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The short, complicated life of Jayden

Catherine McDonald, Global News; With files from Melissa Leong, National Post

Presented by



A mother charged with killing her 18-month-old son was embroiled in a custody battle with the boy's father, a married co-worker with whom she had an affair.

The father, Richard Williams, and his wife of 19 years had reconciled and wanted to welcome the boy, Jayden, into their home.

On Friday, police found Jayden's body in Mississauga. He was in the passenger side of a vehicle parked under the office tower where his parents worked. Police allege Ms. Bernard killed him before trying to kill herself.

"This was an assault on my family," Richard Williams, 45, said in an exclusive interview with Global News from his Brampton home.

"I made an error in judgment, but my son should not have suffered. I am unable to sleep at night. Every time I close my eyes, I see my son."

His wife, Joy Williams, added: "I don't know how anyone could do this to him, because he was such a sweet baby. He was just so adorable."

Last July, Mrs. Williams, who works as a nurse in a maternity ward, found a card in her husband's belongings from the christening of a baby named Jayden Marc Anthony Bernard. Her husband's middle names are Mark Anthony.

She confronted her husband and only then learned of his affair with a woman in his office and that he had fathered a child with her.

After coming to terms with the news, she told him that she wanted to meet the nine-month-old boy.

"All my friends were saying, 'I don't know how you can do this' ... but I work with babies. There was no way I wasn't going to love that baby," she said, breaking down. "I needed to work it out because my family needs their dad. I still need my husband. Jayden needed his dad."

"It was hard trying to absorb Jayden, knowing how he came into the world, but Jayden was an innocent baby and the child can't be victimized."

In the months that followed, Ms. Bernard consented to Jayden visiting the Williamses, who have two children, an 11-year-old son and a 17-year-old daughter, four times a week. Their son took up piano to be able to teach his little brother.

"He looks so much like our daughter. Jayden is such a beautiful baby, and he was so sensitive and kind hearted," said Mrs. Williams.

Mr. Williams' last visit with Jayden was on Nov. 25. Following that, the Williamses say his mother began denying them access.

"She started letting him come visit regularly and when

she realized that I wasn't moving out and I was dealing this, and was loving Jayden, and the children were loving him and accepting him, I guess it was unsettling for her," Mrs. Williams said.

Ms. Bernard's lawyer, John Struthers, would say only that she was involved in a "tumultuous" custody dispute and it was close to being resolved.

According to court documents, in October Ms. Bernard, 34, reported to Bolton OPP that she received a harassing e-mail and a letter from Mrs. Williams. The Williamses denied the allegations and claim the letters were forged.

Less than three weeks ago, lawyers for the Williamses and Ms. Bernard met at the Brampton courthouse and arranged for Mr. Williams to visit Jayden twice a week. The visits never took place, the Williamses said.

Mr. Williams said Ms. Bernard was threatening to move to Florida with Jayden. His lawyer told her counsel that he would be advising the father to petition for full custody if the matter was not settled.

"The reason why I delayed it so much was because I did not want an adversarial situation. I said, 'This is not in his best interest,'" Mr. Williams said.

More than a dozen of Ms. Bernard's family and friends gathered in a Brampton court yesterday for her brief appearance on a first-degree murder charge. She was remanded into custody until April 23.

The accused's mother collapsed and paramedics were called to treat her.

"[She is a] wonderful mother, that's why it's so shocking," Ms. Bernard's cousin told reporters outside court.

Ms. Bernard's two other children were found safe, police said. They are reportedly staying with family.

Residents on Ms. Bernard's street in Bolton said she lived in the home with her parents and her two children from a previous relationship, ages 12 and 14.

Anita Taglione, a neighbour, remembered Jayden as a "cute little boy."

"This is inconceivable," Ms. Taglione said. "She was a good mother."

FATHER' S STATEMENT

I need the court to send a strong message so that no other Dad has to experience the pain that I feel with the loss of my son. Children are not property. No one has the right to dispose of children, as if they are tangible assets when they feel they have no further use for them.

Nadine Bernard needs to serve a minimum of a life sentence for taking Jayden's innocent life. The law allows 25 years for taking a life and even that is 24 more years than Jayden got. The average life expectancy is at least 70 years, so this is the minimum sentence she should get for the crime she committed and she should not be allowed out on bail.

FATHER' S POEM

This poem was written by Richard Williams, the father of murdered toddler Jayden Bernard:

J - for the Joy you brought to everyone who knew you
A-for the Aching hearts you have left behind

Y-for the Youthful days that were stolen from you

D-because we are Determined to bring your death to justice
E-for the Everlasting love your dad has for you

N-for Near in our hearts we will keep you Jayden

We love you!

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