



















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Metro

Neighbor recalls aiding teen in Cambridge slaying

By **Brian R. Ballou** and **John R. Ellement** | GLOBE STAFF JUNE 04, 2012

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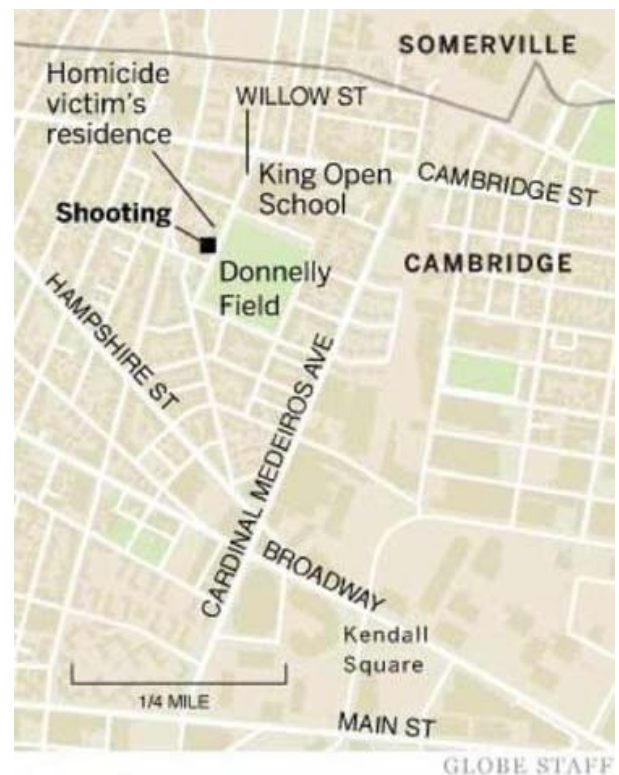
Two teenage girls were shot, one fatally, Sunday night while sitting on the porch of this Willow Street home in Cambridge.

PRINT REPRINTS E-MAIL SHARE

CAMBRIDGE – Charlene Holmes was known to her neighbors as a bright, engaging child with beautiful, expressive eyes who tried to be a positive role model to her peers.

“She had like the cutest features ... big sparkly eyes, kinda like if you gaze into them you fall in love,” neighbor Cindy Rodriguez said, describing the teenager who was shot to death Sunday night on a Cambridge street. “Her eyes were beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. The eyes are the passage through the soul. ... You could tell that she was good at heart, just through her eyes.”

Today some residents on Willow Street where Holmes lived are now haunted by the memory of the 16-year-old girl’s eyes — because as she lay on the sidewalk Sunday night, slowly dying from gunshot wounds, her eyes were vacant.



“When I got over there, she was laying there,” Willow Street resident Cheryl Hall said today, her voice choked with emotion. “I picked her hand up, and I’m trying to talk to her. I told her, ‘It’s going to be OK. Stay with us.’ ”

Authorities said Sunday that Holmes and a second girl — a 17-year-old girl who suffered critical injuries — were shot while they were sitting on the porch of 34-36 Willow St.

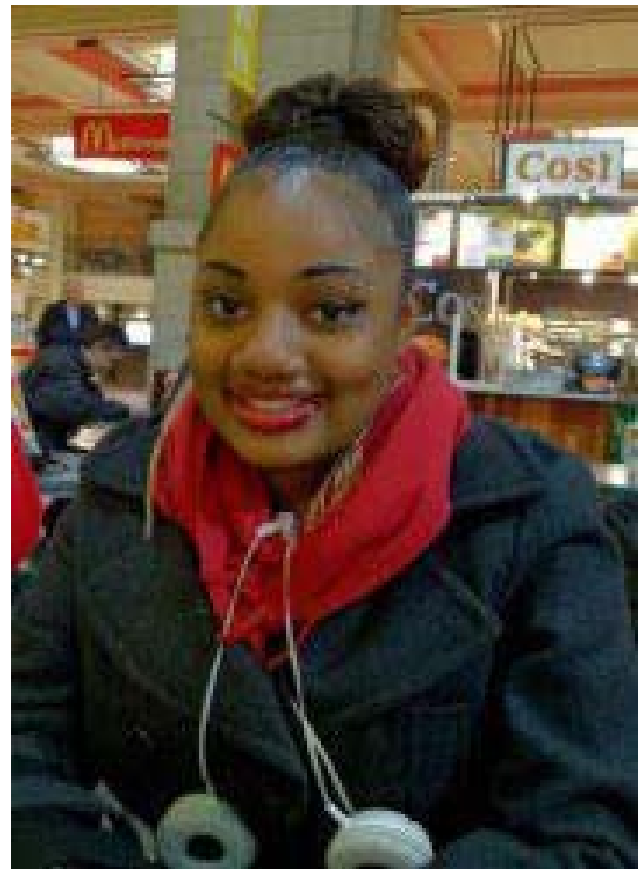
But residents said today that Holmes was walking with an older sister down Willow Street and just happened to be in front of 34-36 Willow St. when the shots were fired. Holmes’s other sister, 17-year-old Chantae, ran to the family’s home at 48 Willow and alerted her parents, said Hall.

“She [the victim] tried to duck, her sister was able to run home, and I was able to run across the street and I held her hand,” Hall recalled.

Hall and other neighborhood residents said Holmes’s mother rushed out and saw that her child had been shot. Amid screams of shock and horror, the child’s mother also shouted “My baby! My baby!” Cheryl Hall said today.

While residents disagreed with authorities on what Holmes was doing, they did agree that the second victim was sitting on the front porch of 34-36 Willow when shot. That girl, they said, was sitting there braiding the hair of a male teenager who lives at that address.

Holmes and the surviving victim were students at Cambridge



TUMBLR

Victim of the Cambridge shooting, Charlene Holmes.

Rindge and Latin School. Holmes was a sophomore, and the survivor is a senior scheduled to graduate this Thursday, said Cambridge School Superintendent Jeffrey Young.

Young spent the day at Rindge and Latin where counselors are on site for both students and faculty. Seniors had their last classes on Friday.

Young said the two girls were “very much loved and respected, caring, outgoing, sociable; terrific students. Everybody in this community are devastated by these events.”

Young added, “As devastating and as difficult it is for us, I know that it is only a fraction of what it’s like for the families. My heart is just breaking for them.”

One of Holmes’s schoolmates, junior Santa De La Cruz, 17, said she was a homebody, not someone who was often hanging out on the street.

“Charlene was a bright girl. All that drinking and smoking — she didn’t do that. She was against violence, which is why I’m surprised that happened to her,” De La Cruz said. “She was always in the house, she wasn’t the type to run the streets and cause drama. She didn’t do that. She had high goals for herself.”

Today, people at the Holmes residence at 48 Willow St. declined comment.

Last night, Holmes’s mother, who is also named Charlene Holmes, called her daughter “a beautiful, loving, wonderful person. She was a people person. She loved life.”

She said the shooting was a drive-by.

“She was an innocent bystander,” she said in a brief, emotional interview.

No arrests have been made, according to Middlesex District Attorney Gerard T. Leone Jr. and Cambridge Police Commissioner Robert Haas.

Police responded to the scene after receiving a 911 call around 8 p.m. Several witnesses described seeing the two girls being treated in front of the house.

The street is a thickly settled residential area of two-family homes known to Cambridge city planners as the Wellington-Harrington neighborhood. The King Open School and the Frisoli Youth Center are located on Willow Street, not far from the address where the shooting occurred.

Rodriguez, the neighbor, said she was with the Holmes family until early today.

“Everybody was in shock. She [the mother of the victim] was just sitting there staring blankly, I tried to converse with her. ... She said she was just plotting out ways to cope in her head, and she was watching videos of her [daughter] on her daughter’s iPod.”

Rodriguez added of her neighborhood, “It’s gone from kid-friendly here to bullet-friendly. I want it gone.”

Globe correspondents Evan Allen, Matt Rocheleau contributed to this report.

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