

# Teacher indicted for sodomy of boys

By Jim Keary  
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A Prince George's County middle school worker was indicted yesterday on charges that he sexually assaulted male students after luring them to his home on promises that a woman there would perform oral sex on them.

Shunnar Mitchell, 21, of the 9700 block of Locust Avenue in Seabrook, was a teaching assistant at Thomas

Johnson Middle School until his Oct. 16 arrest. County school officials said he has been removed from classroom duties since his arrest.

The 26-count indictment charges Mr. Mitchell with sodomy, child abuse, false imprisonment, assault, solicitation, battery, unnatural and perverted sex practices and second-, third- and fourth-degree sex offenses.

According to court records, Mr. Mitchell enticed a 13-year-old male

student at the middle school to come to his home about 5:30 p.m. on Oct. 15, saying a woman would be there to perform oral sex on the boy.

But after Mr. Mitchell took the boy to his home, he tied the victim up and put a towel over his eyes and performed oral sex on the boy himself, according to court documents. The youth told police he pulled the blindfold away and saw Mr. Mitchell performing the sex act.

While police were investigating that incident, another boy at the Lanham school said he also was coerced and assaulted by Mr. Mitchell the same way on Oct. 7. That student, a 14-year-old, said Mr. Mitchell told him a woman performed oral sex on him, but the victim saw no woman at the home.

# Keep It Up, Ken

By Dan Savage

"We're not in the business of putting cock rings into the hands of little girls."

—Lisa McKendall, manager of marketing and communications, Mattel Toys.

**Mattel's new Ken doll is on the market.** New Ken is getting almost as much press as New Coke did. Since his introduction at a toy convention in New York City, Ken's been everywhere, including the front page of *The New York Times*' Arts and Leisure section. Why the hoopla? Ken's first piercing—his left ear—and his two-tone "greased lightening" hairdo.

But an important part of Earring Magic Ken's new wardrobe has been overlooked by the straight media—Ken's cock ring. Hanging around Ken's neck, on a metallic silver thread, is what 10 out of 10 fags will tell you at a glance is a cock ring.

Mattel Toys, in the person of Lisa McKendall, denies the ring around Ken's neck is a cock ring. "Absolutely not," she said. "It's a necklace. It holds charms he can share with Barbie. C'mon, this is a doll designed for little girls, something like that would be entirely inappropriate." Okay, Lisa, let's call it a necklace. Queers have been wearing cock rings as necklaces for years.

When they're not fashion statements, the things are worn around the base of one's penis. Slip one on when soft; once hard, it traps blood in the penis, increasing sensitivity and prolonging orgasm.

Chrome cock rings, like Ken's, were long worn by the leather crowd on the shoulders of their biker jackets (left for top, right for bottom). In the waning years of our long national nightmare (aka the Reagan-Bush years), younger gay-boy activist-

types with brand new leather jackets took to wearing cock rings on whichever side looked best or, to the horror of the leather crowd, on both sides. Tops? Bottoms? Versatile? Clueless? Who knew? Then newly-minted sex-positive dykes started wearing them—cocks or not, they didn't want to miss out on any of the sex-positive accessorizing.

Cock rings exploded (ouch!)—as vest zipper pulls, as key rings, as bracelets; rubber ones, leather ones, chain mail. But the thick chrome variety, the Classic Coke of cock rings, was and is most often worn as a necklace. Chrome cock ring necklaces became *de rigueur* rave wear. For about a year, every gay boy at a rave was wearing at least one—these cock rings were often pressed into service later in the evening, to help totally tweaked ravers keep up

what the X was pulling down.

On closer inspection, Ken's entire Earring Magic outfit looks like 3-year-old rave wear. A Gaultier purple faux-leather vest, a straight-out-of-International Male purple mesh shirt, black jeans and shoes. It would seem Mattel's crack Ken-redesign team spent a weekend in LA or New York dashing from rave to rave, taking notes and Polaroids.

Ken's redesign was prompted by the advice of little girls who play with him. "Two years ago we did a survey," Lisa McKendall said. "We asked girls if Barbie should get a new boyfriend or stick with Ken. They wanted Barbie to stay with Ken, but wanted Ken to look a little cooler."

And what's cool in the USA right now? What's hip? Queers are. Turn on MTV and watch the seven-foot-tall drag queen (we're all praying

she isn't a one-hit wonder) strut her fine stuff for the heartland. Lesbian comics on Arsenio (how far he's come!—thank you, Queer Nation). Gay and lesbian activists in the Oval Office chatting up the president. A live feed of the Queer March on Washington running on C-SPAN.

Suddenly, it's hip to be queer. The little girls of our great nation wanted a hipper Ken, and Mattel gave them a hip Ken. A queer Ken.

"Ken and Barbie both reflect mainstream society, reflect what little girls see in their world," said my pal Lisa, who was getting awfully testy about my line of questioning. "What they see their dads, brothers and uncles wearing, they want Ken to wear."

As nice as Lisa is, I'm not sure I buy her reasoning. How many dads out there are running around with

cock rings dangling from chains around their necks? How many mesh shirts does International Male sell to the Junes and Wards of our great nation? What the little girls were seeing, and telling Mattel was cool, wasn't what their relations were wearing—unless they had hip, queer relatives—but the homoerotic fashions and imagery they were seeing on MTV, what they saw Madonna's dancers wearing in her concerts and films and, as it happens, what ACT UP/Queer Nation fags and dykes were wearing to demos and raves.

When you've made it to the aisles of Toys R Us, your movement has arrived—remember the sudden appearance of African-American Barbie-style dolls after the full

**When you've made it to the aisles of Toys R Us, your movement has arrived. Queer Ken represents either queer infiltration into popular culture or the appropriation of queer culture by heterosexuals.**

impact of the civil rights movement began to be felt? Queer Ken is the high-water mark of, depending on your point of view, either queer infiltration into popular culture or the thoughtless appropriation of queer culture by heterosexuals. Lisa seemed genuinely unaware of the origins of Ken's "necklace"—and it's highly doubtful Mattel's design teams were lurking at queer raves. Queer imagery has so permeated our culture that from rock stars (Axl Rose and his leather chaps) to toy designers, mainstream America isn't even aware when it's adopting queer fashions and mores. Or when they're putting cock rings, even little plastic ones, into the hands of little girls.

Earring Magic Ken is available at Toys R Us stores in the 'burbs. He's made in China, costs only \$10.99 and comes with a set of people-size earrings you can wear around the house or out to the bars. And while Ken now has a cock ring, he still doesn't have a cock.

"Traditionally, Ken doesn't sell as well as Barbie. Ken is a girls' toy..." said Lisa. But Mattel may be surprised how well Cock Ring Magic Ken sells as queers snap up the new Ken.

I already got mine. [ ]

Dan Savage is a free-lance writer and a regular columnist on gay issues for *The Stranger*, where this essay first appeared.

