

VICTIM - OR AGGRESSOR? JAILED MOM ACCUSED OF 'REIGN OF TERROR' BY JUDGE SOSA IN FIGHT TO PROVE CHILD WAS ABUSED

DYANDRIA MURRAY is a soft-spoken, 5-foot-1, 56-year-old, gray-haired woman who often walks with a cane because a bus ran her over in 1984. But according to a judge, Murray is guilty of "very serious violence" for waging "a reign of terror" against judges, court officers and her ex-husband, a retired NYPD detective. For more than two years, Murray has sat behind bars on Rikers Island - without a trial and without being convicted of any crime. In October 2002, she was sentenced to three years for contempt by Manhattan Family Court Judge Helen Sturm. It may be the longest contempt imprisonment ever at Rikers, said one knowledgeable source. Murray's offense? She produced a local-access cable TV show attacking Family Court. She called Sturm a "neo-Nazi".

" Murray passed out leaflets. She served aggressive legal documents on her ex-husband. She wrote to her daughter's school warning that her ex-husband should be watched. She made similar warnings to police and child-abuse caseworkers on Long Island. Murray is convinced that her ex-husband sexually molested their daughter. In 1997, at age 7, the child spontaneously made that claim to doctors at Bellevue Hospital, three of whom testified in court that sexual abuse had occurred. As recently as December 2002, the state's child abuse registry still listed a "substantiated" sexual-abuse report for the child's father. Nevertheless, in 1999, in a ruling upheld by higher courts, Manhattan Family Court Judge Gloria Sosa-Lintner decided that the sex abuse never occurred, even while finding both mother and father guilty of neglect. For four years, the city moved the child from foster home to foster home, letting a legal order to keep the girl expire in 2000. Murray quickly snatched her daughter from school, only to see her ex-husband obtain an arrest warrant for custodial interference and win legal custody. In October 2002, with Murray already jailed for contempt, the Manhattan district attorney filed a 44-count indictment against her, alleging felony crimes such as stalking a judge and threatening her ex-husband. Months later, a criminal court judge dismissed the indictment, mostly for a lack of evidence, noting Murray's "constitutional right to be obnoxious.

" Years before, as the case was escalating, Murray and Manhattan Family Court had begun a war of words. Murray would show up at legal seminars where Sosa-Lintner appeared, asking

rude questions. She produced and narrated a Manhattan cable TV show called "The Real News," publicizing Family Court horror stories. Murray put Sosa-Lintner's picture on TV and labeled her a "fascist".

" She belittled child-abuse caseworkers by name. She singled out a local prosecutor who refused to pursue her case. She put her child on TV. She distributed leaflets to relatives visiting kids in foster care at a Catholic agency in Brooklyn and included a photo of her ex-husband sleeping naked, lying beside his daughter, their faces obscured. "I never have committed a violent act, ever in my life," Murray said in a recent interview on Rikers Island. "The system did something very wrong with my child. I thought I had a right to freedom of speech.

" Sturm, who inherited the case, saw it differently. Murray's daughter, placed with her father, recanted her claim of abuse and begged to have "a normal life.

" Sturm barred Murray from visiting her daughter, now 15, or disrupting her father's new family home. The father's new wife said Murray is "a very malevolent woman.

" State law lets Family Court judges jail someone six months for violating an order. To jail Murray so long, Sturm strung together consecutive six-month terms for six separate acts. A 1995 state Court of Appeals decision in a different case affirmed that practice. The judge suspended all but nine months of her tough sentence but continued to keep Murray imprisoned when her ex-husband filed new claims. "To paint Ms. Murray as the victim is simply inappropriate especially because she has had a hand in delaying proceedings which would have hastened the possibility of her getting out of jail," court spokesman David Bookstaver said. Murray remains in jail waiting for Sturm to rule on even more allegations. Her ex-husband says she communicated with him. Murray says she served him with legal documents to enforce an appeals court order overturning Sturm for excusing the ex-cop from \$6,000 in back child support. "She embarrassed a lot of people," says Bruce Young, the latest lawyer appointed to represent the unyielding mother. "You don't put somebody in jail for that.

"Dyandria's case is, sadly, not an isolated case," said Eileen King, a director of Justice for Children, a child advocacy group in Washington. "The instinct to protect your child is like a life-and-death instinct," King said. "To be asked to just stand back and let the child go when there's credible evidence of abuse is an impossible thing.

"Court officials see it differently. "Murray has continually shown to several judges that she has not put the best interests of her child first," Bookstaver said.