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GIRL'S PARENTS FACE HER ACCUSED KILLER

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Article Text:

The parents of 9-year-old Sherdavia Jenkins were in court to watch one of the men charged in the girl's death enter a not-guilty plea.

David Jenkins had met Yellow Man before, when both would drop off their kids at elementary school.

The two saw each other again Thursday. Only this time, Leroy ``Yellow Man'' LaRose sat slumped in the defendant's box in Miami-Dade criminal court, accused of murdering David Jenkins' 9-year-old daughter, Sherdavia.

LaRose appeared sullen and pale and wore the red jump suit reserved for high-profile inmates.

Sherdavia's mother, Sherrone Jenkins, wore all black.

``It's a lot of mixed feelings,'' David Jenkins said later on the courthouse steps. ``One feeling is of anger, one is of hate. None of it is compassion [for him].''

The dreadlocked defendant's family watched silently. Two rows behind them, the Jenkins watched, too, as LaRose's attorney told the judge his client is pleading not guilty.

``I never thought it would be him, knowing he has kids,'' David Jenkins said. He remembers LaRose bumming spare change off him.

Nearly a month has passed since a bullet pierced the neck of Sherdavia Jenkins as she played outside her family's Liberty City home.

Her death has riveted Miami-Dade, drawn massive media coverage and sparked many vigils and peace rallies.

Authorities say Sherdavia died during a firefight between LaRose and another man, Damon ``Red Rock'' Darling.

Both men are now jailed, charged this week with second-degree murder. Darling was denied bond Thursday.

LaRose's attorney, Andrew Rier, said his client extends condolences to the Jenkins family, and out of respect to them, turned himself in and talked to detectives without a lawyer.

“We would ask people to withhold judgment before all the facts of the case are known,” Rier said.

Thursday promised to be the first of many in these courtroom halls for the bereaved family. The couple vowed to attend every hearing, no matter how mundane.

“Only death,” David Jenkins insisted, would keep him from court.

Their first visit introduced them to many key players in the case, including veteran prosecutors David Waksman and Kathleen Hoague.

Families of other defendants appearing in court Thursday morning filed inside the fourth-floor chambers. They were followed by reporters and curious prosecutors and homicide detectives not involved in the case. They were all interested in the Sherdavia Jenkins case.

“That's the guy who killed the little girl,” one woman in the crowd whispered to another woman.

“That's why the news is here. What's his name? Powder? Yellow Bone? Powder?”

LaRose's moniker, “Yellow Man,” had preceded him.

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