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Are you more likely to support the nomination of John Roberts to the U.S. Supreme Court, following the revelation that he assisted in the repeal of Colorado's anti-gay Amendment 2?
yes . no

**Next Issue:
Interior Decorating**

What happened to Iranian teenagers?

Human Rights Watch says they were executed for raping a child, Outrage says that's not so

by Rex Wockner

The *New York Times* and the *Times of London* have separately reported that Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni — the two male teenagers hanged in Mashad, Iran, July 19 — were executed not for having sex with each other, as has been reported, but for raping a 13-year-old boy. Human Rights Watch (HRW) is supporting that claim.

Asgari and Marhoni allegedly raped the boy at least 14 months prior to their executions, meaning at least one and perhaps both, were minors at the time.

There is some apparent confusion regarding the age of Asgari, as well. In different publications he has been listed as 16, while both *Times* indicated he was 18.

According to Scott Long, director of HRW's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights Project: "On the morning of July 19 — that is, just before the executions — a long article in *Quds*, a Farsi daily published in Mashad, described the case. It is clearly identified there as a rape case, with a lengthy interview with the father of the 13-year-old apparent victim. The account there

is that the case dates back two years, that the boy in question was seized outside a shopping area by the two boys ultimately convicted, who took him to a deserted area where five other boys were also waiting. (It's not clear what happened to the five other members of what is described as a gang.) He was gang-raped at knifepoint, according to his father's account, which is supported by three passersby who interrupted the act. Passersby were attacked with knives and had their cars vandalized."

It also now seems that an article from the Iranian Students News Agency, translated and circulated by the London gay group OutRage, was not the first article about this case, as OutRage believed, and may not have been translated correctly.

OutRage had reported that the ISNA article said the boys were executed for consensual gay sex. But HRW says the headline and the first sentence of the article make it clear they were hanged for "sodomy by coercion" ("lavat beh onf"). "Lavat beh onf," HRW said, is an archaic phrase that is not the normal way to refer to rape.

"Ultimately," said HRW's Long, "one has to ask what is the basis for believing that the



Ayaz Marhoni and Mahmoud Asgari minutes before their execution.

see **CONTROVERSY** on 13

Charlotte's Gay Center gets new executive director

Laura Kane-Witkowski is new executive director

by Monica Simpson

The Charlotte Lesbian & Gay Community Center's Board of Trustees announced Aug. 3 that Laura Kane-Witkowski has been hired as the new executive director. In her new position she will provide direction and leadership toward the achievement of the organization's values, mission, strategy and annual goals and objectives.

Before relocating recently to Charlotte with her partner, Jessica Kane-Witkowski, who is with Bank of America, Laura was the Health Services Coordinator of Affirmations Lesbian & Gay Community Center in Detroit.

"We're ecstatic to have Laura join our team at The Center," says Jennifer Wirt, chair of The Center's Board of Trustees. "She brings enthusiasm and vision for programming that will reach all sectors of our diverse community."

"I'm extremely excited to be a part of The Lesbian & Gay Community Center of Charlotte," says Kane-Witkowski. "Charlotte is such a rapidly growing area and

see **CENTER** on 20



Laura Kane-Witkowski previously worked with Affirmations Lesbian & Gay Community Center in Detroit.

Bush Supreme Court nominee helped overturn 'Amendment 2'

Roberts' work in overturning anti-gay amendment seen as 'crucial'

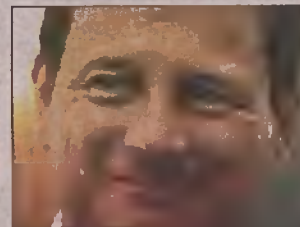
by Donald Miller

The *Los Angeles Times* reported Aug. 4 that Supreme Court nominee John Roberts assisted LGBT activists during the mid-1990s in preparation for one of the most important cases in the history of the gay rights movement.

The *Romer v. Evans* case sought to strike down a voter-approved 1992 Colorado initiative known as Amendment 2, that allowed employers and landlords to exclude gays and lesbians from jobs and housing.

The coalition eventually won the case in 1996 in a 6-3 decision.

Lambda Legal's Jean see **NOMINEE** on 16



Supreme Court nominee John Roberts: friend or foe?