

HARD LIFE ENDS FOR GIRL IN JAIL, MOTHER LEARNS OF DEATH

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Thursday, March 11, 1993

Author: JEANNE MAY and L. A. JOHNSON, Free Press Staff , Writers; Staff Writers
JEFFREY S. GHANNAM and , JACK KRESNAK contributed to this report.

A 7-year-old Detroit girl found dead Tuesday was undernourished and had been moved from home to home before her death, authorities said Wednesday.

Dominique Gibson, who had cerebral palsy, was dead by the time an ambulance got her to Children's Hospital of Michigan -- about two blocks from her home on the 400 block of Eliot.

Wayne County Medical Examiner Bader Cassin did an autopsy Wednesday, but said tests to determine the cause of death will take a week. He said **Dominique** was undernourished and small for her age.

In 1991, the state Department of Social Services received a complaint about **Dominique's** mother, Nicole **Gibson**. Workers could have sent her four children to live with a relative or in foster care.

Instead, they enrolled **Gibson** in the DSS program Families First for six weeks of training in parenting skills designed to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Dominique could not walk, talk or feed herself, according to Michael Davis, a family friend. He usually saw the child lying under a blanket on a couch in her dining room. He said **Dominique** had to be carried everywhere.

Davis said **Gibson**, 24, learned of her daughter's death in a phone call to the Wayne County Jail, where she was being held on a 1989 conviction for dealing less than 50 grams of a controlled substance.

She never showed up for sentencing in 1990, but was picked up on a warrant Feb. 16 and booked into the jail.

Friends said she was out of jail at some point between Feb. 16 and Wednesday, when Recorder's Court Judge John O'Brien sentenced her to probation and told her to get a high school equivalency diploma.

Here, from police and other sources, is the **Gibsons** ' recent story:

About two months ago, Nicole **Gibson** and her sister, Darlene -- plus their eight children -- moved from their home in the Warren-Lakepointe area.

"The landlord cut our water and lights off," Betty **Gibson, Dominique** 's grandmother, said Wednesday.

While Nicole **Gibson** was in jail, her mother and sister moved the children to other relatives' homes, Davis said Wednesday. He said they tried to find a more permanent place to stay.

Dominique's family received Aid to Dependent Children, but **Dominique** got extra money for her care because of her physical condition -- \$450 a month from Social Security and \$280 from other sources.

Davis said that about 10 days ago the **Gibsons** sought refuge in the ramshackle red brick house on Eliot where **Dominique** lay dying Tuesday. "They came here to see if they could get the kids out of the weather," he said.

After Betty **Gibson**, who was at the house, found she was unable to awaken **Dominique**, the child was taken to the hospital.

DSS workers Wednesday took six children from the house into custody.

Nicole **Gibson**'s other children are Shannon, 6; Darrell, 5, and Maurice, 20 months. Darlene **Gibson**'s children are Jamesia, 4; Ricardo W. Jones Jr., 3; Darnell, 20 months, and a girl born in January. The state took the baby girl into custody before **Dominique**'s death.

About 5,700 families have been in the Families First program, Gerald Miller, DSS director, said Wednesday.

Family workers check three and six months after a six-week intervention, and the last time the **Gibson** family was checked, he said, the family was considered stable. "This is a tragic case, but in no way would reflect on the entire program," he said.

Three-year-old Jamiel Neal, who died of bruises, burns and other injuries in January, also had been in the program. Police said he had been shocked with a stun gun, whipped with rolled-up newspapers and forced to stand in a corner for hours. His mother and her boyfriend were charged in the death.

Police late Wednesday said they are questioning witnesses and relatives in connection with **Dominique**'s death, but no one had been charged.

Free Press staff writers Jeffrey S. Ghannam and Jack Kresnak contributed to this report.

Memo: LOCAL NEWS; SEE ALSO METRO FINAL EDITION, Page 3B

Edition: METRO EDITION

Section: NWS

Page: 1B

Index Terms: DEATH ; CHILD ; CEREBRAL PALSY ; DETROIT ; DSS ; NICOLE GIBSON;
DOMINIQUE GIBSON; FAMILIES FIRST ; INVESTIGATION ; PARENT ; PRISON

Record Number: 9301090850

Copyright (c) 1993 Detroit Free Press