

WOMAN FEARED FOR HER LIFE , FAMILY SAYS - COPS: KILLER OF 2 DIED IN RIVER

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Siraquana Cotton **feared her** boyfriend would kill **her** , so she asked the courts to protect **her** .

"Basically, he calls my cell phone making threats to kill me," she wrote last June in a Wayne County Circuit Court petition **for** a personal protection order. "I believe him ... He puts his hand on me and thinks he can get away with it."

On Thursday, about a week before the order was set to expire, Charles Epperson allegedly followed through on his threats: Police said he walked into Cotton's east-side Detroit home, shot **her** in the head and neck, then turned the gun on **her** 2-year-old daughter by another man and killed the girl with a single gunshot to the chest.

Epperson then went to Belle Isle along the Detroit River and jumped in. His body was pulled from the water Thursday afternoon. Epperson's relatives, several of whom gathered by the river as police searched **for** his body, told WDIV-TV Local 4 that Epperson chose to kill himself instead of going back to prison.

"He got depressed about the situation and what had happened," his aunt, Mary Weatherspoon, told Local 4. "He understood ... the consequences of what he was going to go through."

She added, however, that she did not believe he killed the little girl.

"He would have never shot no baby," she said. Despite Cotton's pleas **for** help a year ago, she apparently never reported Epperson **for** violating the protection order - though **family** members said he repeatedly did.

It was tough, they said, because Cotton, 25, was pregnant with Epperson's son, also named Charles, who was born a few months ago.

"She was a sweet person and a good mother to **her** children," said Sandra Redmond, whose son, Demetric Redmond, fathered a daughter with Cotton. Sandra Redmond has custody of that girl, 4-year-old Jayla Cotton. Cotton's oldest child, a boy, **lives** with his father.

"What kind of person kills a little baby?" Sandra Redmond cried outside of Cotton's duplex on the 11700 block of Promenade Avenue. "My understanding of that is zero."

Epperson, who went by the nickname Eastwood, had a history of domestic violence charges, according to Detroit Police Sgt. Omar Feliciano. The 28-year-old also spent time in prison **for** assault with a dangerous weapon and using a firearm to commit a felony, according to the Michigan Department of Corrections.

Redmond said she was supposed to bring Jayla to Cotton's home Wednesday night but she overslept. If she hadn't, she fears Jayla might have been killed as well.

Instead, Redmond said Jayla learned of **her** mother's death while watching television on Thursday morning.

"She said, 'Ga'mamma, that's my mama! That's my sister! And Eastwood killed them!' "

Redmond said she'd warned Cotton to stay away from Epperson. She said Jayla came home from visits with **her** mother and described Epperson beating and jumping on Cotton.

Cotton's father, Bobby Howard, said he also warned his daughter about Epperson.

"He said he would kill me; he said he was going to kill **her** ," Howard said. "I don't know what was wrong with him."

At first, Cotton wouldn't listen, Howard said. She was in love.

But things got tumultuous enough last year that she filed **for** the personal protection order, court records show.

"Charles punched me in the eye," she wrote. "He rides up the street I be on. He vandalizes my car."

The yearlong order was granted June 30, 2005. **Family** members said the order did little good, however, because Cotton never called police to enforce it.

Police said Epperson broke into Cotton's home about 12:30 a.m. Thursday. Three other adults were in the home, as was the infant Epperson fathered with Cotton. None of them were harmed.

Cotton pleaded **for her life** , police said, before Epperson opened fire. Then he shot 2-year-old Maurisha Mosley.

A few hours later, police received a report about a man jumping into the Detroit River. They began dragging the river's bottom in search of his body, which was discovered about 2:40 p.m. near Chene Park.

An autopsy on Epperson's body will be conducted today, officials said.

Neighbors said Cotton had lived in the Promenade duplex **for** a few months. Elroy Knott Sr., 45, said she was friendly, even wishing him a happy Father's Day on Sunday.

"I was born and raised in Detroit, so you see this," Knott said, "but you don't want to hear about it, especially to people you know."

(SIDEBAR)

Where to find help

Many agencies and organizations around the state offer help with domestic violence problems. Here are some of those with 24-hour crisis lines in southeastern Michigan and a Web site with statewide information:

*Detroit Police Department Rape Counseling Center and Domestic Violence lines: 313-833-1660 or 313-833-9813.

*First Step: 734-459-5900 or 888-453-5900; www.firststep-mi.org.

*HAVEN (Help Against Violent Encounters Now): 248-334-1274; www.haven-oakland.org.

*SAFE House: 734-995-5444; www.dvpsh.org.

*Turning Point: 586-463-6990; www.turningpointinc.com.

*United Way of Southeastern Michigan: 2-1-1 help line.

*Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence: www.mcadsv.org.

Contact AMBER HUNT at 313-222-2708 or alhunt@freepress.com.

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CAPTION:

Siraquana Cotton and **her** daughter, Maurisha Mosley, were shot to death Thursday.

AMBER HUNT Detroit Free Press

Sandra Redmond, 55, grandmother of 4-year-old Jayla Cotton, one of Siraquana Cotton's children, said she had warned Siraquana to stay away from **her** boyfriend, Charles Epperson, because of things Jayla had told **her** .

CAPTIONWRITER: Charles Epperson had a history of domestic violence charges and had spent time in prison **for** assault, police **say** .

MEMO: DETROIT MURDER-SUICIDE;SIDEBAR ATTACHED

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