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PRESS RELEASE

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NAVAJO MAN GUILTY OF MURDERING COMMON-LAW WIFE

On September 15, 2010, a federal jury convicted **Nathan Don Jack**, 26, of Hogback, New Mexico, of the second degree murder of Jessica Shorty, his common-law wife and the mother of his three children, after a three-day trial before United States District Judge William P. Johnson. Jack was arrested on August 9, 2009 on federal murder charges after he brought Ms. Shorty to the emergency room of the Northern Navajo Medical Center (NNMC). According to the trial testimony, Ms. Shorty, who was severely beaten about the head, face and body and unable to breathe on her own, was pronounced dead on arrival at the NNMC.

According to witness testimony, after Jack and Ms. Shorty had an argument outside their residence in the early morning hours of August 9, 2009, Ms. Shorty entered the residence and went to sleep with their eighteen-month child and two other children. Shortly thereafter, Jack entered the residence, grabbed Ms. Shorty by her feet while she was breastfeeding their eighteen-month child, and dragged her outside of the residence. A witness who was inside the residence testified that she heard Ms. Shorty screaming for

help. After things got quiet, the witness went outside and saw Ms. Shorty on the ground with Jack blowing air into her mouth. At Jack's request, the witness drove Jack and Ms. Shorty to the NNMC where she was pronounced dead on arrival.

A pathologist with the New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator (OMI) testified that Ms. Shorty's death was caused by asphyxia and that the severe, blunt trauma to her head contributed to her death. In his closing statement to the jury, Assistant U.S. Attorney Rumaldo R. Armijo argued that Jack used dirt as a weapon to kill Ms. Shorty – the OMI pathologist testified that the compacted dirt in Ms. Shorty's mouth was the "size of a golf-ball," and that the dirt in her mouth combined with the dirt in her trachea had the volume of a baseball.

Jack's sentencing date has yet to be set. He faces up to a life-time term of imprisonment, a maximum \$250,000 fine and a minimum five-year term of supervised release.

United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales stated:

"Jessica Shorty was killed as a result of the type of domestic violence we see far too often in our Native communities. Experience shows that domestic violence, if not addressed early, escalates and too often culminates in women suffering serious injuries and sometimes, as with Ms. Shorty, in unbelievably brutal death. I am committed to a long-term sustained effort to reduce violence in our Native American communities, particularly violence against women and children. I commend the efforts of the prosecutors and investigators responsible for making sure that Ms. Shorty's death did not go unanswered."

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Louis Valencia and Rumaldo R. Armijo prosecuted the case, which was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety, Shiprock Division.

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