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QUEENS WOMAN SENTENCED TO 3 TO 9 YEARS IN STATE PRISON
FOR DEATH OF NEWBORN SON FOUND IN BEDROOM CLOSET

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a 21-year-old Jamaica, Queens, woman has been sentenced to three to nine years in state prison for the death of her newborn son whose remains were found stuffed in a plastic bucket in her bedroom closet.

District Attorney Brown said, "The tragic consequences of this case could easily have been avoided had the defendant sought guidance or assistance anytime during her pregnancy or when she was about to give birth. Instead, her family has been shattered by grief and has been robbed of both a daughter and a grandson."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Shantaivia A. Johnson, 21, of 131-25 Mathewson Court in Jamaica, Queens. Johnson, who pleaded guilty to second-degree manslaughter on April 6, 2009, appeared today before Acting Queens Supreme Court Justice Pauline A. Mullings who imposed an indeterminate sentence of three to nine years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the charges, Johnson's mother, Margarita Joseph, went into her daughter's bedroom on August 7, 2008, because of a foul odor emanating from the room. In the closet she discovered a white bucket, which she opened. Inside were plastic bags containing clothing and what appeared to be the remains of an infant. She then called the police.

The District Attorney said that, in statements made to police, Johnson admitted that she became pregnant in March 2007 and did not tell anyone. She gave birth at home to a live baby boy in November 2007 and after the baby was born she cut the umbilical cord and observed the baby bleeding from the cord. Without knowing if the baby was dead or alive, she placed the full term baby in a plastic bag and then later put the bag in the plastic bucket which she stored in her closet.

Assistant District Attorney Leigh Bishop, of the District Attorney's Special Victims Bureau, prosecuted the case under the supervision of Marjory D. Fisher, Bureau Chief, and Kenneth M. Appelbaum and Lucinda C. Suarez, Deputy Bureau Chiefs, 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 Editors: Press release e-version posted on www.queensda.org