

SLAIN GIRL'S DAD CHARGED IN DETROIT DAY CARE ATTACK - POLICE SUSPECT HE MAY BE LINKED TO A 2002 SHOOTING

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Just one **day** before police say he fatally beat his 3-year-old daughter **in** the head, a Detroit father begged the **girl's** mother not to proceed with a court hearing that could have forced him to pay child support for the toddler, according to court records.

Now investigators are trying to ascertain whether Bernard Kelly turns to violence -- or even murder -- when feeling the financial pressure of providing for the **care** of his children.

Kelly, 37, the man police say is responsible for last month's **day care** rampage -- the beating death of his daughter, 3-year-old Stefanie Belue, and the critical shootings of two adult workers - also could have been connected to a 2002 shooting of a woman with whom he fathered a child. Though Kelly was never **charged in** that crime, Detroit police said the cases are too similar to ignore and they will continue to investigate.

"It's more than a coincidence at this point," said Lt. Roy McCalister. "That seems to be his M.O. When he doesn't want to pay child support, he tries to eliminate the source of his problem."

On Feb. 19, 2002, someone shot Detroiter Charity Smith seven times **in** the leg and buttock. Earlier that **day**, Smith said she had had an argument with Kelly about child support. She said Smith threatened to kill both her and their daughter, Amorie. The girl, now 4, was not injured **in** the shooting.

"I'm relieved that he is **in** custody, but I'm a little bitter, too, with the Detroit police and how they swept my case under the rug," Smith, now 23, said Sunday. "If he would have been locked up two years ago, this never would have happened."

Police say that around 10 a.m. Sept. 28, Kelly knocked on the door of a northwest Detroit **day care** center and inquired about **day care** services. When the **day care** owner, Annette Rice, 41, allowed him to enter, he asked where the children were kept, according to court records. Rice took him to the back to show him, and Kelly opened fire, the records say.

Rice and her niece, Sherita Griggs, 22, were shot multiple times and remain hospitalized **in** critical condition at Sinai-Grace Hospital **in** Detroit. **In** addition to the assault on Stefanie, Griggs' 4-month-old son was injured after falling from his mother's arms. Rice and Griggs were found **in** a hallway on the first floor of the home, located **in** the 19000 block of Woodbine. Stefanie was found unconscious, lying on her back on the floor **in** a back bedroom.

Police initially reported that Stefanie had been shot, but the Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office ruled that she died from blunt force trauma to the head.

According to the court file, Rice was able to pick Kelly out of a photo lineup from her hospital bed Friday.

Hours later, a warrant was issued for Kelly's arrest, and a manhunt began. Officers had him under surveillance, but lost him at some point Friday. Around 7 p.m. Saturday, members of the Violent Crime Task Force and U.S. Marshals Service found Kelly at a home on Woodmont near Lyndon, on the city's west side. He was trying to disguise himself, wearing a cap and dark glasses. He also was carrying clothes to a car, police said.

"Had we not taken him down at that time, had we not known his location ... he would have left the state," Detroit Police Chief Ella Bully-Cummings said. "Mr. Kelly moved around the city quite a bit to try to elude us."

Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy said several relatives appeared to be helping plot his escape. She said those family members could face criminal charges, including accessory after the fact, a felony punishable by up to five years **in** prison.

As Kelly was escorted to 36th District Court by police officers Sunday, he was asked whether he killed his daughter. He said "no." During his arraignment, he was silent, except to ask if the charges against him could be repeated because he did not understand them.

Kelly was then arraigned on charges of first-degree, premeditated murder; felony murder; committing a felony with a firearm; child abuse, and two counts of assault with intent to murder. If convicted of first-degree murder, he faces mandatory life **in** prison with no chance of parole. Magistrate Charles Anderson III remanded Kelly to the Wayne County Jail without bond pending an Oct. 21 preliminary examination. "If this is the individual responsible, then we hope he is prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," said Andrea Hakeem, Stefanie's godmother and a family spokeswoman. Stefanie's mother, Charleen Belue, could not be reached for comment.

According to Wayne County Circuit Court records, Belue and Kelly were scheduled for a hearing at 2 p.m. Sept. 28 -- the **day** of the **attack** -- **in** front of Judge Kathleen MacDonald of the family division. Kelly had requested that the judge review a Friend of the Court recommendation made **in** April that he pay Belue child support for Stefanie.

Belue, 38, told police that a **day** before the court date, Kelly pleaded with her not to go forward with the proceedings, according to 36th District Court records.

"I really feel sad for Stefanie's mother and family," Smith said. "I feel like somebody just pulled my heart out. I'm still here for my daughter and my daughter is still alive. I thought me being shot up seven times is pain, but that is nothing compared to losing a child. My pain could never compare to the pain of Charleen Belue."

Bully-Cummings, who called Stefanie a "sweet-looking girl," sympathized, too, with the **girl's** loved ones. "It's very hard for the family of Stefanie Belue, but hopefully, it brings them some closure," the chief said of the arrest.

Asked how the violent death of Stefanie affects the Detroit community, Bully-Cummings said:
"It places a heavy amount of sadness on us."

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