

PRINCIPAL DIES AT HER SON'S HAND , POLICE SAY - BOTH STABBED IN DETROIT HOME

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Doloris Tillman Coleman spent **her** life nurturing young people.

The 64-year-old Detroit woman raised **her** son, **her** sister, **her** niece and was raising **her** niece's small children. And she spent 30 years in Detroit's public school system guiding other people's children, most recently **at** Ronald McNair Technical Middle School.

But **her** son, Laurence Coleman, 35, shunned **her** as he got older, family members say. He had not spoken to **her** in three years. When they finally exchanged words early Sunday, the conversation became a fight, police say. And during that fight in his parents' east-side home, police say Coleman stabbed his mother to death; she was found in an upstairs hallway. He was found dead from stab wounds, too.

The two children Doloris Coleman was raising -- ages 3 1/2 and 16 months -- were in nearby bedrooms.

Family members said Laurence Coleman was suffering from depression and never would have attacked his mother if "he was in his right mind."

"We weren't raised like that," said Lisa Tillman, 30, Doloris Coleman's niece and mother of the children in the home. "We were raised to honor our parents."

When police arrived, Laurence Coleman was lying **at** the base of the stairs. As of Sunday afternoon, police were not sure whether Doloris Coleman had stabbed **her** son in self-defense or whether he had stabbed himself, said Cmdr. Craig Schwartz of the Detroit Police Department's major crimes division.

Schwartz said an autopsy will be conducted today by the Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office and that should give officials a better understanding of how Laurence Coleman died.

The preliminary investigation shows that the mother was stabbed first, Schwartz said. Tillman said the weapon was Laurence Coleman's pocketknife.

According to Tillman, Laurence Coleman never told the family if he was receiving treatment for his illness, whether he was on any medication or how he was earning money. He quit his job **at** American Axle two years ago and lived in an apartment on Jefferson Avenue, Tillman said.

He regularly visited his mother's house on the 2100 block of Bryanston Crescent to do his laundry.

His mother would speak to him; he would not reply, Tillman said.

"She never spoke a mean word of **her** son," Tillman said. "She just said he was sick and that we should pray for him."

On Sunday, he came by around 5:30 a.m. Doloris Coleman and **her** husband of more than 30 years, Clarence, already were up, getting ready for the 8 a.m. service **at** Corinthian Baptist Church in Hamtramck.

As usual, Laurence Coleman did not say anything. So Clarence Coleman stuck to his Sunday morning routine. He walked Nero, the family rottweiler, around the neighborhood.

That was 6 a.m. When he returned a half-hour later, his wife and son were dead, and he called police.

Police would not say whether they were interviewing the 3-year-old boy who was in the home, but Tillman said **her** son did tell the family he had heard a fight.

Police said there was no history of domestic violence **at** the home.

Doloris Coleman was born in Mississippi but raised in Detroit. She graduated from Cass Tech High School. In 1982, she received a doctorate in education from Wayne State University.

She began **her** career with Detroit Public Schools **at** Kettering High School, where she taught child care development. She worked **at** two schools before becoming assistant **principal at** McNair.

She was in charge of the middle school's 300 sixth-graders. She made sure they were enrolled properly. And she would walk the cafeteria during lunch.

Despite **her** age, school **principal** Terry Truvillion said Coleman blended in with the students. She was short; family members say she was just over 5 feet.

She also attended every school event, including the school's skating party Friday. She was planning to visit Truvillion's daughter's housewarming in Taylor on Sunday afternoon.

"Anything Dot was invited to -- whether she knew someone for 10 minutes or 10 years -- she would stop by with a gift," Tillman said.

Afterward, she and **her** husband were going to fix their weekly Sunday dinner for the family. She wanted to eat ribs -- **her** favorite, Tillman said.

Crisis counselors will be **at** McNair today, Truvillion said.

"It will be a hard day for everyone," she said.

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Caption: Photo; Photo Coleman family photo

Doloris Tillman Coleman, 64, was assistant **principalat** Ronald McNair Technical Middle School in Detroit.

From left, Clarence Coleman, Doloris Tillman Coleman and their son, Laurence Coleman. Family members said Laurence Coleman was suffering from depression.

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