

GUNFIRE KILLS 3 CHILDREN - 4TH WOUNDED DETROIT FIREFIGHTERS FIND THEM AT HOME BLAZE

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Firefighters expected to find flames when they arrived at a house in northwest Detroit Tuesday night.

But they found something much worse.

Inside were the bodies of three small children, shot to death in a bed in the basement of the house in the 19000 block of Ashton, said Tara Dunlop, third deputy police chief for the Detroit Police Department.

A fourth child, a girl family members identified as Antonia **Bailey**, also was shot and was taken to Sinai-Grace Hospital. Her condition was not known early today, Dunlop said.

The children's parents were not home when firefighters arrived. A small fire had been set inside, she said. "Once the children were shot, the person that did it attempted to set the house on fire," Dunlop said.

The children's mother, Essie **Bailey**, was talking to police outside the small beige rental house at about 10:30 p.m. Tuesday, dressed in hospital blues.

"They killed my babies," she screamed, collapsing to the ground. Angela Wiggins, 40, a cousin, identified the dead children as **Lamar**, Ishia, and Charnise. All were between ages 1 and 9.

Police said they want to question the children's father, 37-year-old **Anthony Bailey**. He is described as black, 5 feet 7 and 145 pounds with a medium complexion and medium build. He has brown eyes and black hair and is believed to be riding a bike because he does not have a driver's license.

Police declined to give a motive in the slayings.

As a department helicopter flew overhead, Dunlop said, "We're dedicating all of our resources to finding this guy. We're pulling out all the stops."

Anyone with information about this case should call 911, Dunlop said.

Investigators used flashlights and a police dog to search for clues in the early-morning hours. Family and friends kept vigil outside.

With their heads bowed, about two dozen people prayed.

Janiqua Tatum, 12, a student at Coffey Middle School, said she knew two of the children -- Antonia and Charnise, students at Pitcher Elementary School.

They liked to ride bicycles and practice cheerleading, Janiqua said.

Neighbor Kyle Smith, 45, choked back tears.

"I'm hurt," she said. "It made me go into the house and absolutely break down. When people do this to children, it's just too much."

Smith's son, Jashua, 17, was disgusted by the shootings.

"It's horrible," he said. "It's disgusting. It takes something like this for people to realize how bad it's getting in the city."

Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, who in the past has appeared on the scenes of child homicides, was out of town Tuesday. His spokesman, Jamaine Dickens, said the mayor was aware of the killings and was in contact with the Police Department and Wayne County Prosecutor Michael Duggan.

"Obviously, the mayor was saddened, angry, to learn about this situation tonight," Dickens said.

"Any time you have children, young people who are the most innocent, subjected to this kind of treatment, it won't be tolerated."

Twenty-six children age 16 and younger were killed in the city last year, according to a Free Press analysis of Wayne County medical examiner records. Seventeen of them died from gunshots.

Nationwide, more than 20,000 people under age 20 are killed or injured by guns each year, according to a July 2002 report titled "Children, Youth and Gun Violence."

Gun violence is the second-leading cause of death among people ages 10 to 19. Motor vehicle accidents are first.

Locally, shootings contributed to a child homicide rate in Detroit that outranked most of the nation's major cities in 2002.

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Caption: Photo ROMAIN BLANQUART/Detroit Free Press; MAP/Detroit Free Press

Essie **Bailey**, the children's mother, reacts to the horrible news next to an unidentified man after she arrives at the house where her four children were found Tuesday night. All the victims are between the ages of 1 and 9.

Police want to question **Anthony Lamar Bailey**, 37, the children's father, about the shootings.

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