

Polygamous Cult Leader Sentenced to Life for Killing Toddler, One of His Wives

A polygamous cult leader in North Carolina received two life sentences Friday for the murders of a 4-year-old boy and one of the man's wives who tried to escape the group.

Superior Court Judge Orlando Hudson found Peter Moses Jr., who called himself the chosen leader of the Black Hebrew Israelites, responsible for the deaths of Jadon Higganbothan and 28-year-old Antoinetta McKoy in Durham, N.C.

Moses supposedly subscribed to the tenets of the Black Hebrew Israelites, "a radical sect that believes a race war is coming that will leave blacks dominant and supreme," reports. He had put together an unusual family at a home in southeast Durham. "Women who lived with him, according to court testimony, counted themselves as wives or common-law wives and often referred to him as 'Lord,'" the article says.

Moses reportedly shot Higganbothan in the head because he believed the boy was gay, and killed McKoy, one of his common-law wives, after discovering she could not bear children and wanted to leave the sect. The remains of the victims, who were killed in 2010, were discovered in the backyard of a home in 2011.

Seven people—all members of the Black Hebrews—were originally charged in the shootings. Prosecutors say Moses shot Higganbothan in front of the boy's mother, Vania Sisk, because he believed the toddler was an abomination. Prosecutors also say McKoy was murdered because she tried to leave the group and they feared she would tell police about the boy's murder.

ABC-11 reports that Moses' sister Sheila Moses and his mother,

Sheilda Harris, were part of the seven originally arrested but were cleared of all charges last year. Sisk and other conspirators agreed to plea deals and are all serving jail time.

Moses' attorney, Lisa Miles, told Hudson in court Friday that her client did not lead a cult but was mentally ill, saying his illness "made him do something monstrous."

But Hudson, who ordered Moses to serve his life sentences without the possibility of parole, said at the close of the trial, "These are some of the worst cases I've ever seen as a judge."

McKoy's mother, Yvonne, who called Moses evil at one point during the trial, said her daughter was a "good girl, a church girl, a God-fearing girl."

She told the court, "That's the only thing that gives me closure is to know that she knew God herself 'cause this is something that I never dreamt I would deal with, never."