

## **MOTHER WHO LEFT BABY PLEADS - SHE'S TO GET HELP**

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Saturday, March 9, 2002

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Shaniqua Betty, whose infant son was beaten to death in August by the stranger she handed him to at a Detroit bus stop, pleaded no contest Friday to fourth-degree child abuse.

Betty's attorney, Steven Fishman, said he was overjoyed to see that she will get help to straighten out her life as part of her plea agreement.

"The program they have set up for her will give her an opportunity to succeed," Fishman said.

With the plea, Betty, 21, did not admit guilt but acknowledged that she likely would have been convicted if she went to trial. The charge carries a maximum penalty of four years in prison.

During a fight with her boyfriend at 1 a.m. Aug. 3, Betty grabbed her 3-month-old son, Isaiah, from the bathtub, wrapped him in a towel and fled into the hot night air. She met **Harold Reed**, 49, in a bus shelter at Woodward Avenue and State Fair.

**Reed**, a convicted pedophile from Pittsburgh, befriended the woman and convinced Betty she could safely leave the baby with him while she returned to her boyfriend's house to retrieve her purse and shoes.

When Betty returned less than 20 minutes later, **Reed** and her baby were gone.

After television stations broadcast a convenience store videotape showing **Reed** with the baby that night, **Reed**'s family identified him as the suspect. Police arrested **Reed**, and he confessed before leading detectives to a nearby abandoned home where the child's body was found under a mattress.

On Feb. 25, **Reed** was convicted of second-degree murder. He faces up to life in prison when he is sentenced April 1.

Wayne County Prosecutor Michael Duggan also charged Betty with criminal child abuse, a charge that was condemned by the Detroit branch of the NAACP and others. Duggan said he wanted to send a message to parents and get help for Betty, who had a history of abuse and neglect as a child.

"We have to be firm in dealing with parents who do not properly care for their children, and we will be firm," Duggan said at the time. "Anyone who hands a baby to a stranger at one in the morning can expect to be charged."

At a brief hearing Friday before Wayne County Circuit Judge Sean Cox, Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Suzette Samuels outlined a plea and sentencing agreement that calls for Betty to serve one year of probation.

Betty also will be enrolled in psychological counseling with a focus on bereavement, behavior modification therapy, anger management classes and an education program so she can earn a high school equivalency degree.

Cox is being asked to take Betty's plea under advisement. If she successfully completes the programs by year's end, the prosecutor's office will ask Cox to dismiss the case and Betty would not have a criminal record.

Cox is scheduled to rule on the agreement April 4. If he does not agree to it, Betty has a right to withdraw her plea and go to trial.

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Caption: Photo

CUTLINE RAN IN METRO FINAL EDITION ONLY:

Shaniqua Betty had given her child to a stranger at a Detroit bus stop.

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Section: NWS

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Index Terms: SHANIQUA BETTY ; INFANT ; DEATH ; PARENT ; NEGLECT ; PLEA ; NO CONTEST

Record Number: 0203090112

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