

# Pierce County

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **MURDER CHARGE FOR MAN WHO BEAT GIRLFRIEND, BURNED BODY**

Tacoma, WA - - Today Prosecutor Mark Lindquist charged Mthulisi Ndlovu, 38, with Murder in the First Degree for killing his 42-year-old girlfriend Mary Mushapaidzi at their Bonney Lake home on Saturday, October 8. The victim's two children, ages eight and two years, were in the home at the time of the murder.

According to charging documents, on October 9 at 11:00 a.m., Ndlovu walked into Bonney Lake Police headquarters and reported that his girlfriend of three years was missing. He told police that she left for a run around 5:30 a.m. and failed to return. Officers accompanied Ndlovu to the residence, a duplex. They noted that it smelled as if plastic had been burned. Ndlovu claimed he'd been burning junk mail on the garage floor.

Police spoke with the neighbor who lives in the other half of Ndlovu's duplex. The neighbor heard a loud banging from the adjacent unit around 11:30 p.m. on October 8. A second neighbor saw Mushapaidzi's vehicle arrive home about the same time. The neighbor heard yelling and what sounded like someone being beaten with a bat. He decided not to call police because he didn't hear gunshots.

After obtaining a search warrant, officers entered the home and saw blood streaks on the stairway leading from the kitchen to the garage. They found a burn barrel containing burned human remains in the garage. Also found at the scene was a pair of long handled pruning shears. The handles had been purposefully separated. At least one of the handles had been used to strike the victim, who suffered several large lacerations to the head consistent with blunt force trauma.

Under questioning, Ndlovu told investigators that late Saturday night, October 8, he and Mushapaidzi argued about dirty dishes. He claimed she struck him in the face with her purse, at which time he became enraged and knocked her to the floor. He climbed on top of her and punched her several times. Ndlovu said it was possible he tried to strangle her and hit her with the pruning shears, but he couldn't remember. After realizing the victim was dead, the defendant dragged her body into the garage and put her in a metal barrel. Later in the morning he put charcoal into the barrel and lit it in an effort to destroy the body.

Ndlovu and Mushapaidzi are natives of Zimbabwe. Ndlovu has no criminal history and there is no evidence of prior domestic violence with the couple.

Charges are only allegations and a person is presumed innocent unless he or she is proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Ndlovu will be arraigned today at 1:30 p.m. in Room 270 in the County City Building in Tacoma.

For additional information contact Becky Stover at 253-798-4910 or [rstover@co.pierce.wa.us](mailto:rstover@co.pierce.wa.us).

