

' THESE WERE BABIES ,' NOT DRUG-RUNNERS, FAMILIES SAY - 5 ARE ARRAIGNED IN KILLINGS OF 2 BOYS

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The gangland-style executions of Orlando Herron, 13, and Darren Johnson, 11, made no sense to their families, who said Tuesday that the boys were more likely to play video games than run drugs.

" **These were babies** ," said Ebony Montgomery, 29, cousin to both Orlando and Darren. "They had never been involved in drugs. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Police reports don't say why Orlando and Darren were killed Friday night in the house at 6535 Mansfield in Detroit.

Police sources said Monday that the boys were drug-runners, but members of the boys' families adamantly deny that.

Darren's stepfather, Dashaan Warren, 33, a disc jockey at WJLB-FM (97.9), described his stepson as a fun-loving kid who dreamed of playing in the NBA and loved to draw.

"He was not a drug-runner; he was not a thief," Warren said Tuesday. "He was a great kid."

Warren said Darren's father took his son to the home on Mansfield. "I'm not going to question where his father takes him," Warren said. "No one is responsible for what happened to Darren but the people who killed him."

Detroit Police Chief Ella Bully-Cummings said at a news conference Tuesday that she could not confirm whether the boys were involved in drugs.

"Until I have absolute information that would confirm that, I can't say that for sure," she said.

The boys' cousin Ronell Thompson was a known drug dealer, Bully-Cummings said.

On Tuesday, details of the slayings emerged from court and police reports as five people were arraigned on a litany of charges, including first-degree murder and kidnapping.

The reports state that Thompson, 23, was kidnapped, bound with duct tape, forced into his car's trunk and taken to his house on Mansfield before his two cousins were shot in the head.

Thompson was shot in the arm, leg and chest in the home, in which police found cocaine stored in a safe. He is in serious condition in an area hospital.

Released from probation two days before the slayings, Thompson had been arrested in November 2005 on a drug charge and sentenced to probation.

The suspects were arraigned Tuesday in 36th District Court in Detroit. They are: Sonya O'Neal, 38; Torrisandois Lyons, 42; Deandre Witherspoon, 23; Robert Reed, 36, and Charles Moore, 38, all of Detroit.

They're accused of luring Thompson, an associate of Witherspoon, to O'Neal's home on Orleans to deliver 9 ounces of cocaine - worth about \$9,000 - then kidnapping him, police say.

"I can't speak on that," said Montgomery, who helped raise Orlando in Detroit. "I can't defend what a grown man does, but those babies had no connection to any illegal, foul, vulgar activity. They were murdered for someone else's evil."

Among the details alleged in the official reports:

- *Three of the suspects - Lyons, Reed and O'Neal - drove Thompson's car to the Mansfield home with Thompson bound and shoved in the trunk.

- *Three people in the home were beaten, including a 20-year-old woman.

- *Reed and O'Neal were the shooters.

According to the search warrant, Thompson said O'Neal shot him.

O'Neal's lawyer, David Steingold, said his client was not involved.

Warren said that Darren lived with his mother, Allyson Johnson, and Warren during the week in Oak Park. The boy, who was to turn 12 less than two hours after his death, spent many weekends with his father, Darren Johnson Sr.

Calls to Darren Johnson Sr. were not returned Tuesday.

Stephanie Hall, a spokeswoman for Ferndale Public Schools, said Darren was held back in fifth grade at Coolidge Intermediate School but was excelling this year, and that there were plans to move him to sixth grade.

Montgomery said Orlando regularly attended school, but she wouldn't say where. She said the kids were at the Mansfield house to play video games during winter break.

"If those parents had believed their children were in danger, they wouldn't have been there," she said.

"You do all you can to make sure you raise your children right and how to distinguish right from wrong, then it just so happens that everything you fear comes to light."

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo

CAPTION: The five people arraigned in the case, from left: Sonya O'Neal, 38; Torrisandois Lyons, 42; Deandre Witherspoon, 23; Charles Moore, 38, and Robert Reed, 36. They face a litany of charges, including first-degree murder and kidnapping.

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