

Excerpts from video of the "birth" and death of Candace Newmaker

This is the transcript of a video shown in court in the trial of Julie Ponder and Connell Watkins, who wrapped a ten-year-old girl, Candace Newmaker, in a blanket, sat on her and killed her. They were practising a form of quackery known as "rebirthing" to treat a non-existent condition called "attachment disorder". Jurors cried when they saw this. I can understand why.

You can read more about this tragedy in the book *Attachment Therapy on Trial: The Torture and Death of Candace Newmaker* by Jean Mercer, Larry Sauer and Linda Rosa.



Thank you to the Denver Rocky Mountain News for the story.

Timelined excerpts from the videotape of Candace Newmaker's April 18 rebirthing session at the home of Connell Watkins in Evergreen. (Unless otherwise indicated, the comments are from Candace Newmaker.)

00:00 -- Therapist Julie Ponder tells Candace to lie down on the navy blue flannel sheet and get into the fetal position.

Ponder: So imagine yourself as a teeny little baby inside your mother's womb and what it felt like. Warm. It felt tight because her stomach was all around you. (Candace is bound in the sheet, the ends twisted above her head and held by Ponder. She is covered by pillows and four adults begin pressing on her.)

01:25 -- Ponder: What do you think you thought about when you where in there?

I thought I was gonna die.

Ponder: You thought you were gonna die in there?

Yeah.

Jeane Newmaker: I'm so excited. I'm going to have a brand new baby. I hope it's a girl. I'm going to love her, to hold her and tell her stories... I'm going to keep her very safe... Every day we'll be together and she'll be with me forever.

(Candace is asked if she believes what her mother is saying.)

Uh huh.

(Candace is asked how that makes her feel.)

Happy.

Watkins: If the baby doesn't decide to be born, she will die. When the baby decides to be born it's a wonderful thing.

Ponder: So little baby, are you ready to be reborn?

Uh huh.

Ponder: Come out head first. You have to push really hard with your feet. If you stay in there you're going to die and your mommy's going to die.

08:42 -- Who's sitting on me? I can't do it.

08:53 -- I can't do it! (Crying). My hands come out first?

Watkins: Sometimes it takes 18 hours to be born.

09:36 -- (Screaming) I can't do it. I can't do it! I can't breathe. I can't breathe!

10:16 -- Whoever is pushing on my head it's not helping. I can't do it. I can't do it. I can't breathe. It's too dark under here. Please quit pushing on my head I can't do it. Somebody's sitting on top of me.

10:50 -- (Moaning) Somebody's on top of me. Where am I supposed to come out? Right here? Where my finger is?

11:26 -- I can't do it. (Screams) I'm gonna die.

Ponder: Do you want to be reborn or do you want to stay in there and die?

11:40 -- Quit pushing on me. Please. (Moaning) Quit squishing my legs. I'm gonna die now. (Screams)

Ponder: Do you want to die?

No, but I'm about to.

12:10 -- Please, please I can't breathe.

12:30 -- I can't do it anymore.

12:40 -- Please quit pushing on me.

13:12 -- I need some help. Help! Help me please.

Watkins: Are you feeling the contractions, mom?

Newmaker: I am.

13:43 -- Where am I to go? Right here? Right here? I'm supposed to go right here? Please. Please. (Screams) OK I'm dying. OK, I'm dying. I'm sorry.

14:31 -- OK, I'm dying.

14:38 -- I'm going to die.

15:30 -- I want to die.

16:08 -- Can you let me have some oxygen? You mean, like you want me to die for real?

Ponder: Uh huh.

Die right now and go to heaven?

Ponder: Go ahead and die right now. For real. For real.

OK, I'm dead.

Watkins: It's not always easy to live. You have to be really strong to live a life, a human life.

17:07 -- (Labored breathing) Get off. I'm sick. Get off. Where am I supposed to come out? Where? But how can I get there?

Watkins: Just go ahead and die. It's easier... It takes a lot of courage to be born.

18:26 -- You said you would give me oxygen.

Watkins: You gotta fight for it.

19:50 -- (Candace vomits) OK, I'm throwing up. I just threw up. (Vomiting) I gotta poop. I gotta poop.

21:24 -- Uh, I'm going in my pants.

Ponder: Go ahead.

Watkins: Stay in there with the poop and vomit.

23:22 -- Help! I can't breathe. I can't breathe. It's hot. I can't breathe.

Newmaker: I'm so excited to have this baby. I'm waiting for you, to love you and hold you...

Ponder: Scream, Candace.

No.

Newmaker: Baby, I love you already. I'll hold you and love you and keep you safe forever... Don't give up on your life before you have it...

32:25 -- 33:44 -- Jack McDaniel repositions himself on a pillow over Candace's head.

Ponder: Candace? (No response) (Takes another pillow from Newmaker.) She needs more pressure over here so she can't... so she really needs to fight.

Watkins: Getting pretty tight in here.

Ponder: Yep... less and less air all the time.

35:39-40:00 -- Ponder and McDaniel reposition themselves again.

Ponder: She gets to be stuck in her own puke and poop.

Watkins: Uh huh. It's her own life. Quitter.

40:01: No. (This is Candace's last word.)

McDaniel: Mama got you this far, now it's up to you.

Watkins: Candace is used to making her life everybody else's problem. She's not used to living her own life.

Ponder: Quitter, quitter, quitter, quit, quit, quit, quit. She's a quitter.

(Watkins leaves, Newmaker leaves. McDaniel takes Watkins' place. Watkins returns.)

McDaniel: This baby doesn't want to live. She's a quitter.

(Watkins tells McDaniel and St. Clair to take a break.)

(Ponder and Watkins discuss someone who is stressed, then chitchat about their dream homes and a million-dollar property nearby that is being remodeled.)

Watkins: Let's talk to the twerp.

(They unwrap Candace.)

01:09:53 – Watkins: Oh, there she is sleeping in her vomit.

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