

' MY BABY'S DEAD ' - HER FATHER IS HELD BY POLICE AS 20-MONTH OLD GIRL BECOMES 13TH DETROIT CHILD HOMICIDE OF '02

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Saturday, June 29, 2002

Author: BEN SCHMITT FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER. Staff writers Tamara Audi and M.L. Elrick contributed to this report.

Anita Jenkins can't shake the scene: a mother screaming over a baby girl lying facedown, little arms dangling over a bed with a gunshot wound to her abdomen; her 4-year-old sister cowering in a corner.

"Whenever I closed **my** eyes to sleep last night, I kept seeing that little baby," 15-year-old Anita, who lives across the street, said Friday. "It's not something a person **my** age should have to deal with."

Now, Detroiters are dealing with another child shot to death. Amari Ware, born in October 2000, is Detroit's 13th child homicide victim so far this year -- the 10th from gunfire. A 14th was killed in Mt. Clemens. Amari was killed in her home in the 1800 block of Sycamore on the city's southwest side.

The girl's father, Antonio Ware, 24, is in custody, and is expected to be arraigned this weekend on murder charges. Ware is believed to be a U.S. Army veteran, police said.

Amari's 3-year-old brother, Andreas Ware, was treated and released Friday morning from Henry Ford Hospital for a wound after a bullet grazed his left ear, police said.

Their 4-year-old sister, Alexis, and mother Victoria Seldon, 24, escaped uninjured, police said.

The killing of the 20-month-old girl on the eve of today's big anti-violence rally on Belle Isle has Shikha Hamilton, president of the Million Mom March's Detroit chapter, heartbroken and livid.

"I can't stop thinking about this baby and the two kids who witnessed this," she said. "Who knows what kind of lasting effect this will have?"

Reports are that Seldon was ending the relationship with Antonio Ware and that they also argued over money, police Cmdr. Dennis Richardson said. Antonio Ware has no felony criminal history in Wayne County.

Anita Jenkins and her friend, Sarah Patton, 17, had just returned to Anita's Sycamore Street home at about 11:30 p.m. Thursday after the fireworks show downtown. That's when they said they saw Antonio Ware run out of a house across the street with a gun in his hand.

"He had a crazed, but scared look in his eye," Sarah said. "He ran up to someone in a car and told them to get out. They sped off."

Ware then took off running down an alley, Sarah said. Then she heard screams coming from the home across the street.

"I heard, ' **My baby's dead , my baby's dead ,** ' " Sarah recalled. "Anita and I ran into the house across the street and I saw the baby, lying facedown on the bed. We all started screaming."

Four-year-old Alexis was cowering in a corner of the bedroom, the girls said. Sarah said she tried to comfort the children's mother, but she was hysterical. Other neighbors called police.

"The mother kept screaming, 'He killed **my** baby,' " Sarah said.

Officers from the 3rd (Vernor) Precinct located Antonio Ware about an hour after the shooting in the backyard of a home on the 7300 block of DeSoto, Richardson said.

"The officers from the 3rd Precinct and homicide section worked tirelessly to avenge this **baby's** senseless death," Richardson said Friday afternoon.

This latest gun death of a Detroit child brought swift, angry reaction from a community battered by child shootings in the last six months.

"The ultimate issue we are dealing with here is apathy," said Frank McGhee, program director for the Youth Initiatives Project, a metro area group of more than 200 teens and children, which promotes gun control. "In Detroit, we tolerate more and believe we should tolerate more. We should move away from that concept, thinking that someone else should solve the problem. Each of us is a member of our community. Each of us has a responsibility to protect our children."

McGhee said Amari's death underscores the need for parents to get involved in the effort to curb gun violence. "We need to change the hearts and minds of the adults in our community," he said. "Thus far it's been the young people who have led the campaign to tell the adults, get your act together. Now we all have to work together to stop this epidemic."

Hamilton, the Million Mom March organizer, said easy access to guns is another issue she will continue stumping against.

"Today, I'm feeling like **my** rights are being infringed upon when it comes to keeping children safe," she said. "One issue we can tackle is access to a gun."

Statistics were not available from Detroit police Friday as to how many residents have applied for gun purchase permits and they were unable to provide estimates of how many households in the city own guns.

Nationally, about 42 percent of households in the United States reported having a gun in their home in 2000, the most recent statistics available, according to Nancy Hwa, spokeswoman for the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence in Washington, D.C. In the Midwest, 45 percent of households reported having guns in the home that year, Hwa said, quoting numbers from the Bureau of Justice Statistics sourcebook. In urban areas, nationally, 32 percent of households

reported having guns at home.

Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, as a state representative, had opposed legislation allowing more people to carry concealed weapons because he was worried it would mean more guns in Detroit, said his spokesman Jamaine Dickens. Amari's shooting prompted Kilpatrick to again go to the scene of a dying child.

"The mayor's been very, very disturbed about it all day," said Dickens. "The mayor is calling this community to action, to take action against violence and proliferation of guns in the community."

Dickens said Kilpatrick learned of the shooting shortly after he and his family returned home after Thursday night's Freedom Festival fireworks.

"He immediately got back in his car and rolled out to the hospital to support the family."

Henry Ford Hospital spokeswoman Synthia Bryant said doctors worked on Amari for about 90 minutes.

She said Kilpatrick stepped into the resuscitation room after Amari had died. Bryant said the mayor then visited with the girl's mother in the hospital's family room.

Police are still investigating where Antonio Ware got the handgun he allegedly used in Thursday night's shootings.

Seldon's older sister, Anietra Seldon said she thinks he obtained it in Ohio, where he has family and friends. Ware did not live in the Sycamore street home, she said.

Another of Seldon's sisters said she is at a loss to explain what happened. Antonio Ware and Victoria Seldon had dated on and off since high school, Kim Seldon said.

"I don't have any answers," she said Friday. "All I can say is Amari was well-loved."

Contact BEN SCHMITT at 313-222-6597 or schmitt@freepress.com. Staff writers Tamara Audi and M.L. Elrick contributed to this report.

(SIDEBAR)

HOW YOU CAN HELP

MAYOR KWAME KILPATRICK hosts a Project Safe Neighborhoods Community Action Rally against violence at noon today at the Belle Isle Band Shell. Information will be provided on how to report a drug house, join a citizens radio patrol, join Operation Kid Watch, bid on properties seized by officials, get involved in Blitz and Broom, and partner with community groups. Detroit police will give away free trigger locks. For more information, call 313-628-2412.

STUDENTS from the Youth Initiatives Project of Neighborhood Service Organization will kick

off their gun safety campaign. The event, which includes gospel choirs, family games and the distribution of gunlocks and brochures, will be at 3 p.m. Sunday at Abundant Life Faith Temple, 9179 Delmar, Detroit. For more information, call 313-867-9112

THE MILLION MOM MARCH is a national organization that works to prevent gun death and injury. For information, call 888-989-6667 anytime and leave a message, or go to www.millionmommarch.org.

(SIDEBAR)

METRO AREA'S OTHER YOUNG HOMICIDE VICTIMS

Thirteen metro Detroit children 16 and younger, including Amari Ware, have been homicide victims this year. All were killed in Detroit. A 14th victim, Tiffany Taylor, was killed in Mt. Clemens.

FEB. 25

Ajane Pollard, 7

MARCH 23

Destinee Thomas, 3

MARCH 28

Alesia Robinson, 16

APRIL 30

Christopher James, 11

APRIL 10

Brianna Caddell, 8

APRIL 30

Cherrel Thomas, 15

MAY 24

Irika Peterson, 14

MAY 26

Tiffany Taylor, 15

JUNE 3

DeAntoine Trammell

Not pictured:

Jameise Scaife, 3 days old Jan. 13

Joseph Walker, 16 Feb. 11

Brennon Cunningham, 3, Feb. 21

Irisha Keener, 3, April 18

Caption: Map Detroit Free Press. Photo Family photo. Photo PAUL GONZALEZ

VIDELA/Detroit Free Press

Police say Antonio Ware, 24, may be arraigned on murder charges this weekend. His son's ear was grazed by a bullet. Amari Ware, 20 months, was shot and killed in her Detroit bedroom Thursday night. Anita Jenkins, 15, lives across the street from the apartment house where 20-month-old Amari Ware was shot and killed in her bed Thursday night. Jenkins and a friend were

returning from the fireworks when they heard screams and went into the duplex. Anita Jenkins, 15, left, lives across the street from where Amari Ware was shot and killed in her home in southwest Detroit on Thursday night. Jenkins and Sarah Patton, 17, right say they saw Antonio Ware run out of a house with a gun in his hand.

Memo: SIDEBAR ATTACHED

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 1A

Index Terms: CHILD FATALITY ; INFANT FATALITY ; SHOOTING ; DETROIT ; AMARI WARE ; ANTONIO WARE ; STATISTIC ; SUMMARY ; AMARI WARE ; NAMELIST ; AGE

Record Number: 0206290394

Copyright (c) 2002 Detroit Free Press