

TEEN'S STORY DIDN'T ADD UP POLICE SAY BOY WHO WAS SLAIN WOULD HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN 3 DEATHS

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Author: JACK KRESNAK AND ARIANNA E. CHA Free Press Staff Writers

Detroit police homicide detectives suspected that Lorenzo Shelton III may have been involved in the slayings of three teenage girls outside his southwest Detroit home Sunday, but they let him leave police headquarters anyway, a top police official said Tuesday.

But releasing Shelton, at a time when detectives had no solid evidence against him, was part of a strategy that could have resulted in the youth being charged -- if he hadn't been killed first, Executive Deputy Chief Benny Napoleon said.

"We can't hold him without probable cause," Napoleon said. "Of course, we **didn't** expect anybody would go and kill him."

The battered and bloody body of Shelton, 18, was found at about 10 a.m. Monday, 16 hours after he walked out of police headquarters, where he'd been questioned in the slayings.

The girls -- Mindee Kalka, 14, Aleisha Belcher, 15, and Rachelle Goodwin, 17 -- were all struck down about 4 a.m. Sunday by shotgun blasts and then shot again at close range with a pistol, police said.

Napoleon said the range of the shootings **didn't** jibe with Shelton's **story** that the girls were killed by gang members firing out of a car passing Shelton's mother's home in the 600 block of Waterman.

And police said bullets found in the bodies were linked to a pistol found in Shelton's home.

Although that solid evidence was not immediately available Sunday, detectives considered Shelton a potential suspect.

Detectives often wait until they are absolutely sure a person is responsible for a crime before arresting him or her because statements made by someone who is not under arrest are admissible.

Statements made by an arrested suspect can be used in court only if that person has been advised of his right to remain silent and to have an attorney present during questioning -- the so-called Miranda warning.

"To be honest, it's easier when he's not arrested," Napoleon said. "Miranda doesn't kick in if he's free to leave."

Napoleon said detectives could have used those inconsistent statements about the killings to challenge him later.

"A lot of times when people walk out like that, they think they fooled us," Napoleon said.

Asked if the four killings, especially Shelton's unsolved execution, were gang-related, Napoleon said: "It looks like at this point the initial killing of the three girls was not gang-related. Whether his murder was gang-related is something that we don't believe to be true, but we have not ruled it out."

No suspects have been arrested in Shelton's death.

Meanwhile on Tuesday, students at Western High School in southwest Detroit, where Shelton was a junior, described him as a quiet charmer with good grades and dreams of attending college.

Kianna Coleman, 17, a junior who worked on an American history report with Shelton last semester, said he eagerly did his share of the work and had his mother type **up** the paper.

"He was smart -- and aggressive," she said. "It seemed like he was going places."

Shelton quit coming to school but returned in January. He was taking a college preparatory curriculum, including an ROTC class, and talked about getting an ROTC scholarship for college.

Lela Aldridge, 18, said this semester Shelton avoided the gangs he used to hang out with.

"People would throw **up** sets" -- make hand signals to other gang members -- but Shelton never did that, said Aldridge.

Shelton had been a student at Western since 1995, but administrators realized it only after grieving classmates sought out counselors Monday.

On Tuesday a team of psychologists and social workers spoke to all of the classes on Shelton's schedule, said principal Paul Gray.

Jason Stevens, 17, a senior, used to hang out with the three Lincoln Park girls and with Shelton. In fact, he and some friends were supposed to stop by Shelton's house the night the shooting occurred.

"Aleisha paged me and wanted to know if we'd come over and chill. But we were stranded at a club. That was at about 1:30 and we were tired so we just went home," Stevens said.

"I can't stop thinking about it," he said.

Visitation for Aleisha Belcher will be noon-9 p.m. today at John K. Solosy Funeral Home, 3206 Fort in Lincoln Park. Viewing will begin at 9 a.m. Thursday leading **up** to a 10 a.m. funeral service at Calvary Lutheran Church, 3320 Electric in Lincoln Park. Burial will be in Michigan Memorial Park in Flat Rock.

A memorial fund for Rachelle Goodwin has been established at the National Bank of Detroit. Ask any NBD branch for details on how to donate to the Rachelle Goodwin Fund.

Caption: Photo

Lorenzo Shelton III left Detroit police headquarters Sunday night. He was dead Monday. ***

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