

# Teen's defense will be stress of inner-city life

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An attorney apparently is planning to go ahead with an unconventional defense of a 17-year-old girl: blaming the client's alleged killing of another teenager, after a scuffle over a coat, on the distressing effects of inner-city life. (9)

The girl will be in Circuit Judge Michael Malmstadt's court Tuesday at a hearing to decide if she should be tried as an adult for crimes ranging from first-degree intentional homicide to six counts of armed robbery in the Oct. 26, 1991, slaying of Brenda Adams, 17.

Three psychologists retained by defense attorney Robin Shellow, each of whom examined the girl, all suggest that the accused suffers from symptoms of post-traumatic

stress disorder. Two of the psychologists diagnose the disorder, while one gives a "provisional" diagnosis, saying it is "difficult to attach the cause of her symptoms" specifically to the disorder.

The psychologists who interviewed and tested the girl are Pamela Ross Mahnke, Lawrence Currie and Angrid D. Hicks, all of Milwaukee. Their reports are in the girl's Children's Court file.

All three agree that the girl is emotionally disturbed. She was raped when she was 12, and was herself beaten and robbed one month before the shooting, according to the Children's Court file.

Last week, Shellow refused to say on what basis she would argue that the case be kept in Children's

Court. But she has said previously that her client is mentally unstable, and has suggested that she suffers from a stress-induced "psychosis" because of her violence-filled life.

According to the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association, the disorder follows "a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience." While it is most commonly associated with military combat veterans, victims of natural disasters, catastrophic accidents, rape or other such traumatic occurrences also can suffer from the disorder.

Shellow has said this may be the first time such a defense has been mounted in a juvenile case here, and that the stress that affected her client's actions also may govern the lives of other central city children who are exposed to conditions not unlike those of a war zone.

## PROSECUTION REJECTS ARGUMENT

Asst. Dist. Atty. David Robles has rejected Shellow's arguments to keep the case in Children's Court. He said the girl was not mentally ill, was aware of her actions and that "the offenses were committed in a premeditated and willful manner." Also, the accused will turn 18 and become an adult in the eyes of the law on April 1.

The slain girl's sister says she also rejects the argument that Brenda's accused killers are not responsible for their actions. In a letter to

The Journal, Yolanda Adams of Atlanta, writes:

"They must understand that society as a whole cannot and will not tolerate such acts, regardless of race, creed, national origin, or any other sociological premise. . . . they can no longer hide behind the skirts of excuses."

The accused girl allegedly shot Brenda as Brenda left a party with a friend, using a gun given to her by a 15-year-old companion. According to police reports, several armed robberies precipitated the shooting in the same area. The shooting took place in the 3400 block of W. Villard Ave.

The girl, who had lived with her grandmother, currently is in custody.

The 15-year-old who allegedly supplied the gun also has been charged, as has an 18-year-old man, Kureate U. Oliver. Both are charged with first-degree intentional homicide, and with six armed robberies that occurred the same night.

The 15-year-old is scheduled for trial Feb. 4 in Children's Court, Robles said. Oliver's trial in Circuit Court is scheduled for Feb. 21.

All the psychologists suggested that the girl lived in a violent world where a different moral code ruled. They suggest that many of her problems stem from being raped by her mother's landlord at age 12.

According to the psychological manual, a victim of post-traumatic stress disorder often re-experiences the event, which causes intense psychological distress.