

## Amanda Knox Supporters Cheer Court Decision

Written by AP

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Once it was clear that Amanda Knox's Italian murder conviction was overturned, her supporters in Seattle burst into cheers, threw their hands in the air and began to cry in joy.

"She's free," Tom Rochelle repeated as the translation of the Italian judge's words came across TV Monday.



Courtesy Photo

Surrounded by news cameras, the dozen or so supporters began hugging each other at a downtown hotel suite. The celebration marked four years of uncertainty for friends and supporters of Knox's family.

In its ruling, the Italian appeals court also cleared Knox's co-defendant, Raffaele Sollecito, of murder in Meredith Kercher's death. Kercher, 21, shared an apartment with Knox when they were both students in Perugia. She was stabbed to death in her bedroom.

Knox and Sollecito, her former boyfriend from Italy, were convicted of murdering Kercher in 2009. Knox was sentenced to 26 years in prison, Sollecito to 25. Also convicted in separate proceedings was Rudy Hermann Guede, a drifter and native of the Ivory Coast.

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Knox and Sollecito denied wrongdoing and the appeals court ultimately agreed.

Supporters also expressed sympathy for the Kercher family.

"This is primarily a sad occasion," said Tom Wright, one of the main organizers of the Friends of Amanda group, after the verdict. "They lost their daughter. We'll keep them in our prayers."

Knox grew up in Seattle, attending a private Jesuit high school before going to the University of Washington.

Friends of Amanda formed shortly after Knox was arrested for murder in 2007. With Italy nine hours ahead of Seattle, the group rented a suite and waited through the night for the court's ruling.

Friends of Amanda is made up of parents of her high school classmates, her friends from college and high school, and sympathizers from around the country. Some never met the young Seattle woman, including Rochelle, who joined the group two years ago after learning about Knox in the news.

From trips to Italy to sending Knox books, the group has been a pillar of support for the family.

Kellanne Henry is friends with Edda Mellas, Knox's mother, and has visited the family in Italy.

"It's the first night in four years that (Edda) is going to know her daughter is safe," said Henry, holding crumpled tissues in her hand. "That was a really overwhelming thought for me."

Some of the people gathered for Knox wore T-shirts that said "Free Amanda and Raffaele." Photographs of Knox, Sollecito and Kercher, illuminated by candles, were set up in the suite.

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"It's unreal," John Lange, Knox's former teacher, kept repeating after the verdict was read.

Lange remembers Knox as the modest drama student who played an orphan in the high school's production of "Annie."

"There's the person you know and there's the widely varying depictions of her character largely wrong, and upsetting to those of us who know her," Lange said earlier in the day.

Wright spent the last minutes leading to the verdict writing a speech, pending a verdict. When asked, he said his words didn't anticipate that the conviction would not be overturned.

"It was inconceivable for me that she wasn't coming home," Wright said