

TEEN SAW DRUGS' DANGERS POLICE TRY TO GET REAL STORY BEHIND HIS DISAPPEARANCE

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Wednesday, November 29, 1995

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Tazar Carter may have foretold his own descent into Detroit's drug world four years ago when he wrote two essays describing his mother's addiction to crack cocaine.

"Detroit is and good city to live in but drugs and gang will get to you," **Tazar** said in the awkward handwriting of a child. "The drug dealer will make money off of you. You will be a crackhead. You will come addicted to Rock, ice and any other kind of drugs. . . .

"If you have kids and let one of your kids see you, they will hate you for the rest of your life."

On Tuesday, **Tazar** was in the spotlight of massive news coverage extending to other countries after police said his mother, Mary, had sold him into slavery to a drug dealer to settle her drug debt.

Although news organizations seized on the incident as another horror story about crack cocaine's insidious effects on families, interviews with **Tazar**'s mother, grandmother, neighborhood residents and police raised doubts about what really happened.

Tazar , 15, was found late Monday after a months-long disappearance. **Tazar** , dubbed "Cash" by a drug dealer, admitted selling drugs and police said they're trying to sort out conflicting stories about whether he was a victim or a willing participant.

His mother denied Tuesday that she sold him to a 42-year- old drug dealer, who is being sought.

"He wanted to sell drugs," Mary **Carter** , 34, said during an interview from Wayne County Jail, where she is being held in an unrelated case. "If I owed money for drugs, the dope man would've come to kill me first. It wouldn't have been about my son."

Carter , who insisted she hasn't used drugs for eight months, said **Tazar** wanted to make enough money to help her get a permanent home and put their family back together again.

Tazar 's two younger siblings have been living with their grandmother, Regina **Carter** , since 1992 when Detroit police found them abandoned.

Mary **Carter** called the Free Press from the Wayne County Jail around 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, 90 minutes after a hearing in Wayne County Juvenile Court to decide **Tazar** 's immediate future.

Tazar was the subject of two hearings: one alleging that he was a neglected child who needed protection, the other that he was a delinquent who had runaway from home, was truant from school and admitted selling crack cocaine.

Assistant Attorney General Catherine Gardner said both neglect and delinquency petitions were filed in order to make sure that **Tazar** could be held in a secure facility.

"The child would be better served if there were public funds for a secure facility for neglect wards," Gardner said. "We have no such facilities at this time."

Children who are abused, neglected or abandoned usually are placed in foster homes or in unlocked residential facilities. **Tazar** told police that if he went back to his grandmother's home or is put in foster care, he would run away.

Juvenile Court Referee Harriet Harris ordered **Tazar** held in the Wayne County Juvenile Detention Facility in lieu of \$10,000 bond that can be posted only by his parents.

Harris, who asked that the media avoid exploiting **Tazar** 's image on television and in newspapers, said: "I care about the young man. We want him to go back into the community and lead a normal life. He can't do that with his picture all over the place."

Mary **Carter** is in jail for a two-year-old burglary charge for which she had failed to appear in court. The address of his father, Frederick Simpson, is unknown.

Mary **Carter** admitted that she had been addicted to crack cocaine and other drugs for several years.

"We been through a lot," **Carter** said. "I was on drugs. I changed all that. I did that on my home without any help from my family, without even going into rehab."

"When they came to arrest me that Thursday," she said, referring to Nov. 16. "I had just gotten off work. I had just gotten paid."

Carter , who worked for an automotive packing company in Ecorse, said that last week she gave her mother \$100 from that paycheck when she came to visit her in jail to help support her other two children, Arsenio, 11, and Regina, 4.

"If I was on drugs, would I give someone \$100?" **Carter** said, adding she offered to be tested for drugs when she was arrested but police did not take her up on the offer.

She said she does not have a drug debt.

"I don't owe nobody nothing, no sir," she said.

But Regina **Carter** , the 54-year-old grandmother, said "I don't know what to believe.

"He has told me fibs and she has, too," she said.

Tazar disappeared in early July. On Nov. 7, Sgt. Shelley Foy of the Detroit Police Child Abuse Unit got a referral from DSS Child Protective Services that a teenager had been sold by his mother to a drug dealer on 28th Street near Horatio to pay off a drug debt.

Foy spent two days canvassing the area until she learned the boy's name.

She said that in the wake of her efforts, she got several phone calls -- some anonymously -- from people who confirmed the story about **Tazar** being sold. One caller claimed that **Tazar** had been beaten for being \$10 short on the money he was to turn over to the drug dealer.

Child Abuse Unit and other units of the department, including Armed Robbery, Sex Crimes and the Major Crimes Mobil Unit, began looking intensely for **Tazar**. Police said they believe **Tazar** was being shifted between at least three crack houses operated by the drug dealer.

Foy even said the drug dealer called her once and demanded that she stop "hounding" him.

"I told him when I get the kid and talk to you, the hounding will stop," Foy said.

Police decided to ask for the public's help through the media Monday.

After news reports were aired, nearly two dozen tips were called in.

One led police to 15345 Dacosta, in the Brightmoor area of west Detroit, and 6th (Plymouth) Precinct Officers Alphonson Buffington and Robert Turner found **Tazar** and arrested a man and woman in the home at 11:25 p.m.

Police Inspector Michael Hall said the woman knew nothing about **Tazar**'s status and was released. The 42-year-old man has an extensive history of drug charges and convictions and was being held pending investigation, Hall said.

Neighbors said the people in the house moved there within the last two weeks. They said there was a high volume of traffic at the home and they believed it was a crack house where drugs were sold.

Regina **Carter** said she spoke with **Tazar** on the telephone Tuesday morning and he did not claim his mother had pushed him into drug dealing to settle a debt.

"We really didn't get a chance to talk like we wanted to," she said. "He said he didn't want to see her" his mother "sleeping in boxes or being a squatter."

According to the police report filed in Juvenile Court, **Tazar** admitted selling crack, but denied he did so to repay his mother's drug debt.

"He stated he sold drugs so he could get money to buy clothes and shoes for school," the report said. "The juvenile stated he would not stay with his grandmother or in a foster home. He would run away."

Although the report said **Tazar** attended Hudson school, he was enrolled in Hamilton Middle School, near his grandmother's east side home, where he was supposed to go into the eighth-grade in September.

Jannie Miller, 49, a neighbor on Eastlawn near Regina **Carter** 's house, said she often saw **Tazar** and siblings play in the neighborhood.

She described him as "a nice young man. . . . To me, the dope people should have gotten her instead of him," Miller said. "He's an innocent child. It's very upsetting because I had six kids, and to me a parent is supposed to protect her children. She should do time -- she should do a lot of time."

Other neighbors described the teenager as someone who kept to himself and was prone to occasional outbursts of anger. Some teens said he occasionally smoked pot openly on the street.

Regina **Carter** said that **Tazar** ran away from her home to find his mother last December and had not been in school since.

A school official said **Tazar** had been in 15 different schools since kindergarten -- a sign that his mother did not have a stable family life.

Mary **Carter** said she was living last summer with **Tazar** in an apartment building at 678 Selden -- the same building where the parolee accused of killing Oakland University student Tina Biggars was arrested -- and that **Tazar** had become enamored with the drug trade and the money that could be made.

"I told him that was no right way to do it. I would rather see him do it by working," Mary **Carter** said. "I didn't want money that way. There wasn't going to be nothing good out of it."

One day, **Tazar** just left in a car driven by a dope man that Mary **Carter** said she knew only as "G."

Caption: Photo Color KARIN ANDERSON/Detroit Free Press

: **TazarCarter** , the teenager long missing and feared in servitude to a drug dealer, listens to a juvenile court judge Tuesday in Detroit. Regina **Carter** , **Tazar** 's grandmother, pauses before his hearing in juvenile court.

Memo: SEE ALSO METRO FINAL EDITION, Page 1A

Edition: METRO EDITION

Section: NWS

Page: 1A

Index Terms: TAZAR CARTER; TEEN ; DISAPPEARANCE ; MISSING ; DRUG ; CRIME ;
CONTROVERSY

Record Number: 9502070752

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