

TOUGHER CHARGE IN CHILD'S DEATH - COUNTY SEEKS 1ST-DEGREE MURDER IN DRUG LEASE

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For a few rocks of crack cocaine, Sean Sims loaned his girlfriend's 1996 Ford Taurus to a drug dealer and the dealer took off speeding down the streets of an east side Detroit neighborhood, prosecutors said Friday.

The Oct. 1 "drug lease," as Prosecutor Mike Duggan called it Friday, turned out to be fatal. **Rontae Hill** crashed the Taurus at a speed of more than 70 m.p.h. into two other cars at the intersection of Andover and Remington, Duggan said. Nolan Middle School student Darrin Marshall, 11, was bouncing his basketball on the sidewalk on Andover when he was hit by one of the cars that ricocheted off the Taurus. He died 40 minutes later at Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit.

On Friday, Duggan announced that an open murder charge against **Hill**, 21, of Detroit, had been upgraded to a first-degree felony murder charge, punishable by life in prison.

So far this year, 20 kids age 16 and younger have been killed in metro Detroit, 15 of them by gunfire.

"In this case it wasn't gunfire," Duggan said. "There are so many ways that our children are being killed by the drug trade in Detroit."

Duggan explained that first-degree felony murder occurs when death results from the actions of someone who is in the process of committing a felony. In this case, Duggan said, **Hill** was using the car as part of the agreement for the delivery of crack cocaine.

Duggan said Sims got high and passed out in a crack house while **Hill** took the car.

"Every time drug trafficking kills a kid, I'm going to find a way to charge first-degree murder," Duggan said. "And I'm going to do it over and over."

Sims, 30, of Mt. Clemens told investigators he had been visiting the east-side neighborhood to get drugs for at least five years, said Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Tom Furtaw.

"That was a place he was comfortable with, the easiest place to get narcotics, and it wasn't unusual for him to trade a car or do whatever he had to do to get crack for the day or for the evening," Furtaw said.

Sims is charged with conspiracy to commit a legal act in an illegal manner, for furnishing the car, a felony punishable by up to five years in prison upon conviction. He is scheduled to appear in court Oct. 22.

Hill 's preliminary examination is scheduled for Thursday.

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Caption: Photo

Nolan Middle School student Darrin Marshall, 11, was hit by a car and died.

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