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D.A. BROWN: QUEENS MAN SENTENCED
TO 20 YEARS IN PRISON FOR CHOKING DEATH OF WIFE

Left Two-Year-Old Daughter in Car With Mother's Body

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a Jamaica, Queens, man has been sentenced to 20 years in prison for the October 2004 choking death of his wife. The woman's toddler daughter was found abandoned with her mother's body in a parked SUV five days after the slaying.

District Attorney Brown said, "The lengthy prison sentence imposed by the court is more than warranted considering the violent and brutal nature of the crime. This young mother was senselessly killed and her 2-year-old daughter was left alone to die. If the baby had not been rescued by firefighters she may also have died."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Leonardo Almonte, 40, of 139-11 115th Avenue in Jamaica, Queens, who is a bodega owner. Almonte, who has been held without bail since his arrest in October 2004, was sentenced today by Queens Supreme Court Justice Robert J. Hanophy to a determinate term of 20 years in prison. Almonte had pleaded guilty last month to first-degree manslaughter and first-degree reckless endangerment.

District Attorney Brown said that, in pleading guilty, Almonte admitted that he caused the death of his wife, Cesarina Colon, 32, on the evening of October 23, 2004, by throwing her to the floor inside the family's residence at 139-11 115th Avenue, straddling her body and choking her. Afterwards, he left her body and her two-year-old child, Rosie Batista, inside a vehicle that he parked at 95th Avenue and Cresskill Place about a mile from their home.

According to the District Attorney, the baby girl was rescued on October 28, 2004, when a passerby saw the woman's body and the child inside the vehicle and called 911. Firefighters assigned to Truck 303 responded to the scene, broke into the vehicle and rescued the baby girl, who was strapped in a car seat.

Assistant District Attorney Shawn Clark, of the District Attorney's Homicide Trial Bureau, prosecuted the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Brad A. Leventhal, Bureau Chief, and Jack Warsawsky, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Charles A. Testagrossa and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel A. Saunders.

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Note to Editor: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.