

## **Dad absolves mom in baby's death - Father of slain 3-month-old insists society should console the mother, not fault her**

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DETROIT -- His shoulders slump and he stares at the steps of his brick house, searching for words. Although Ivan Brown Jr.'s grief is palpable, he refuses to blame the mother of his murdered son.

In a monotone, barely audible voice, the 37-year-old father of three other children spoke exclusively to The Detroit News about the brief time he spent with 3-month-old son Isaiah Lewis and the woman, 17 years younger, whom he still affectionately calls "Babydoll."

Despite growing outcry that 20-year-old Shaniqua Betty should be held accountable for her actions, Brown feels that same community let her down.

"Everybody is pointing the finger at Shaniqua, but nobody is saying, 'Let me console you. Let me give you a shoulder to cry on,' " he said, sitting on the front porch of his north Detroit home. "I don't blame her. It was a bad situation. I can't think for her. All I can do is support her."

The events that led to Isaiah's death began Aug. 3, when Brown and Betty argued at his home about giving the baby medicine. At about 1:30 a.m., Betty fled the house with the baby and went to a bus stop, where she handed Isaiah to a strange man so she could return to Brown's home for her purse and shoes.

When she returned to the bus stop, the man and baby had disappeared. A week later, police found Isaiah's body in an abandoned house and arrested **Harold Reed**, 48, on murder charges.

Brown and Betty both are from Pontiac, and once lived together off and on. He said he punches a clock and has an honest job. "No, I'm not out here being a street pharmacist," he added defensively.

But Brown now stays in the north Detroit home near the Michigan State Fair, and Betty is living with relatives in Pontiac.

"I talk to her every day," he said, "I need to talk to her about a lot of things, including the baby she's carrying. I want to find out if it's mine. If it is, I'll do what's best."

Brown, who picked up his son every day after work, and often bought him toys or outfits while shopping at the malls, expresses no rage or desire for revenge against **Harold Reed**, the accused murderer.

"Nobody is happy about the results, but life doesn't stand still," he said, blankly staring at a warehouse across the street from his house. "He ( **Reed** ) will get what's coming to him. Whatever they do, the judicial system is always right, so whatever they do, that's what's going to happen." After pausing a moment and leaning back in a chair on his porch, he added, "I'm not seeking revenge. I just want to know why?"

The only time he smiled was when talking about little Isaiah.

"He has four names, you know," he said. "Isaiah Lamar James Lewis is named for my brother, her brother, myself, and she gave him her grandfather's last name because he was the one who raised her."

Brown insists he was a hands-on dad. He was there for the baby's birth and stayed at the hospital so long, the nurses had to ask him to leave.

The last time he saw his son was that Friday when he argued with Betty.

"I had picked them both up and was bringing them over to my house," he said. "The baby was smiling and happy because Mommy and Daddy were together and we were on our way home."

But later that evening, they argued about giving the baby medicine for an infection.

"All I can tell you is that she left and at first, I didn't know she was gone," he said. "Then she came back for her purse and shoes and I asked where the baby was, but I don't remember what she said because we were still arguing."

Brown replays the events leading up to his son's murder.

"I wish things had happened differently," he said quietly. "If we hadn't been arguing, we would have had clearer heads. I just regret that we had argued because things could have ended much differently."

His next-door neighbor, Marquita Mickens, 31, a nursing assistant, is one of the few neighbors interviewed who expressed compassion for Betty.

"We are all sad," she said. "I know she gave her baby to a stranger, but we don't know what she was going through. I don't think she should be punished because Oakland County social services knew she needed help. The system failed her."

But another neighbor, Melvin Taylor, 40, a mechanic, vehemently disagrees. "She shouldn't get away scot-free because this is a clear case of neglect, regardless of her state of mind. Her maternal instinct should have kicked in at some point. You just don't walk off and leave your baby with a stranger."

Mela Johnson lives in an apartment building next door to the bus stop on the corner of Woodward and State Fair, where Betty said she left her baby with **Reed** .

Johnson was holding her year-old daughter, Acacia Calvin, outside the apartment building.

"I don't think the man should be in jail because it wasn't his fault," she said angrily. "It is her fault, because why would she leave her baby with a stranger to walk all the way home to get her shoes? She didn't have any business out at night in the first place with her baby wrapped only in a towel. I prayed every night that the baby would be found alive."

She added, "I would never give my baby to a stranger, especially a guy. She needs to at least be charged with abandonment and neglect."

A few steps away, inside the Marathon gas station next to the bus stop, Stevon Mosley, 48, of Oak Park was inside paying for gasoline.

"I have three children myself and there's no way I would even hand my children over to a uniformed police officer. I love my kids and I'd do anything for them -- even die for them. I just don't think she was in her right mind."

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