moral decisions. However, while we are healthy and not in active psychosis, many of us are morally adept and want the best for the world around us. We can lead productive lives once our illness is addressed.

It's unfortunate that unlike physical illness, like diabetes, mental illness is often seen as someone's fault, where the person experiencing the illness is stigmatized and blamed. The media often makes it seem like people who've experienced psychosis are always going to be in active psychosis for the rest of their lives. The myth of bad character is perpetuated, when the fact is, people with mental illness are more likely to be victims of crime and trauma than the average healthy population. It is unfortunate that those of us under the PSRB who have GEI, have made mistakes because of health conditions we did not ask for. It is unfortunate that our health is tied to committing crimes against society. While, we have histories of committing crimes, while being symptomatic, the truth for me, and for countless others, is that if our mental illness is treated and addressed, we may go on to never experience additional psychoses again. Given our healthy selves, many of us can become professionals who are able to give back to the community. I was given a chance to work for Central City Concern and give back to the houseless community as a licensed mental health care provider.

Many of us want the best for our community, but many of us who experience delusions and hallucinations, are not well equipped to navigate reality, unless we have the support of our professional healthcare providers. If we can address our illnesses through therapy, recover groups (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous), spiritual communities, supported employment and medications when appropriate, we can go on to become professional members in our society.

While it's important that GEI be accessible to those in need, many people of the consumer movement also believe that mandatory maximum sentencing should be ratified to reflect the reality of treatment and success. I believe sentencing should better reflect the pace at which healing can occur. I think we should take people's individual circumstances into account. People should be sentenced on a more case by case basis. Using blanket mandatory maximum sentences perpetuates the stance that all people with mental illness heal at the same rate. We are ultimately individuals who want to be part of the community. We are not just numbers to be cast away and forgotten. We are not just our past mistakes and crimes. We are sorry for our delusional states of mind that led us to be dangerous to our surroundings. We believe we deserve a chance at rehabilitation, to lead gentle and productive lives. We ask for forgiveness and a chance at a beautiful life worth living, back in our loving community.

Dr. Nicholas Buekea

OTD R/L

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Buekea', written over a white background.