

Georgia high court frees teen in sex case

by UPI

ATLANTA -- Georgia's highest court Friday ordered the release of an African-American teenager in prison for having consensual oral sex with a 15-year-old girl at a party. Genarlow Wilson, a former high school football player in Douglas County, Ga., was convicted of aggravated child molestation in 2005, when he was 17, and sentenced to 10 years in state prison with no chance of parole. The sex act was videotaped by his friends at a New Year's Eve party. In a close 4-3 decision Friday, the Supreme Court of Georgia upheld a lower court's finding that Wilson's 10-year sentence constituted "cruel and unusual punishment." The law Wilson was convicted under was amended in July 2006 to make consensual oral sex between two willing teenage participants a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in prison. The 48-page majority decision said: "Although society has a significant interest in protecting children from premature sexual activity, we must acknowledge that Wilson's crime does not rise to the level of culpability of adults who prey on children and that, for the law to punish Wilson as an adult appears to be grossly disproportionate to his crime." Wilson was also charged in the rape of a 17-year-old girl at the party but acquitted by a jury.

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