

NAACP NEWS

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NAACP PRAISES GEORGIA SUPREME COURT'S ORDER TO RELEASE GENARLOW WILSON

NAACP officials are applauding the Georgia Supreme Court's order to release Genarlow Wilson from the Burruss Correctional Training Center.

"Thank God that common sense, the will of the General Assembly and the popular opinion of most Georgians still has a place before the powers of government," said Georgia NAACP State Conference President Edward O Dubose in reaction to the court's decision. "America's history is littered with instances when laws have been misused -- their intended purposes subverted and lives destroyed. The NAACP monitors and intervenes when necessary because all too often the misuses of said laws are predicated by race or results in racial disparity."

The court's 4-3 decision written by Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears determined that Gernarlow Wilson's sentence of 10 years imprisonment for having consensual sex with a 15-year old girl when he was 17 constitutes "cruel and unusual punishment." Georgia Attorney General Thurbert Baker had appealed a Monroe Superior Court's grant of habeus corpus relief that would have freed Gernalow Wilson earlier this year.

Although the Georgia General Assembly changed the law since Wilson's conviction--to make similar acts a misdemeanor punishable by a maximum of one year in prison--Wilson, now 21, has been incarcerated for more than two years.

"For three years we've been proclaiming to anyone that would hear that Genarlow Wilson's sentence was unjust, and today the Georgia Supreme Court affirmed our position," said Kimberly Alexander, president of the West Metro NAACP Branch.

The NAACP has been in the forefront of the case. The West Metro Branch intervened on behalf of Wilson and five other defendants when they were originally charged in 2003. In July 2007 the NAACP led the first march and rally of more than 3,000 in Douglas County to draw attention to the injustice and demand Wilson's release.

The Genarlow Wilson tragedy is another example in an alarming series of cases that demonstrates overly aggressive prosecution against African American youth. Wilson's case and countless other recent dehumanizing attacks led the NAACP to declare a 'State of Emergency' that requires immediate action by local and state authorities as well as the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Congress. The NAACP has called for hearings in Congress and every community around the nation in order to clearly understand the scope of this problem and most importantly craft viable solutions. To learn more go to: www.naacp.org.

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors.