

# Mob attacks not the only outrages

**BY MARY SCHMICH**

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The woman answered my knock by opening the door a crack. She was neatly dressed in blue jeans and a blue shirt.

Was this Dvonte Sykes' home? Was there someone I could talk to about what happened Saturday night?

"I'm his mother," she said, warily.

It was Friday, midday, not quite a week since Tonia Rush's son was arrested. He and four other teenage boys were charged with mugging five people in an affluent, touristed part of downtown Chicago. She didn't want to talk, but said she would, outside, on the stoop of her two-story graystone duplex.

Had Dvonte been in trouble before?

"No. Never. He's a pretty good kid."

She reached absent-mindedly into her mailbox, pulled out several envelopes.

She said Dvonte had planned on going to summer school to earn credits to complete his junior year of high school.

Instead, at 17, he has been charged as an adult with robbing a Thai tourist and participating in a "mob action" in which a group of teenagers tried to steal another man's scooter.

"Now we're going to throw the book at him," she said, "going to use him as an example."

What he's accused of doing is really bad, right? When I asked, she didn't hesitate.

"Yes. It is. Absolutely. If he did it, he needs to be punished. But how it's blown up is not making it any better."

Nearby, the Englewood neighborhood was humming with young men. They clustered at the bus stop, next to cars, outside Stewart's Cut Rate Liquors. A couple of guys played a game of quarters, tossing coins on the sidewalk, aiming at the cracks.

But Rush's block, which has houses on only one

side, facing elevated Metra tracks, was quiet except when a train roared by.

She said that since she moved here from Hyde Park because it was all she could afford, the neighborhood has gotten worse.

"I can walk to the bus stop and hear gunshots. People getting murdered, drive-bys every day."

After her son's bond hearing, she told a reporter that his \$250,000 bail wouldn't have been so high if he'd committed crimes on the South or West sides. Her remark ignited outrage. She holds to her opinion.

"Politics, money, race," she said when I asked why she thought this case was so big. "Pick any one of them. New police chief. New mayor. They're going to make sure they're setting an example for everybody."

Rush was polite, but short on details. She said she works part time. She said she'd never heard of the two other teenagers charged as adults with her son. She said his father had seen him since the arrest.

What would she like to say to Dvonte in jail?

"That I got his back 100 percent. I'm here for my son. I'm not here for the media, nor anybody else."

Then from her handful of mail, she picked up a postcard. She flipped it over, flipped it back.

"How did they get this address?" she said.

She passed it to me. The card, handwritten to her son, used a racial slur: "You and the other (expletive) don't seem to be able to quit acting like (expletive). Hopefully, they will now put all you (expletive) away."

"I have no comment on this," she said.

Her voice stayed level. She walked back inside and closed the door.

The marauders who beat five people in downtown Chicago last Saturday did something very bad. They hurt those individuals, and they hurt the city. But let's save some righteous anger for the unseen assaults that happen in Chicago every day.