

VICTIMS OF CHILD-CARE SIEGE TELL OF HORROR - THEY TESTIFY ABOUT VIOLENT SHOOTINGS IN HEARING AT HOSPITAL

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Annette Rice's right arm was in a sling and her right side was in a brace. Much of Sherita Griggs' face was bandaged, along with the left side of her neck. Both of their voices were raspy from tracheotomies.

Still, the women were able to describe to a Detroit judge what happened the day they were shot and 3-year-old Stefanie Belue was fatally beaten inside a home day-care center. Their testimony was broadcast live on local television.

After hearing their testimony, 36th District Judge Donald Coleman found enough probable cause to bind Stefanie's father, Bernard Kelly, over for trial in Wayne County Circuit Court.

Police and prosecutors say Kelly, 37, killed Stefanie because he did not want to pay child support to the girl's mother, Charleen Belue. On the day of Stefanie's killing, Kelly and Belue were scheduled to go to a court hearing to finalize the support payments.

Stefanie died of blunt force trauma to the head. According to the Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office, the injuries appeared to have been inflicted with a pipe or stick.

On Thursday, Belue testified at Kelly's preliminary examination in a downtown Detroit courtroom. On Friday, the judge, prosecutor and defense attorney traveled to Sinai-Grace Hospital in northwest Detroit to hear testimony from Rice and Griggs. The two women have been in the hospital recovering since they were in critical condition from the Sept. 28 incident.

Rice, 44, who owned and operated the day-care center from her northwest Detroit home, said four children, including Stefanie, and her niece, Griggs, 22, were in a back bedroom when Kelly knocked on her door. She said she went to open it and he inquired about day-care services.

She said Kelly then asked if there was another area of the home, located in the 19000 block of Woodbine, where the children were kept. She told him that the kids sometimes played in a bedroom, and he asked if he could go see them. Rice said Kelly peeked into the room while she was standing next to him, and then they went back to the front of the house.

Rice said Kelly told her he liked the day care. She offered him some registration papers to take with him.

He then asked if he could go back to the bedroom.

"When I turned around, I heard 'boom, boom, boom,' and he shot me three times in the back," Rice said. "I fell on the floor and I hollered 'Sherita get the babies.' "

Rice said she could feel Kelly run past her, and then "I heard him holler 'Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!' "as the children began crying and screaming. Rice said she heard more gunshots before Kelly came back out into the hallway and shot her again.

He ran away again, and Rice said she heard "knocking around" sounds coming from the bedroom.

Griggs testified that she heard her aunt talking to a man, but stayed in the bedroom because the children were there watching television. She said she was holding her 4-month-old son, Amari. She said she heard gunshots, then Kelly appeared in the doorway of the bedroom, cursing at her.

"I remember getting shot twice in the face," she said. "After that, I don't remember anything."

Griggs said she blacked out, but thought she had laid her son down. However, Amari fell from her arms during the attack and suffered head injuries. He has since recovered.

Griggs testified that she didn't know how long she was unconscious in the hospital, but when she awoke, she was able to instantly identify Kelly from a picture shown to her by Detroit police investigators.

Kelly is being held in the Wayne County Jail. He is charged with first-degree murder, felony murder, two counts of assault with intent to murder and committing a felony with a firearm. If convicted of first-degree murder, he faces mandatory life in prison with no chance of parole.

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Caption: Photo CARLOS OSORIO/Associated Press

The suspect in the day-care shootings, Bernard Kelly, left, and his attorney appear before Judge Donald Coleman, right, at Sinai-Grace Hospital in Detroit on Friday. Annette Rice described the incident and her injuries. Sherita Griggs said she blacked out during the shootings.

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