

Vegans jailed over death of baby

A vegan couple have been sentenced to life in prison by a US court over the death of their malnourished baby.

The baby died six weeks after birth after being fed a diet largely made up of soy milk and organic apple juice.

Defence lawyers for Lamont Thomas and Jade Sanders said they had starved their child unintentionally by adhering to a strictly vegan diet.

But prosecutors in the US city of Atlanta said the couple had deliberately neglected their child.

"No matter how many times they want to say, 'We're vegans, we're vegetarians,' that's not the issue in this case," Prosecutor Chuck Boring is quoted by the Associated Press news agency as saying.

"The child died because he was not fed. Period," he said.

Strict vegans adhere to a diet that avoids all animal products.

'I loved my son'

Crown Shakur weighed 3.5lb (1.6kg) at the time of his death in April 2004.

The baby was born in a bathtub in the couple's house.

Defence lawyer Brandon Lewis is quoted by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution newspaper as saying the couple did not take their child to a doctor because they feared hospitals were full of germs.

Defence lawyers said the couple did not realise the baby's life was in danger until it was too late.

A jury deliberated for seven hours before delivering its verdict on 2 May.

Sentencing the couple, the judge said the murder verdict made the life sentence mandatory.

Jade Sanders told the judge: "I loved my son - and I did not starve him."

According to the AP news agency, Lamont Thomas complained that he had not known he was being tried for a felony - rather than the lesser offence of a misdemeanour.

"We had no idea involuntary manslaughter was a felony. We were told for three years this was a misdemeanour," he reportedly said.

"It takes money to prove this wasn't a felony - money we don't have."

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