

COURT HEARING FOR THOSE ACCUSED IN 6 KILLINGS MARSHALL PLANNED ROBBERY , ST. AUBIN CODEFENDANTS SAY

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Saturday, April 21, 1990
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According to confessions by two of her codefendants obtained by the Free Press, Tamarra Marie Marshall instigated the St. Aubin Street crack house robbery that turned into Detroit's worst mass killing in nearly 20 years.

Marshall wanted to "go to hit a lick" -- pull a drug rip- off -- on the crack house run by her former boyfriend, investigators were told by Marc Caison, the alleged getaway driver.

Another defendant, Jamal Latiff Biggs, told investigators that Marshall -- whom he knew as Honey -- planned the robbery, was the first to pull a gun inside the house, and then started the killing by shooting at the former boyfriend, Steven Owens.

"All of a sudden Honey just started doing all that," he told investigators after his arrest. "When she shot Steve everything just went berserk."

Marshall, however, has told investigators that she was surprised when guns were pulled, that she was outside the house when the victims were shot, and that she tried to convince Caison to flee with her.

Anything she did, said her lawyer, Charlie Campbell, was "so she wouldn't be killed, too. I think that'll float with a jury."

Marshall, 18; Caison, 19; Biggs, 19, and Mark Bell, 20, are charged with first-degree murder in the April 4 slayings of six people in Owens' house.

A preliminary examination to determine if there is enough evidence to warrant trial began Friday and is to resume Monday before Detroit 36th District Judge Gerald Brock.

Killed in the incident were Owens, 32; Bobby Frazier, 16; Carl Williams, 21; Robert Hill, 15; Levon Robinson, 18; and Rodney Lewis, 22.

But at least four people survived the slaughter, and two of them testified Friday under tight security. Assistant Prosecutor Augustus Hutting and Brock, citing concerns for their safety, asked that the survivors' names not be published because their names were not known to the defendants.

A young woman, known by her nickname "Janet," said she was spared because she told the alleged killers that she was only 14. Although she is 20, Janet could be taken easily for a middle school student.

Janet testified she and Owens planned to go roller skating, but she was at the house when Marshall arrived. She said she stayed upstairs while Owens went to talk with Marshall.

In a matter of minutes, Janet testified, Marshall came upstairs with a gun.

"It was pointed at me," she testified, adding that Marshall forced her downstairs at gunpoint.

Janet said she was taken into the dining room where Owens, Williams, Frazier and a man she did not recognize were being held at gunpoint by Biggs. Bell soon joined the group.

After some searching, the victims were led upstairs and placed in different bedrooms, face-down on the floor, she said.

The shooting soon started.

She said the shots "were getting closer to me. Then they shot the person next to me."

Bell said she would live because of her age, but warned her not to inform on him, Janet said.

But Marshall, she said, had urged that she be killed.

"She said, 'I don't know nothing about the bitch, go ahead and kill her,' " Janet said, later adding that Marshall directed that Owens be killed "because he knew about them."

She said Marshall then urged "the two guys to hurry up; she had done this too many times to be caught."

The other survivor who testified, a youth in his late teens, said he and Robinson walked up to the house and were allowed inside by Biggs.

Once inside, the teenager said, guns were pulled by Bell and Biggs and they were ordered to the floor. The teen said they pleaded for their lives.

"They told us to shut up," he testified. Robinson was taken to the basement and the teen said he soon heard a shot.

"I had to take a chance," the teen testified. He bolted out of the house a moment after hearing footsteps coming up from the basement. He said he encountered Biggs on the porch.

"We got into a little tussle," he said, later elaborating that he punched Biggs in the jaw and slammed him into a wall, then ran home.

On Monday, the prosecution is expected to use some of the defendants' statements in the examination.

In her version, according to investigators, Marshall claimed she went to the house to set up a dope deal, but that Biggs suddenly pulled a gun while Owens was telephoning for a fresh shipment. She said she was outside when the shooting started, and was unable to get Caison to flee.

Caison, however, told investigators that Marshall planned the robbery, but that he had no idea anyone was going to be shot. He said he waited outside the entire time and did not know anyone had been killed until later when he got his share of money and drugs taken from the house.

Biggs told investigators that the focus should be on Marshall. He told them that she said she could set up a lucrative robbery.

He presented investigators with a picture of a robbery that went rapidly out of control, with more people arriving every few minutes. Some people were sent away but others, such as Robinson, were brought in.

All the shooting took place after he left the upstairs and then the last shot came after he left the house, he told investigators.

Caption: Photo PATRICIA BECK

: Defendants had a preliminary examination Friday. Above, from left to right, are Mark Bell, 20, Marc Caison, 19, and Jamal Biggs, 19. The three, along with Tamarra Marie Marshall, 18, at left, are charged with murder.

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

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Index Terms: DEATH ; MURDER ; COURT ; DETROIT ; DRUG ; MULTIPLE

Record Number: 9001150832

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