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Housing Project Feud Cited in Killing of Basketball Star

By [COREY KILGANNON](#)



A shrine to Tayshana Murphy, a high school basketball star, outside the Grant Houses in Morningside Heights, Manhattan.

As soon as Tayshana Murphy, 18, was shot early Sunday in the Grant Houses, a public housing project in Morningside Heights, Manhattan, her friends and neighbors declared that they knew, immediately, who had killed her.

“Manhattanville killed her, it’s a fact,” said Calvin Spencer, 30, who lives in the same building as Ms. Murphy did: 3170 Broadway at West 125th Street, where Morningside Heights meets West Harlem.

Mr. Spencer was referring to the Manhattanville Houses, another public housing complex just across 125th Street from the Grant Houses. Residents of both housing complexes said there had been a running feud between the projects for years, and that fights among young residents had increased before the shooting.

“It’s a senseless beef and it goes back before I was born,” Mr. Spencer said. “I remember growing up with it in the ’90s. Things were escalating the last couple weeks and these guys came here to hurt a Grant person, didn’t matter who it was. And now this is going to make it worse.”

Police officials also said the shooting might have been connected to the dispute between the projects.

“It’s stupid stuff; these two groups don’t even know each other,” said Krisy Reyes, 18, a friend of Ms. Murphy’s. “All they knew was, ‘We’re Manhattanville, they’re Grant. So they’re the enemy.’”

Manny Cerrutty, 42, another longtime resident of the Grant Houses, stared at the makeshift shrine Ms. Murphy’s friends had made, with hundreds of handwritten messages scrawled on a bedsheet duct-taped to the building’s facade. On the ground were more than 100 candles, and empty bottles of liquor, apparently consumed in tribute.

“They killed Grant’s star,” Mr. Cerrutty said. “It’s all going to start back up now.”

Several teenagers sitting on a railing nearby, agreed, and perhaps indulged in a bit of bravado.

“There’s going to be bodies dropping in the ‘Ville now, for real,” one said, referring to the Manhattanville Houses.



The Grant Houses, where Ms. Murphy lived.

Ms. Murphy, who was known as Chicken, lived in a 15th-floor apartment at 3170 Broadway. She moved to the Grant Houses five years ago with her mother and two brothers.

There, she developed into a high school basketball star, playing competitive games on the projects’ courts and in tournaments in summer. She also practiced her dribbling incessantly in front of the building, in between dancing and holding court among groups of friends.

On Sunday, police officials and neighbors said, Ms. Murphy was in a group of young people outside the Grant Houses when some men walked up to them on a short walkway from Broadway. The Grant group scattered and Ms. Murphy fled into her building and ran up the stairs. She was shot several times in a stairwell on a fourth-floor landing; her blood remained on the wall on Wednesday. Nearby walls were covered with graffiti tributes.

The police said three men were captured on surveillance cameras approaching Ms. Murphy’s building carrying guns. On Tuesday, the police announced that one of them, Terique Collins, 24, had been arrested in the Manhattanville Houses and charged with weapons possession. The police identified the other two suspects as Tyshawn Brockington, 21, and Robert Cartagena, 20, but did not provide information on Wednesday about where they lived.

Ms. Murphy began playing basketball at age 5 – usually with boys – while growing up in the Queensbridge Houses in Long Island City, Queens. She was ranked on an ESPN Web site as the nation’s 16th-best point guard in her class, and was starting her senior year at Murry Bergrtraum High School for Business Careers, a New York City basketball powerhouse.

Ms. Murphy was known for her ball-handling and her ability to drive hard to the hoop, but she also enjoyed a sometimes raucous social life outside her building, friends said.

Some of Ms. Murphy's friends insisted that she was not involved in any rivalry between the projects. But others said that she, or her 17-year-old brother, known as Bam-Bam – might have been involved in a fight the night before the shooting. (Ms. Murphy and her brother were strikingly similar in appearance.)

On Saturday night, some said, a young man from the Manhattanville Houses was beaten and slammed over the head with a bicycle outside the C-Town supermarket, on 125th Street on the edge of the Grant Houses. Her killing, several hours later, was retribution, they said.

Feuds between nearby housing projects are not uncommon. There have been longstanding, recurring rivalries among complexes in the Rockaways, including Beach 41st Street Houses, the Ocean Bay Houses and Ocean Village.

"It's common, the feuds, but Chicken was only involved in basketball, nothing else," said Zanobia Rivera, 18, who described herself as Ms. Murphy's girlfriend.

Ms. Rivera, a senior at the Global Learning Collective school in Manhattan, was standing by the shrine for Ms. Murphy, clutching a pair of her red basketball shorts.

In the Manhattanville Houses, a young couple pushing their baby in a stroller said there had been constant fights between groups of young men from the two projects in recent weeks.



The Manhattanville Houses, just across 125th Street from the Grant Houses. Some residents blame a feud between the two complexes for Ms. Murphy's death.

"They learn this stupidity at a young age," said the mother, who would not give her name for fear of retribution. "My little brother just started seventh grade at the local school, which has mostly Manhattanville kids. They've already started bullying him, asking him, 'You from Grant, huh? You from Grant?' Where do they learn this?"

Near the shrine, Mr. Spencer, a fledgling rapper known as Babyface, said, "The only thing we can do is try to stop the violence because violence ain't going to bring Chicken back."